



ASTC Honors Four with Leading Edge Awards

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Three ASTC-member organizations and one science center professional were honored with 2006 *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards* on October 29 at the 2006 ASTC Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Now in their second year, the awards, named in honor of the late museum consultant and former ASTC president, recognize both large and small ASTC members and/or their employees for extraordinary accomplishments in Visitor Experience, Business Practice, and Leadership in the Field. In addition to a commemorative jade glass award, winners receive a paid registration to the following year's ASTC Annual Conference.

The winner of the *Leading Edge Award for Business Practice* (Large Institution) was the **Orlando Science Center**, Orlando, Florida, for *Cocktails and the Cosmos*, a monthly evening program for members and adult guests that combines food, drink, and a festive atmosphere with exhibits, films, laser light shows, and more. With events built around themes like *The Science of Poker*, *Mystic India*, and *The Science of Big Hair ('80s Night)*, the center has turned its extended Friday hours, which once averaged 50 guests per night, into the "in" place to be for up to 1,200 visitors.

The recipient of the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution) was the **Hands On! Regional Museum**, Johnson City, Tennessee, for its *Eastman Discovery Lab*. This inviting 675-square-foot exhibit area, which opened in October 2005, not only engages visitors but also serves as a highly regarded resource for the science educators of eastern Tennessee. The lab features a smart board, computer-enhanced programs, distance learning capabilities, and hands-on experiments.

The *Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience* (Large Institution) went to **The Tech Museum of Innovation**, San Jose, California, for *TechTags*, a program that personalizes and expands the science museum experience through small radio frequency identification (RFID) tags issued to each museum visitor. TechTags enable visitors to record their interactions with exhibits and create personal web sites accessible from home or school. The jury particularly praised The Tech's willingness to share this technology with other institutions.

The award for *Leadership in the Field* (Experienced) was presented to **Tracy Calogheros**, executive director of Exploration Place, Prince George, British Columbia, Canada. Within a year of being hired in 2003, the jury noted, Calogheros initiated a comprehensive Capacity Building Review by independent museum consultants. Based on their recommendations, and guided by director Calogheros's enthusiasm and vision, the museum revamped its volunteer program, increasing volunteer hours 177 percent in two years; reorganized and re-energized its board and staff, reducing turnover; and increased school program participation by more than 400 percent.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers is an organization of more than 430 science centers and museums in 42 countries dedicated to furthering the public understanding of science among increasingly diverse audiences. ASTC encourages excellence and innovation in informal science learning by serving and linking its members worldwide and advancing their common goals. ASTC provides professional development for the science center field, promotes best practices, supports effective communication, strengthens the position of science centers within the community at large, and fosters the creation of successful partnerships and collaborations.

Visit www.astc.org to learn more about ASTC, the *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards*, and to find a science center near you.

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