



# Five Honored with Leading Edge Awards at 2012 ASTC Annual Conference

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COLUMBUS, OH – Three ASTC-member organizations and two science center professionals were honored with *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards* on October 13, during the 2012 Annual Conference of the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), hosted by COSI. Now in their eighth 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.

The 10-member Leading Edge Award jury chose to recognize **Carnegie Science Center**, Pittsburgh, in the Business Practice category, for its *Chevron Center for STEM Education and Career Development*. The Chevron Center, launched in 2011 with \$1.9 million in unrestricted funds, encompasses the Science Center's existing informal science education programs for students and has embarked on new initiatives, including partnerships with area school districts to develop and strengthen STEM curriculum, a database of regional STEM programs, and a public awareness campaign aimed at parents. The Chevron Center is a "community connector," bringing together a coalition of corporations, K-12 formal education, higher education, and foundations with the common goal to address challenges in STEM education and workforce development in the western Pennsylvania region.

The Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution), given to those institutions with annual operating expenses of less than 3 million dollars, was presented to the **National Ag Science Center**, Modesto, California, for *Ag in Motion*. Ag In Motion is an innovative one-of-a-kind Ag Science Field Trip on wheels. This 53-foot (16-meter) mobile science lab is designed to be a memorable experience for every youth who steps through its doors. From the exterior graphics and trailer design to the laboratory lessons and on-board videos, the student experience is designed to excite, engage, and entice further science study.

The jury chose to honor **Scitech**, Perth, Australia, with the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Large Institution), for the *Aboriginal Education Program*. (This award is given annually to those institutions with annual operating expenses in excess of 3 million dollars.) While providing science outreach in many of the regional areas of the vast state of Western Australia, it became apparent that Scitech's capacity to serve the specific needs of the remote Indigenous Aboriginal communities was diminished through lack of resources and the need for more culturally relevant programs. Scitech's Aboriginal Education Program has addressed the challenges of access and equity by shipping trucks with interactive exhibits out, and flying educators and explainers in. At the same time, the center developed a comprehensive suite of engaging science activities for children, parents, and teachers that recognize the communities' unique Aboriginal culture and language.

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**Denise Amyot**, President and CEO of the Canada Science and Technology Museums Corporation, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, was presented the Leading Edge Award for New Leadership in the Field. (A "new" leader is defined as someone who was initially hired in the science center and museum field within the past three years.) Amyot was recognized for developing *Let's Talk Energy*, a multi-year initiative which explores the relationship between energy, the Canadian economy and the environment. The program reaches Canadians across the country through a range of activities including exhibitions, distance learning programs, school programs and kits, virtual exhibitions, social media programming, and lectures and workshops.

**Joanna Haas**, executive director, Kentucky Science Center, Louisville, was honored with the Leading Edge Award for Experienced Leadership in the Field. The jury recognized Haas for leading her institution (formerly known as the Louisville Science Center) to fulfill its role as the state science center of Kentucky and maximize its community engagement. A passionate advocate of giving all children the opportunity to become lifelong learners, Haas currently serves on the Executive Committee of ASTC's Board of Directors as Member-at-Large.

This year's Leading Edge Award jury was chaired by **Grant Troop**, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto; and its members included: **Erica Lacey**, Kirby Science Discovery Center, Sioux Falls, SD; **Steve Langsdorf**, Roto, Dublin, OH; **Janice Luth**, Exploration Place, The Sedgwick County Science and Discovery Center, Wichita, KS; **Keith Ostfeld**, Children's Museum of Houston, Texas; **Rae Ostman**, Sciencenter, Ithaca, NY; **Whitney Owens**, Great Lakes Science Center, Cleveland; **Len Soccolich**, Evidence Design, Brooklyn, NY; **Erik Stengler**, University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom; and **Charlie Walter**, New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, Albuquerque.

Winners receive an etched glass award and a complimentary registration to the subsequent year's ASTC Annual Conference. (The 2013 conference will be hosted by Explora, the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History, and the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science in Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 19-22.)

### **About ASTC**

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a global organization providing collective voice and professional support for science centers, museums, and related institutions, whose innovative approaches to science learning inspire people of all ages about the wonders and the meaning of science in their lives. Through strategic alliances and global partnerships, ASTC strives to increase awareness of the valuable contributions its members make to their communities and the field of informal STEM learning. Founded in 1973, ASTC now represents over 600 members in 45 countries, including 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. For more information about ASTC, or to find a science center near you, visit [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org).

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