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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center's Teen Innovation Programs Engage Hartford and Danbury Youth in STEM Workforce Development

Teens develop exhibits and technological applications alongside scientists

Hartford, CT— June 22, 2015 — Teens in Hartford and Danbury will enjoy exciting opportunities in technological fields with high career potential through the Connecticut Science Center's Teen Innovation programs, expanding this summer at satellite locations in Hartford and Danbury.

Now in its fourth year, the program has expanded to include middle school as well as high school students, with the total number of participants climbing to more than 80 in 2015. In the program's first offsite expansion, both Hartford and Danbury students will complete programs based in robotics, with a group of Hartford teens also working in the genomic sciences. Students will develop educational programs, technological applications, and exhibits to share with Science Center visitors. Program participants in Hartford will work at the Science Center, as well as at an additional downtown location on Pratt Street, through an arrangement with the social entrepreneurship organization, Civic Mind. Danbury students will complete their projects at the Danbury Public Library and Hacker Space. Science Center STEM Educators will facilitate the 5- and 6-week programs at all three locations. Teens working in the genomics program will also engage with graduate students from the University of Connecticut's Center for Genome Innovation.

"Teen Innovation programs let teens experience science as working scientists and engineers do: they envision an exhibit or a robot challenge, then design, test, experiment, and redesign until they achieve the goal they set out to accomplish," said Hank Gruner, Vice President of Programs at the Connecticut Science Center. "Teen Innovation program participants are preparing themselves for careers in Connecticut's STEM workforce, which is essential to maintaining our place as a science and technology leader. It's also a great way for the Science Center to leverage the innovative capacity that the youth of today possess to influence our thinking about programs and exhibits. By connecting teens who are passionate about STEM with Science Center visitors and our community, Teen Innovation is helping spark interest among new generations of scientists and engineers."

The Science Center's Teen Innovation programs were launched in the summer of 2012 to bring together urban teens to learn STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) principles, gain work experience, engage in peer-to-peer mentoring and 21st century skill-building, and work alongside established scientists. Designed as a pipeline program, Teen Innovation engages students through their first year of college, with students returning each summer to complete progressively challenging projects. Beginning in their second year of participation, students are paid as interns. High-school age "ambassadors", who have completed several summers worth of programs, act as mentors for younger incoming "apprentices". In addition, ambassadors gain real-world job skills as they take on advanced tasks including project budgeting and research.

Over the course of the summer, the Science Center's Teen Innovators will design and program robots, create hands-on genomics exhibits, and design activities that engage the Science Center's diverse audiences. Students will interact directly with the public both at the Science Center and throughout downtown Hartford, presenting their projects and demonstrating how they're used as a way of developing their communications skills. In addition, Teen Innovation programs coincide with the Science Center's popular Summer Vacation Exploration Camps for children in grades 1 through 6. Teen Innovators will interact with younger campers, helping ignite their interest in STEM and showing them that discovery and exploration become even more exciting as they progress to new levels of understanding and achievement. After the summer programs end, participants will return to the Science Center during weekends and school vacations, when they will continue to share knowledge and inspire their peers.

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About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving nearly 2-million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries and a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is also the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful Professional Development for educators. More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.