

# Generations of STEM:

# Maritza Soto

## Chilean Astronomer

As a child, Maritza loved astronomy, and studied books on planets from the age of 10. A native of Chile, her parents encouraged her learning and she attended the University of Chile in engineering, specializing in Astronomy.

Her star gazing paid off in 2015, when at the age of 25 she confirmed the existence of exoplanet HD 110014 c, a giant three times the mass of Jupiter. She discovered this planet by accident while studying a giant star 293 light-years away, in the constellation Virgo.

In 2018, she led a team of ten astronomers to discover more planets, this time intentionally. Her team discovered two other gaseous exoplanets, both larger than Jupiter. Much of her job isn't peering through a telescope, but working with numbers and data with her team in an office setting.

Ms. Soto believes that women can be scientists while still being themselves: "People make it seem like you have to be either super-nerdy or the complete opposite, like super-fashionable and girly. No – you can be whoever you want. You may be nerdy or into fashion. It doesn't matter. You can be whatever you want and be a scientist on top of that!"

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