



Seven Honored with Leading Edge Awards at 2011 ASTC Annual Conference

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BALTIMORE – Six ASTC-member organizations and one science center professional were honored today with *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards* during ***Knowledge that Works—from theory to practice***, the 2011 Annual Conference of the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC). Now in their seventh year, the awards recognize both small and large ASTC-member institutions and/or their employees for extraordinary accomplishments in Visitor Experience, Business Practice, and Leadership in the Field during the last three years. Presented annually, the awards honor the late Roy L. Shafer, a former science center director and ASTC president. Winners receive an etched glass award and a complimentary registration to the subsequent year's ASTC Annual Conference. (The 2012 conference will be hosted by COSI in Columbus, Ohio, October 13-16.)

The Leading Edge Award jury decided to give two awards in the Business Practice category. The **International Centre for Life**, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom, was recognized for *Sustainability through Diversity*. By developing a business portfolio that provides funds for its dual missions of public science engagement and support for world-class scientific research, the Centre rendered itself sustainable for the foreseeable future. The science centre runs on revenue generated from two onsite cafés, a parking garage, a conference and banqueting business, and leases not only to university laboratories, but also to popular bars and nightclubs.

The jury also recognized the **Philippine Science Centrum** for its rapid response and recovery following a natural disaster. On September 26, 2009, Typhoon Ondoy sent nine-foot-high flood waters into the science center, submerging its exhibits and traveling exhibitions. Within 24 hours, the center's staff and trustees met and started the first steps of rebuilding, launching a fundraising campaign called Project 926, with the goal of raising 9 million Philippine pesos (about \$210,000) in two ways (cash and in-kind assistance) within six months. The center reopened to the public less than six weeks after the typhoon hit, and was fully restored after four and a half months.

Two institutions were honored with the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution), presented to those with annual operating expenses of less than 3 million dollars. **Amazement Square**, Richmond, Virginia, was recognized for its program, *Amazing Adventures of Scorpy Bug*. A curriculum-based cartoon series designed to help educators take an interactive and interdisciplinary approach to teaching challenging concepts, *Scorpy* has been made available free-of-charge to teachers and families through publication in the regional newspaper and through a comic book series that addresses specific scientific topics. *Scorpy* is integrated across all museum platforms: exhibitions, outreach programs, website, and community and school partnerships.

The **Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre**, Oak Hammock Marsh, Manitoba, Canada, received its award for its *Wetland Outreach* program. Migratory birds depend on wetlands, and many species are endangered due to wetland destruction. In the past three years, the centre fostered public awareness among students and educators across a vast geographic area on the value of wetlands through several outreach programs. The "Wetlands On-the-Go" team delivered programs to 56,000 students in 2,500 classrooms in over 100 communities in three Canadian provinces. The centre also held eight workshops for teachers in six Caribbean locations and provided educational resources to underserved communities.

The jury also honored two institutions with the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Large Institution), given annually to those institutions with annual operating expenses in excess of 3 million dollars. The **Chabot Space & Science Center**, Oakland, California, received its award for *Bill Nye's Climate Lab*, a media-rich, hands-on exhibition that explores the effects of climate change on Earth's interconnected systems and offers activities that increase climate and energy literacy. Each visitor receives a "Climate Scout ID" — an RFID card that is automatically detected as the visitor moves from station to station, achieving solutions to climate challenges and earning points. Exhibit activity is stored on the ID, which can be taken home and used to log in on BillsClimateLab.org.

The **Museum of Science & Industry**, Chicago, Illinois, was recognized for *Science Storms*, its multiple-award-winning, 26,000-square-foot/2,400-square-meter permanent exhibition, which features dynamic large-scale experiments that explore nature's most powerful phenomena. Visitors can manipulate the vortex variables of a 40-foot tornado, unleash a tsunami in a 30-foot wave tank, trigger an avalanche, and pit fire vs. water to see how flame reacts to different conditions. The more than 50 hands-on exhibits are joined by 200 important artifacts that help visitors to further understand the basic science behind the forces of nature.

Clarence Sirisena, assistant chief executive in projects and exhibitions at Science Centre Singapore, was honored with the Leading Edge Award for Experienced Leadership in the Field. The jury recognized Sirisena for his efforts in spearheading several international exhibition collaborations, as well as playing a key role in the promotion of exhibition exchanges in the Asia-Pacific region.

About ASTC

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a global nonprofit organization of science centers and museums committed to raising public understanding of science's role in solving critical societal issues, and its value in igniting and nurturing the innovative spirit that people of all ages need for success in today's world. Founded in 1973, ASTC now numbers nearly 600 members in 45 countries, and its members include not only science centers and museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and natural history and children's museums, as well as companies, consultants, and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. Visit www.astc.org to learn more about ASTC and to find a science center near you.

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