



## The Future of Mississippi Is Here!

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### MS Science Festival Presented by C Spire to Celebrate STEM and Feature Apollo 13 Astronaut

**Jackson, Mississippi...** The **2017 Mississippi Science Fest (MSF)** presented by C Spire, launches September 22-23 in Jackson, Mississippi's **LeFleur Museum District (LMD)**. Leaders from all four museums of the LMD organized the event to showcase the Magnolia State's innovative **science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM)** industries and organizations!

LMD President and Executive Director of Mississippi Agriculture & Forestry Museum Aaron Rodgers states, "The LeFleur Museum District is incredibly excited to host the first annual Mississippi Science Fest. As educators, historians, and scientists, we feel it is exceedingly important to promote STEM initiatives and activities that inspire the next generation of Mississippi innovators, engineers and visionaries."

The Mississippi Science Fest aims to **engage students, families, adults and educators in a fun and interactive environment** providing **science education, workforce development and a glimpse into Mississippi's future**. MSF will offer special **exhibitors, events and programs** that celebrate STEM and illustrate the vital role that Mississippians serve in these fields.

STEM-themed field trips to each museum will be held on Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. That evening at 6 PM, **Apollo 13 Astronaut and Mississippi native**, Fred Haise will present our keynote address, open to the public, at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum. **A full schedule of activities for the festival and tickets can be found at [www.mssciencefest.org](http://www.mssciencefest.org)**. Tickets can also be purchased on the day of September 23rd at any participating museum.

C Spire, MSF's presenting sponsor, recognizes the importance of technology education and increasing Mississippi's digital literacy and technical workforce. "At C Spire, we believe that some of the world's brightest future scientists, engineers, mathematicians and creative thinkers will come from Mississippi," said Hu Meena, C Spire CEO. "That's why we are so excited to present our home state with a festival designed to encourage technology education and inspire our future workforce."

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## **INSPIRATION FOR THE MISSISSIPPI SCIENCE FESTIVAL**

In 2016, with support and assistance from The Franklin Institute, the Mississippi Children's Museum piloted the first Mississippi Science Fest. They hosted 23 exhibitors from across the state and saw over 600 visitors to the one-day event. Reflecting on the success, MCM President & CEO, Susan 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 have not had the opportunity to ever consider."

This year the festival has been significantly expanded to include events throughout the LMD, which includes the Mississippi Children's Museum, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum and the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum.

A study from the **Alliance for Science and Technology Research in America** (ASTRA) predicts an 11% increase in STEM job opportunities in Mississippi between 2015 and 2024. MSF and its partners believe it is vital for children and families to experience STEM education on a level that challenges and encourages them to explore further. The nationally regarded **Science Festival Alliance's** evaluation data illustrates the importance of festival attendees interacting with STEM professionals. This interaction dramatically increases interest and knowledge in science among attendees. MSF will also work to create opportunities for STEM professionals to gain exposure and become more deeply involved with their community.

### **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.

### **About C Spire and the C Spire Foundation**

C Spire is a diversified telecommunications and technology services company that provides world-class customer-inspired service and a superior comprehensive suite of wireless communications, high-speed Internet access and a range of other telecommunications products and services to consumers and businesses. The C Spire Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and its mission is to support STEM education that strengthens digital literacy, technology and professional skills development for students in grades K-12 and at institutions of higher learning in Mississippi.

For more information about C Spire or the C Spire Foundation, visit [www.cspire.com](http://www.cspire.com) or follow on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cspire](http://www.facebook.com/cspire) or Twitter at [www.twitter.com/cspire](http://www.twitter.com/cspire).