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New Jersey STEM Month Kicks Off With STEM Ball Drop

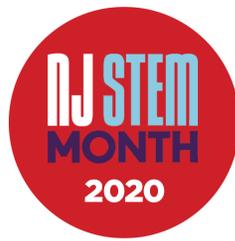
Wall Township, NJ – Last Thursday, February 27th, nearly 100 STEM supporters gathered together at InfoAge Science Learning Center and Museum in Wall Township to kickoff March as the second annual New Jersey STEM Month. The Research & Development Council of New Jersey (“R&D Council of NJ”) and the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network (“NJSPN”) hosted the event, which featured an actual student developed STEM Ball that dropped, a reading of the STEM Month Gubernatorial Proclamation, several inspirational speakers, a museum tour, and networking.

The event began with guided tours through the InfoAge Science Learning Center, coupled with a scavenger hunt for guests to immerse themselves in the museum’s unique displays, which included exhibits on radio and television, electronic warfare and radio astronomy.

The next part of the night included several speakers, beginning with InfoAge’s CEO Mike Ruane, who informed attendees of the rich history of scientific innovation in New Jersey. Mike spoke about the incredible pool of volunteers supporting the museum, announcing “We even have a few people working here today who hold patents on HDTV!”

Larry O’Connell, the Chairman of the R&D Council and Vice President of Global Technical Leadership and Global TechLine at IBM, then spoke and shared his experience as an industry representative. “Over the years, the demand for STEM jobs in New Jersey have exponentially increased, but the supply of our students is not necessarily meeting that demand,” Larry explained, “But the work of the ecosystems and other STEM programs like PTECH here in New Jersey is aiming to change that.”

Following Larry’s remarks were two representatives from one of New Jersey’s STEM learning ecosystems, Mary Jo Hutchinson and Erica DeMichele, the co-leads of the Delran STEM Ecosystem Alliance. The two women celebrated Delran’s recently opened Fabrication & Innovation Laboratory, which has reignited the excitement of STEM learning for students, teachers, partners and community members in their ecosystem. Additionally, these students are set to receive digital badges, which are certifications that they can carry with them into future STEM higher education and careers.



To conclude the remarks, Kim Case, the Executive Director of the R&D Council, spoke about the impact of New Jersey STEM Month over the last two years, which in 2019 included: 21,000 learners, over 155 unique events, and was celebrated in 17 counties across New Jersey. “This year, in 2020, the goal is to reach 25,000 learners during New Jersey STEM Month,” Kim shared.

NJSPN’s Coordinator Shirley Guzman, then read the NJ STEM Month Gubernatorial Proclamation to the event’s guests. The full proclamation can be read [here](#).

Then came the main event of the night: The Ball Drop. Under the guidance of Christine Girtain, Toms River Regional Schools Director of Authentic Science Research High Schools North and South, six high school students from Toms River created a STEM Month Ball that dropped similar to the Times Square New Year’s Eve Ball drops. The students developed this ball using things like a foam ball, wooden dowel, cardboard box and LEGO wheels.

The New Jersey STEM Month Ball Drop event was sponsored by Siemens, Tallo and Teq.

NJ STEM Month is a celebration co-hosted by the NJSPN and the R&D Council of NJ that highlights the Garden State’s incredible accomplishments in science, technology, engineering, math, (“STEM”) and innovation. Anyone can participate in NJ STEM Month by hosting/attending STEM-related events and engaging on social media throughout the month of March using #NJSTEMMonth. Information about how to get involved in New Jersey STEM Month can be found at <https://njstempathways.org/stemmonth-2020/>.

Two more NJSPN-hosted NJ STEM Month events include a [STEM Leader Forum](#) on March 18th, which is sponsored by Discovery Education, and the NJ STEM Month State House Showcase in Trenton on March 26th.

You can learn more about the STEM Month Ball Drop, the New Jersey STEM learning ecosystems, the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, by visiting www.njstempathways.org.