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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Connecticut Science Center Announces Pixelmania Minecraft Tournament Winners** *Weekend event draws thousands of families to participate in Minecraft-themed Science activities and entertainment*

**Hartford, CT**, August 17, 2016 – The Connecticut Science Center is pleased to announce the winners of its first-ever Minecraft gaming competition, Pixelmania, featuring Pixelmania Shoutcaster “Solid Jake” Kulinski. A “Pixel Master” was named each day of the tournament with 12 year old Liam Bowers of Farmington taking home the trophy on Saturday, and 13 year-old Tom Gardiner of Waterford earning the prize on Sunday. Both winners received the grand prize of a party at their home with a luxury gaming bus, compliments of Rolling Video Games of New England, as well as prizes of limited-edition Pixelmania merchandise, prizes from Froyo Frozen Yogurt, SUBWAY™, and medals from previous rounds.

The tournaments took place on August 13 and 14 with more than 200 players, ages 7 to 15, competing in 6 rounds each day. 120 players advanced to the semi-finals, and 60 players advanced to the finals over the course of two days. The first round of the competition took place in the Discovery Center Labs on the ground level of the Science Center with players moving into the theater for results and to watch the semi-finalist competition live on the gigantic 36' screen in the 200 seat Maximilian E and Marion O. Hoffman Science Theater.

Players in the first round of the Pixelmania Tournament faced off in a build competition challenge to build the Connecticut Science Center’s iconic building. The creations were judged on creativity, most complete, most detailed, and best overall. Semifinalists competed in a Parkour challenge with the finalist competing in a survival challenge. A gallery of entries and a full winner’s list can be viewed at [www.ctsciencecenter.org/pixelmania](http://www.ctsciencecenter.org/pixelmania).

The event drew upwards of 6,000 people over the weekend to take part in Minecraft-inspired activities in the Science Center Galleries and the first-ever “Creepier Carnival” on the plaza. All of the Gallery activities were included free with General Admission or Science Center Membership and featured more than a dozen hands-on activities, as well as the Science Center exhibits and live science demonstrations. Some of the highlights in the galleries were a “Mining for Elements” scavenger hunt, Cubelets (programmable robotic blocks), a photo booth, and a gaming floor with more than 40 gaming stations. Guests were treated to appearances from Nickelodeon’s SpongeBob Squarepants, courtesy of Comcast, and Pikachu. Participants sharpened their survival skills by making working solar ovens from pizza boxes and exploring the Science Center’s Rooftop Garden with the “Survivalists Guide to Plants.” In addition, more than 400 Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts from across the region earned a special-edition square Pixelmania patch.

Several programs were presented by the Science Center’s Teen Innovation Ambassadors, sponsored by Bank of America. The teens presented popular activities including an Augmented Reality Sandbox, Brian Burst, and a giant Nintendo Controller fashioned from Makey Makey circuit boards. The Teen Innovation Ambassadors also served as a focus group for planning the tournament and assisted the tournament’s Lab Managers.

“This is the first time we have programmed our plaza with this amount of activity,” said Ed Lane, Director of Facilities at the Connecticut Science Center. “We are so pleased that it has been so well received. We are grateful for our partners at Riverfront Recapture for their support and guidance to help us maximize the public space around our building.”

The tournament and the event were produced by Tribune Events Group (TEG) in partnership with the Connecticut Science Center's "Minecraft Taskforce," a group of Science Center team members assembled across departments to execute the exciting event. The group planned and researched for months and designed the tournament so that players could experience all of the game modes.

"We are thrilled about the success of the first-ever Pixelmania event. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive," said John Bourdeaux, Vice President of Advancement at the Connecticut Science Center. "By using all of the unique spaces inside and outside of the Science Center, we were able to create a memorable, fun-filled day for Science Center guests, members, tournament players, and spectators." Bourdeaux added, "We are proud of the outstanding array of special programs developed by the Connecticut Science Center's programs team. The fun and engaging activities brought science concepts to life using the popular theme of Minecraft."

Minecraft fans will want to mark their calendars for Pixelmania 2017, August 12 and 13. Plans are underway to add programming and tournament prize sponsors. More information about Pixelmania 2017 will be announced in the coming months. To receive Pixelmania news and information, including information about early registration, Minecraft fans can sign up at <https://www.ctsciencecenter.org/about/newsletter/>. In addition, the Connecticut Science Center is welcoming event ideas and sponsorship inquiries for Pixelmania 2017 at [marketing@CTScienceCenter.org](mailto:marketing@CTScienceCenter.org).

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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 more than 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: [www.CTScienceCenter.org](http://www.CTScienceCenter.org) or 860.SCIENCE.

**About Jake Kulinski** Jake "SolidJakeGG" Kulinski is a professional video game commentator and personality. Since 2006 Jake has been working with video game competitions as a commentator, stage host, producer, director, and tournament administrator. Over the years Jake has worked with ESPN, Blizzard Entertainment, Major League Gaming, ESL, and other publishers or event organizers in the United States.