



Media Contact:

Tracy Shirer (tshirer@ctsciencecenter.org)

O: 860.520.2116, C: 860.817.1373

Connecticut Science Center | 250 Columbus Blvd | Hartford, CT 06103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Science Straight Up: The Gene Pool Party *Dive into Hartford's Smartest Happy Hour Friday, October 26*

HARTFORD, CT (October 23, 2018) – It's time to blow up the pool floaties and head over to the Connecticut Science Center, Hartford's smartest happy hour is going for a swim. **Science Straight Up: The Gene Pool Party** is diving into the deep end of genetics with hands-on activities and demonstrations. All participants can engage with experts as they explore the latest technology in the field, whether they are experts themselves or just dipping their toe in to learn about how genetics touches our everyday lives.

Genomics education at the Connecticut Science Center is led by Dr. Stephanie Airoldi and Melissa Garafola, both leading science educators and communicators with a specialization in genetics and genomics. During the last two years under their leadership, public-facing programs have been developed and deployed to spark the imagination of visitors and educate the public on this complex yet fascinating scientific revolution.

EnviroLogix' Chief Scientific Officer, Dr. Breck Parker, will be showcasing the technology that has established the company as a global leader in the development of rapid detection technology used to keep food supplies safe and healthy. Visitors can explore this innovative technology, including their DNABLE method, and see how the company is staying on the forefront of global issues in food production by finding smart, simple solutions to challenges before they even arise. Dr. Parker will also be engaging with participants about the science behind gene editing.

The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine is bringing in their mobile lab where visitors can practice the techniques scientists use to obtain and analyze DNA from living cells with Dr. Sarah Wojiski. Differences in DNA sequences determine differences each person has in their traits, including taste. Visitors can take a taste test to see their ability to taste bitter substances, showing which DNA sequence they possess. The Jackson Laboratory is transforming medicine by working to develop solutions tailored to each person's unique genetic makeup. In her role as the Director of STEM and Undergraduate Education, Dr. Wojiski connects the field of genomics to individuals at the most personal level.

Professionals at UCONN recognize the importance of understanding a disease's genetic makeup to design a treatment. Dr. Elaine Choung-Hee Lee from UCONN will be showing visitors a new method in controlling genes to create more advanced personalized medicine and ultimately improve human health. Dr. Lee is the Director of the Human Performance Laboratory and an Assistant Professor of Molecular Biology and Applied Genetics at UCONN. Her research examining genetic codes and methods to control gene functionality are being applied to keep athletes healthy in times of physical stress, to better understand chronic diseases and improve personalized medicine.

Visitors can learn about detecting and collecting forensic evidence from The Connecticut State Police Central District Major Crime Squad. They will be bringing tools from the Major Crime Van, which are used to detect and prepare forensic evidence for the crime lab.

Open for the event will also be the Science Center's more than 165 hands-on exhibits, including the *Butterfly Encounter*. Here, visitors can be immersed in a tropical environment with hundreds of free-flying butterflies all around them. Everyone will enjoy listening to live music, and testing his or her knowledge with BaR Rated Trivia through their fun and interactive trivia games. Visitors can enjoy delicious barbeque food with BEAR'S Smokehouse, find their new favorite beer or Brockmans gin through one of the tastings and happy hour bar specials going on all night.

Science Straight Up is made possible by Burns & McDonnell, a successful engineering, architecture, construction and environmental firm that designs, permits, constructs and manages assets for their clients around the world. "We are proud to support the Connecticut Science Center and its new program, Science Straight Up," says Brett Williams, Burns & McDonnell president and New England office general manager. "Our country is built on ingenuity, and we believe that by investing in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), we can maintain that tradition and make a lasting impact on our future." Additional support for Science Straight Up is provided by Hartford Distributors, BEAR'S Smokehouse and Brockmans Gin.

Additionally, Science Straight Up showcases prominent women in science fields as part of the Women in Science Initiative. Women in Science encourages girls and young women to pursue studies and career paths in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and celebrates the achievements of women in the sciences. The initiative seeks to bridge the gender gap in STEM by developing original programming and to build the community of women in the sciences. Women in Science is supported by founding sponsor, Petit Family Foundation and Voya Financial.

Science Straight Up: The Gene Pool Party will take place on Friday, October 26 5:30PM-8:30PM. Tickets are currently on sale on the Connecticut Science Center website, CTScienceCenter.org. Tickets purchased in advance are \$10, tickets purchased at the door are \$12 and Connecticut Science Center members receive a discounted rate of just \$5. This event is 21+ ONLY and photo ID is required.

###

About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving more than 3 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries covering a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is also the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful Professional Development for educators. More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.