



PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE RESEARCHERS DR. BECCA PEIXOTTO AND MYRIA PEREZ SELECTED AS AAAS IF/THEN® AMBASSADORS

DALLAS (Sept. 10, 2019) – The Perot Museum of Nature and Science is proud to announce that **Dr. Becca Peixotto**, archaeologist and director of Perot Museum's *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*, and **Myria Perez**, paleontologist and assistant fossil preparator in the Perot Museum Paleo Lab, have been selected as AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) IF/THEN® Ambassadors. IF/THEN®, a national initiative of Lyda Hill Philanthropies, seeks to further women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by empowering current innovators and inspiring the next generation of pioneers.

"We firmly believe that IF we support a woman in STEM, THEN she can change the world," said Lyda Hill, founder of Lyda Hill Philanthropies. "The goal of IF/THEN® is to shift the way our country – and the world – think about women in STEM, and this requires changing the narratives about women STEM professionals and improving their visibility."

"There is no doubt that science is the answer to solve many of our country's most challenging issues, and we need all of our nation's critical thinkers addressing these issues," said Nicole Small, president and CEO of Lyda Hill Philanthropies. "Women make up nearly half of our population yet only a fraction are entering STEM-related fields. This is why we've committed more than \$25 million to ensure that women like Becca Peixotto and Myria Perez are empowered to change the world and serve as high-profile role models for the next generation of STEM pioneers."

To successfully change the culture and inspire more girls to consider STEM careers, IF/THEN® has developed an ambitious game plan, crucial to empowering a sustainable movement, with four key elements: IF/THEN® Ambassadors, IF/THEN® Coalition, IF/THEN® Collection and IF/THEN® Grants. For more information, visit ifthenshecan.org.

IF/THEN® is proud to recognize talented women STEM professionals across a variety of industries as IF/THEN® Ambassadors who will serve as high-profile role models for middle school girls. In partnership with AAAS, IF/THEN® created the AAAS IF/THEN® Ambassadors Program that brings together 100+ of these innovators for specialized media and communications training. Using a talent agency model, IF/THEN® will support the Ambassadors and their inspiring work by showcasing them on a national platform.

"We are thrilled to have Dr. Becca Peixotto and Myria Perez represent the Perot Museum of Nature and Science as AAAS IF/THEN® Ambassadors," said Dr. Linda Silver, Eugene McDermott Chief Executive Officer of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science. "The Perot Museum plays an important role in fueling tomorrow's STEM-capable workforce by igniting imaginations and providing career inspiration. When girls see role models like our ambassadors, they believe they, too, can change the world."

Becca Peixotto, Ph.D. leads the Perot Museum's *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*, a global hub for education, communication and research in the study of human origins. Her excavation and research work on *Homo naledi*, a recently discovered new species of ancient human relative in the caves of South Africa, will be featured in the upcoming exhibition *Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind*, opening Oct. 19 at the Perot Museum.

Paleontologist Myria Perez prepares dinosaur fossils fresh from the Perot Museum's groundbreaking fieldwork in Alaska as guests watch in real-time through the Museum's glass-encased Paleo Lab. She also frequently assists with fossil excavations from North Texas dig sites. Perez's intricate work on delicate marine fossils during her studies at SMU are currently on view in the exhibition *Sea Monsters Unearthed: Life in Angola's Ancient Seas* at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

AAAS IF/THEN® Ambassadors were selected through a rigorous selection process. Candidates were evaluated for overall excellence with a focus on the following:

- Contributions to their STEM-related field, commensurate with their career stage
- Demonstrated experience and abilities in STEM communication and public engagement via media, classroom, and public programs
- Commitment to inspiring middle school girls to be the next generation of STEM pioneers

For a complete list of Ambassadors, go to ifthenshecan.org/ambassadors.

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ABOUT THE PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE. *The top cultural attraction in Dallas/Fort Worth and a Michelin Green Guide three-star destination, the Perot Museum of Nature and Science is a nonprofit educational organization located in the heart of Dallas, Texas. With a mission to inspire minds through nature and science, the Perot Museum delivers exciting, engaging and innovative visitor and outreach experiences through its education, exhibition, and research and collections programming for children, students, teachers, families and life-long learners. The 180,000-square-foot facility in Victory Park opened in December 2012 and is now recognized as the symbolic gateway to the Dallas Arts District. Future scientists, mathematicians and engineers will find inspiration and enlightenment through 11 permanent exhibit halls on five floors of public space; a children's museum; a state-of-the art traveling exhibition hall; and The Hoglund Foundation Theater, a National Geographic Experience. Designed by 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis Architects, the Victory Park museum has been lauded for its artistry and sustainability. To learn more, please visit perotmuseum.org*

ABOUT IF/THEN

IF/THEN® is part of Lyda Hill Philanthropies' commitment to fund game-changing advancements in science and nature. IF/THEN® seeks to further advance women in STEM by empowering current innovators and inspiring the next generation of pioneers. Rooted in a firm belief that there is no better time to highlight positive and successful female professional role models, IF/THEN® is designed to activate a culture shift among young girls to open their eyes to STEM careers by: (1) funding and elevating women in STEM as role models, (2) convening cross-sector partners in entertainment, fashion, sports, business and academia to illuminate the importance of STEM everywhere, and (3) inspiring girls with better portrayals of women in STEM through media and learning experiences to pique their interest in STEM careers. To learn more, visit ifthenshecan.org or follow IF/THEN® on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT LYDA HILL PHILANTHROPIES

Lyda Hill Philanthropies encompasses the charitable giving of founder Lyda Hill who believes that "science is the answer" to life's most challenging issues and is committed to funding transformational advances in science and nature. To learn more, visit lydahillphilanthropies.org.

ABOUT AAAS

*The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal [Science](http://science.org), as well as *Science Translational Medicine*; *Science Signaling*; a digital, open-access journal, *Science Advances*; *Science Immunology*; and *Science Robotics*.*

AAAS was founded in 1848 and includes more than 250 affiliated societies and academies of science, serving 10 million individuals. Science has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world. The nonprofit AAAS is open to all and fulfills its mission to "advance science and serve society" through initiatives in science policy, international programs, science education, public engagement and more.

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