

Hank McKinnell
Remarks at Groundbreaking of
Connecticut Center for Science & Exploration

Hartford, CT

Oct. 21, 2005

Thank you, Ted. Governor Rell, Mayor Perez, my fellow Board members and distinguished guests — thank you all for being a part of this historic event today.

Pfizer has taken a very active role in making the Connecticut Science and Education Center a reality, because, quite simply, science and innovation are what we at Pfizer are all about...

Without strong, solid science, nothing else Pfizer does is of any consequence.

And to do that kind of science, you need world-class scientists...

Connecticut, we have discovered through experience, is a great place to find them...

It has been home to Pfizer's global research and development effort for more than five decades...

Throughout the state's history, few places have better exemplified the idea that that prosperity exists in the minds of people...

Inventors such as Eli Whitney came to personify the idea of "Yankee ingenuity."

In his great book *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville noted how Connecticut, despite its stony soil, chilly climate and few natural resources, nevertheless provided America with her clock-makers and her schoolmasters.

But history is full of examples of great traditions that were eventually lost.

Past performance is not necessarily indicative of future results.

Unfortunately, the evidence is all around us that scientific illiteracy is widespread in the United States.

Studies by the Center for Biomedical Communications at Northwestern University Medical School have found that:

- Most American adults don't know what molecules are — other than that they are really, really small;

- In spite of its figuring in seemingly every episode of “Law & Order,” fewer than a third can identify DNA as the key to heredity;
- And, incredibly, one in five Americans believes the sun revolves around the earth, an idea disproved four centuries ago.

Some respond to such statistics by noting that the United States can import whatever scientific talent it needs from abroad.

And American-based companies, including Pfizer, have been doing just that.

But that is, at best, a stopgap measure.

As prosperity rises in countries such as China and India, those countries are increasingly positioned to successfully retain their scientific talent.

Also, given the lightning advances in communications technology, highly trained scientists can do their jobs from almost anywhere on the globe.

There is no reason to believe that Connecticut’s, or America’s, traditional advantage in brainpower will be permanent.

It is this state of affairs that the science center aims to address.

When completed, the center will be a statewide learning destination that we hope will inspire children to see the relevance and promise of science in their everyday lives...

Some of those who visit this center will choose to pursue higher education and careers in science...

Others will grow up to be better parents because they are able to talk to their kids about the world around them in an informed manner.

From how a video game or a big-screen TV works to life-saving medicines, science will be a part of their lives.

So as we break ground today, we are making a statement to our children that we understand what science means to them, and that they can mean something to science...

We are recognizing their potential, and creating a place that will help them exercise, enjoy and benefit from that potential.

Besides, being knowledgeable about science is more than just a way to get a good job and help your fellow man at the same time — it could just save your life.

I recall the story last December of 10-year old Tilly Smith...

She listened as her teacher told her and her fellow students how to recognize the early signs of a tsunami...

Vacationing with her family in Thailand a few months later, she alone among all the people on the beach saw the danger when the tide suddenly and inexplicably ran out...

Thanks her timely warning, her family and all the other beachgoers were able to scramble to higher ground, just in the nick of time.

Many people are alive today who otherwise would have been swept away...

All because a little girl was paying attention in science class.

So this science center has both a very exciting and a very serious mission.

We are building a place where students like Tilly Smith can carry away with them the inspiring discoveries of modern science, and so give the children of Connecticut a strong start in the race to the future.

We have come a very long way from the day when we decided that it was time to do this.

Through the great generosity of the State of Connecticut and my colleagues on the Board, we are ready to begin work. Of course, there is much more to do.

So while I thank all of you for everything that you have done, I remind you that we are far from finished.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Hank McKinnell, Chairman/CEO of Pfizer Inc, is Chairman of the Board of the Connecticut Center for Science & Exploration.