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## STEM Careers Showcase Expands for 2020; Six Sessions at Connecticut Science Center

*More Students, More STEM Professionals, More Corporate Involvement in Exploring Career Possibilities*

As Connecticut employers contend with a deepening science, technology, engineering and math (“STEM”) talent crunch, the Connecticut Science Center is ramping up its STEM Career Connections initiative with expanded programming, including STEM Career Showcase events.

These events are part of an institution-wide project to generate awareness of Connecticut STEM industries, employers and careers, and inspire children and their families to consider pursuing them. Research finds that the likelihood of participation in STEM careers is dramatically increased by awareness at a young age, and that widely held misperceptions of STEM careers can discourage students from pursuits which frequently offer higher compensation than other professions.

The Connecticut Science Center’s STEM Career Showcase highlights careers in the STEM fields, providing students with hands-on experiences, guided by professionals currently working in a wide range of STEM disciplines. Launched last year with three sessions, the initiative returns for 2020 with six sessions, in March, November and December, responding to growing interest from students, educators, STEM professionals, and businesses throughout the region looking to encourage and engage today’s youth – and tomorrow’s prospective employees. STEM Career Showcase is presented by Stanley Black & Decker, a program of the Connecticut Science Center’s STEM Career Connections initiative, presented by The Hartford and Cognizant U.S. Foundation with founding support from The Mandell-Braunstein Family.

Two of the six sessions – on March 23 and March 24 - are sold out. STEM Career Showcases will also take place on March 7, November 5, December 1 and December 2. Through informal conversations and hands-on activities, volunteer exhibitors from a broad range of careers share the importance and real-world applications of their work and help students discover the skills needed to be successful in the STEM fields. Often, students are unaware of the wide variety of careers that are within the STEM fields, and professionals welcome the opportunity to demonstrate and explain their work.

The March 7 STEM Careers Showcase is geared towards families, and the others are for student groups. Elementary, middle and high school students take field trips to the Connecticut Science Center to participate, and more than 500 students from schools throughout the region are expected to take part on each of the STEM Career Showcases dates. Each of the sessions will have a keynote speaker from a STEM field to kick-off the day.

“STEM Career Showcase provides students a real glimpse of what it’s like on a day-to-day basis in a variety of occupations in the STEM fields, and what it takes to get there,” said Matt Fleury, President & CEO of the Connecticut Science Center. “They have an opportunity to talk with professionals who were once kids just like them, and talk about their path and their work first-hand – how they found their way to their careers, how they solve problems, how they use technology, and how many different jobs there are in these exciting, growing fields.”

Reflecting the wide range of STEM jobs at many levels, the STEM Showcase participants in 2020 include Stanley Black & Decker, Cognizant, The Hartford, Tilcon, Hartford Healthcare, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, ESPN, Nassau Re, Lake Compounce, Hartford Stage, Ensign Bickford Aerospace & Defense, Pratt & Whitney, Shepley Bulfinch, Baypath Occupational Therapy, along with the Town of Windsor Building and Fire Safety, Capital Community College, Tunxis Community College, Asnuntuck Community College, The Coder School and the State Department of Labor, with more to be announced.





Data from the inaugural year of STEM Career Showcase programs at the Connecticut Science Center indicate that 81% of participating students reported that the Showcase increased their interest in STEM careers, and nearly 6 in 10 attendees now see a STEM career as a possibility. Participating students also indicated that they were exposed to careers they did not previously know existed and now feel capable of pursuing, and they enjoyed the opportunity to interact with professionals in an informal setting.

On March 23, the keynote speaker will be Paul Tyler, Chief Marketing Officer for Nassau Re, the insurance and asset management company headquartered in Downtown Hartford. In that role, he leads the strategy, development, and delivery of company marketing campaigns across digital and traditional channels. The March 24 keynote speaker will be Dr. Kristine Larsen, professor of astronomy and astrophysics at Central Connecticut State University. Speakers for the November and December sessions will be announced later this year.

"Students and professionals have an opportunity to really talk about careers, to make the connections between today's education and tomorrow's possibilities, and to break down any misconceptions about STEM and careers," said Megan Ramer, Public Programs Manager at the Connecticut Science Center. "STEM professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds – including some that will surprise students - share breakthroughs in science and technology, and their real-world experiences. By doing so, they inspire students and contribute to developing the next generation of thinkers and innovators."

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**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 3.25 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 the state's only year-round butterfly habitat, five educational labs, the 200-seat Hoffman Foundation Science Theater, function room, gift store, food, dessert and coffee concessions, 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 the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful professional development for educators. *More information:* [CTScienceCenter.org](http://CTScienceCenter.org) or (860) SCIENCE.