



SCIENCE



News from the Connecticut Science Center

Welcome to 2022 at the Connecticut Science Center!

The last few years have been a time of incredible challenge and innovation for the Science Center. As we look to the future, this year and beyond, we continue to navigate and meet the needs of students, educators, families, and our community at large. Whether welcoming the droves of visitors marveling at the *Mummies of the World* exhibit, supporting families and schools through in person and virtual offerings, or partnerships like those with Hartford HealthCare to deliver vaccines to our visitors, the Science Center's mission remains steadfast. 2022 at the Science Center brings new STEM Careers to explore, new ways to think about our history of diverse scientists and scientific achievement, timely new conversations, and so much more.

A recent article published by WIRED reports *Surprise! The Pandemic Has Made People More Science Literate!* The piece describes that "People are internalizing, using, and remembering valuable scientific information...Not only increasing their scientific vocabularies, but they are learning important concepts from biology and public health. Students are showing more interest in the roles of scientists and health workers. The messy trial-and-error of the pandemic is showing nonscientists what the process of science really looks like—and we may all be better off for it." We at the Connecticut Science Center couldn't be happier about this as we continue our important work to nurture a more science aware society and STEM enabled workforce. ■



Thanks to Hartford HealthCare for holding their Vaccination Clinic for ages 5-11 at the Science Center in February. More than 60 vaccine doses were administered and each participant received a free ticket to the Science Center for the day.



The Connecticut Science Center inspires lifelong learning through interactive and innovative experiences that explore our changing world through science.

STEM Career Showcase: Expanding Viewpoints of STEM History

Every year the Connecticut Science Center's programs team provides multiple opportunities for students to engage with and learn from local career professionals working in a variety of STEM fields.

Beginning in May 2022 the team will build upon their efforts by highlighting the significant contributions of lesser known scientists and the various approaches to scientific practices that are often excluded from the historically accepted yet culturally narrow views and considerations about "real" science.

Each new STEM Showcase conversation will focus on breaking down stereotypes and dispelling common myths and beliefs about who can be a scientist, mathematician, or engineer and will introduce different Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) topics. Students will have more and more chances to see diverse professionals that reflect themselves in successful and fulfilling STEM careers that will inspire them to follow their passions and pursue future careers in STEM fields.



STEM Career Showcase panelists from left to right: Julia Su, Jack (City of Hartford), Jackie Garofano (Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology), Michelle Fuda (UnitedHealth Group), and Meryl Mallery (Ensign-Bickford Aerospace & Defense)

As the programs team continues to innovate and inspire through the STEM Career Showcase, future offerings will increasingly reflect our collective efforts to learn and understand the importance of a more diverse and inclusive world view of STEM, with the aim of inspiring the next generation of scientists in our state and beyond. ■



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Staff Profile: Nick Villagra, STEM Educator

Since September 2013, STEM Educator Nick Villagra (fondly known among children as Mr. Nick) has delivered a variety of educational programming—from Discovery Center field trip classes and neighborhood based STEM enrichment activities, to professional development for science teachers. "No two days are the same as a STEM Educator," says Nick. Nick applies his knowledge, creativity and science communication skills in a way that makes science content both interesting and accessible to a variety of audiences. "At the Science Center, we are in a unique position to have the freedom, flexibility, and resources to develop programming that might be too difficult to implement in a different educational setting." You can also hear Nick regularly on WPLR's (99.1 FM) morning show with Chaz and AJ. ■



Nick Villagra



Drawings by students inspired by Science Center programs.



Coded Bias Director Shalini Kantayya answers audience questions after the movie's screening event on March 3.



WFSB Meteorologist Mark Dixon and Connecticut Science Center Education Programs Manager Aoife Ryle.



Governor Lamont joins Science Center President & CEO Matt Fleury as well as US, state, and city leaders at the Science Center.

School Partner Highlight: Groton's Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School

The Connecticut Science Center and Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School (CKMS) in Groton are collaborating on an educational partnership that will immerse both teaching staff and students in opportunities connected to the school's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Math) theme.

This partnership will provide engaging and meaningful STEM-focused learning experiences that align with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in the classroom through traveling programs, professional development support for educators, and other enriching experiences for the school community. Classroom programming throughout the year will align with instruction and select grade levels will have an opportunity to visit the Connecticut Science Center.

"Teaching science is more complex than just opening a book and learning facts. While our students need to understand basic scientific principles, they also need to investigate, explore, debate, and problem solve. It's important that we utilize each student's innate curiosity to get them excited about exploring scientific phenomena and STEM," said Christine Dauphinais, Principal of CKMS. ■



Genomics Education with The Jackson Laboratory

The Connecticut Science Center launched an extensive line-up of Genomics programming, culminating in the official opening of the *Genome in Me* exhibition in 2021. The Jackson Laboratory (JAX) has been a strong partner and invaluable resource to the Science Center team and our visitors every step of the way. Sarah Wojiski, Director of Education at The Jackson Laboratory, served on the Advisory Committee for *Genome in Me*, and has continued to review content with our team after its launch.

Partnering with our programs team to strengthen knowledge and develop programming, JAX extended invitations to facility tours and professional development programs. Working directly with our visitors, staff from JAX also inspire students at STEM Career Showcases. In 2021, Dr. Charles Lee, Scientific Director and Professor at The Jackson Laboratory, was elected to the Science Center's Board of Trustees. In this role, Dr. Lee contributes to the Science Center's work to strengthen a culture of science learning and innovation in our state. ■

The Genome in Me Exhibition is supported by the Chase-Bear-Dyer Family and The Jackson Laboratory.

UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS:



Ofrenda by Hartford artist Carlos Hernández Chávez was on display for Dia de los Muertos at the Connecticut Science Center.



MUMMIES

OF THE WORLD

THE EXHIBITION

EXPERIENCE IT TODAY!



Thank you for your support of the Connecticut Science Center.

The Connecticut Science Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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