

NATIONAL CENTER FOR INTERACTIVE LEARNING

EXCITE. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.

Education & Outreach Newsletter

Engaging Youth in Exhibit Development

Most science centers have a variety of programs designed to engage youth in science activities. As part of its *Great Balls of Fire!* project, NCIL invited middle school students to help develop an exhibition that would travel to science centers. The project team wanted to engage the student advisors with the exhibit's science content, and learn from them about how to engage other middle school students. Sasha Palmquist of the Institute for Learning Innovation evaluated the effectiveness of the project's student advisor program.

At the 2011 conference of the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), Palmquist will chair a session called "Designing Youth Roles in Exhibition Development and Evaluation: Effective Strategies." Co-presenters for the session include Tish Morris of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, Erin Graves of the Catawba Science Center, Robby Schreiber of the Science Museum of Minnesota's Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center, and Jessica Sickler of the Institute for Learning Innovation.

The conference session will discuss how engaging teens (middle school students specifically) in exhibit planning, prototyping, and evaluation positively impacted the exhibit design while enhancing their interest in science and science literacy. The students who participated in the *Great Balls of Fire!* project were part of three teams located at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, the Catawba Science Center in North Carolina, and Sunset Middle School in Colorado.

Palmquist will also lead an online discussion called "Expanding Roles for Youth in Informal Learning Experiences" as part of the professional development programming on the ASTC Connect Web site (<http://connect.astc.org>). The discussion will take place during the week of September 12 – 16, 2011. If you would like to register early for this event, please contact Wendy Hancock at whancock@astc.org.

For more information on the ASTC conference session or the ASTC Connect discussion, contact Sasha Palmquist at palmquist@ilinet.org.

For more information on the Great Balls of Fire exhibit, contact Lisa Curtis at curtis@spacescience.org or visit www.greatballsoffireexhibit.org

STAR_Net's Community of Practice to Link Librarians with Informal STEM Providers

Every day, millions of Americans visit public libraries which provide their services for free. Among these visitors are children who don't live near a science center or can't afford the price of admission. For several years, NCIL has worked on developing exhibits for libraries that will reach library patrons, particularly underserved audiences.

NCIL's *STAR_Net* (Science-Technology, Activities and Resources)



A student advisor talks to younger students about the science behind shooting stars at an exhibit prototyping event at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Photo Courtesy of New Mexico Museum



New Mexico middle school students participated in this *Great Balls of Fire* prototyping event at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Photo Courtesy of Jeff Kennedy Associates



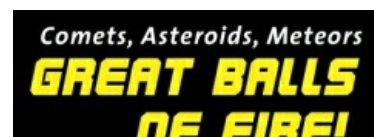
Giant Worlds Tour Schedule

Available for Rent in Fall 2011!

February 12 - August 31, 2011
Lafayette Natural History Museum and Planetarium
Lafayette, Louisiana

October 1 - December 31, 2011
OPEN

Contact Lisa Curtis-- curtis@spacescience.org or visit www.giantworlds.org to learn more.



project is designing two exhibits that will tour libraries around the country. To support librarians and other professionals who want to provide hands-on science learning in libraries, the *STAR_Net* project is launching a Community of Practice Web site in early June 2011.

According to researcher Etienne Wenger, Communities of Practice are:

groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

The *STAR_Net* Community of Practice will:

- Provide a forum where professionals--librarians, scientists, educators, and others--can share resources and learn from one another about how best to engage the public in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning experiences in libraries.
- Support the librarians and others who are providing or will provide STEM learning in libraries.
- Support the STEM professionals and educators who want to reach public audiences through STEM learning experiences in libraries.
- Foster partnerships and collaborations among CoP members to develop new STEM learning experiences for libraries.

For more information about the *STAR_Net* CoP, and to be notified when the site becomes active, contact

Lisa Curtis: curtis@spacescience.org

Large Exhibit (3000 sq. ft)

May 28 - December 31, 2011
Science Museum of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

February 1 - April 30, 2012
OPEN

Small Exhibit (750 sq. ft)

July 1, 2011 - May 31, 2012
Tyler Community College Planetarium
Tyler, TX

Visit www.greatballsoffireexhibit.org to learn more!



Expanding the frontiers of knowledge and understanding

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