



MS Science Fest Wins Festival of the Year Award!

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MISSISSIPPI SCIENCE FEST WINS FESTIVAL OF THE YEAR AWARD AT GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Jackson, Miss. - The Mississippi Science Fest was awarded *Small Festival of the Year* by the Mississippi Tourism Association (MTA) during the recent Governor's Conference on Tourism. This award recognizes the Mississippi Science Fest, presented by C Spire, as an important community event attended by over 4,000 people and hosted collaboratively by the four museums of the LeFleur Museum District (LMD). The LMD includes the Mississippi Children's Museum, the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, and the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum.

This science-based, 3-day event created opportunities for visitors to grow in their understanding of possible careers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and imagine themselves as future scientists!

The Day 1 of the MS Science Fest involved C Spire's first statewide coding challenge, C3 Jr., with elementary children and was held at the MS Children's Museum. "We were excited to partner with C Spire to host this inaugural event for children," said Susan Garrard, president and CEO of the Mississippi Children's Museum. "This was a great way to kick-off three days of focus on the importance of technology education, digital literacy and our needs in building a 21st century workforce in Mississippi."

"Building on our highly successful C3 coding challenges for high school students, we planned age-appropriate challenges for younger students who participated in the C3 Jr. competition," said Carla Lewis, chief information officer for C Spire. "Hopefully, we can inspire and encourage them to seriously consider IT and computer science as an academic and career path."

Fifteen teams of from across the state competed in two set challenges. Each team was paired with a C Spire Tech Mentor and was given the tools and technology to code a small robot through a series of movements on a floor mat. Winners included students from Madison Crossing Elementary School (first place), Lamar Elementary from Meridian (second place), and Central Creativity from Laurel, (third place).

Day 2 was Field Trip Friday with STEM-themed activities for school groups. The museums of the LMD welcomed over one thousand students from across the state. Students were able to learn from and interact with over 39 exhibitors including NASA, Waggoner Engineering, C Spire, McNeely Plastics, and Central Creativity.

The third day of MS Science Fest showcased 50 STEM-based exhibitors from diverse fields at each of the four museums. Guests could purchase one \$10 admission ticket and visit all four museums throughout the day courtesy of a free shuttle. Exhibitors included NASA, the Jackson Zoo, Central Mississippi Beekeepers Association, Bureau of Land Management, MDOT Safety, Entergy, EPA, UMMC, Robotics Alliance of MS, Molina Healthcare of MS, USM Poly Sci just to name a few.

The MS Science Fest has been presented by C Spire since its beginning in 2016. Reflecting on its success over the past three years, Garrard saw the evident desire from the community for this event, noting, "STEM jobs are the future of Mississippi. The Mississippi Science Fest is a great way to expose children to educational concepts in an exciting and engaging way, as well as provide them examples of STEM-centered career paths they may not have had the opportunity to ever consider."

Dede Mogollon, 2018-2019 president of MTA, praised the museums of the LeFleur Museum District on winning **Small Festival of The Year Award**. Mogollon noted "This recognition was given to our tourism industry leaders who we value for their talents and achievements through their outstanding accomplishments. We are happy to have the opportunity to honor the winners of these awards as we truly appreciate their dedication not only to our organization but to the entire tourism industry."

This MS Science Fest is annual event held during the third week of September. For more information visit www.mssciencefest.org or www.mschildrensmuseum.org

About the Mississippi Children's Museum

The Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides unparalleled experiences that ignite a thirst for discovery, knowledge and learning in all children. MCM is dedicated to inspiring Mississippi's children from all backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. The museum features 40,000 square feet of exhibit space designed around five primary initiatives: Literacy, STEAM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts and Mississippi Heritage. The museum's exhibits, programs, and outreach opportunities provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages. To learn more about MCM visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.

About the LeFleur Museum District

The LeFleur Museum District(LMD) promotes four uniquely different museums and is located at a one-quarter mile stretch, just off I-55 and Lakeland Drive in Jackson, MS. The district provides interactive, exciting museum and outdoor experiences with special joint events and activities that educate and entertain families with emphasis in nature, literacy, health and nutrition, the arts and much more. The LMD's mission is to inspire visitors from around the region and nation with a sense of wonder. LMD creates opportunities for growth for all museums involved through joint events and cross-promotion of individual activities. Associations like the LeFleur Museum District are important developments to this region's creative economy. The district partners with nearby restaurants and hotels to build the area as a premier destination for visitors.

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