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**FLINT HILLS RESOURCES GENIUS STATION**

***Science geeks to spark a stroke of genius in children!***

***Geek Interactive Grand Opening, May 11 at 10:30 a.m.***

**HOUSTON (MAY 8, 2019)** – Even geniuses need tech support! The Children's Museum of Houston will debut the "**Flint Hills Resources Genius Station**" during a mind-blowing **"Geek" interactive game show at 10:30 a.m. this Saturday, May 11.** Inspired by Apple's "Genius Bar" and Best Buy's "Geek Squad," the Genius Station provides immediate answers to scientific questions by professional science educators (including two with Ph.D.'s), troubleshoots any scientific problem (even help with homework) and advances Museum-setting learning by customizing STEM-based interactions on children's interests and skill levels. It's science on wheels! No other children's museum in the nation is doing this right now!

Located in the Museum's *How Does It Work?* exhibit, the "Flint Hills Resources Genius Station" is staffed by a rotating team of "Geeks," including:

- Tammy Barette, who has a Ph.D. in biological and forensic anthropology and was an associate professor at Keystone College in Pennsylvania.
- Keith Ostfeld, who has a B.S. in biological science and hosts science segments on KPRC Channel 2 as "Mr. O."
- Gretchen Schmaltz, the Lead Geek, who has a B.S. in biology and more than a decade of experience facilitating educational programming for children and youth.
- Kendra Taylor, who has a Ph.D. in neuroscience and has conducted research on how neurons migrate to developing parts of the brain.

The Geeks are skilled at helping children understand complex science concepts. With a wide range of experiment options, Geeks pique children's interests with exhilarating activities which take learning to the next level. From questions about animal biology to electrical engineering, Geeks quickly assess a visitor's current knowledge and ask open-ended questions which encourage discovery and confidence.

"Learning is often founded in relationships where a safe environment is created to share, try new things, make mistakes and practice," Lead Geek Gretchen Schmaltz said. "As a Geek, I feel am able to cultivate these types of spaces and create special learning experiences for each child I meet."

Recent Geek investigations have included a set of activities on structural iridescence with visitors making bubbles, exploring the structure of peacock feathers and butterfly wings, and even painting iridescent nano-films on cards they could take home. Budding electrical engineers have produced electricity with hand-crank generators and built different kinds of circuits with the help of a Museum Geek.

**(more)**

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

There is ample evidence that many of the 215,000 Houston area children who attend HISD are not performing strongly with respect to meeting grade level standards for the knowledge of science and math, and in addition, are not performing well in reading, a keystone skill essential to STEM learning.

- Results of the 2015-18 STAAR tests indicate that the percentage of HISD students who have mastered or met grade level standards is at 37-percent for science, 43-percent for math, and 39-percent for reading.
- Additional results provided by HISD's Spring 2018 RESEARCH Educational Program Report, STAAR Grades 3 – 8, indicate test scores of African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are substantially lower than those of Anglos and Asian Americans, with results especially poor for students who are English Language Learners.
- These results indicate that roughly four in five students within HISD are not developing the knowledge and skills required for entry to the STEM fields and will need to be engaged in long-term, targeted interventions if their performance is to improve.

The Genius Station promotes a unique one-on-one, hands-on learning experience not possible in traditional classroom settings, exposes children to some STEM concepts far earlier than they would encounter them in the classroom, and offers a fun, interactive environment in which to learn. **It also provides parents with the understanding that they need not always have answers.** Geeks encourage parents to do STEM-related activities at home with their children, provide suggestions for activities to perform at home, and give advice regarding online videos and apps. The Geeks also volunteer to provide advice via email.

“With our team’s science and teaching expertise, we are able to offer a one-on-one service to the community which did not previously exist within the gallery at large,” Schmaltz said. “We can create experiences, conversations and special moments for children which may not have occurred had we not been present.”

## **GEEK INTERACTIVE GRAND OPENING, MAY 11 AT 10:30 A.M.**

On **Saturday, May 11, at 10:30 a.m.**, “Flint Hills Resources Genius Station” Geeks will be presented with three mystery boxes containing supplies they must use to create super cool Geeks science demos. The event will be modeled after 1960’s game shows with the intent to introduce Geeks to visitors and emphasize how science is accessible to everyone. **Media is invited to attend.**

## **ABOUT CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF HOUSTON**

TripSaavy’s 2018 Editor’s Choice Award “Best Family Attraction and Experience,” AAA 2018 Editor’s “Best Of Things To Do,” listed among *Forbes*, *LA Times* and *USA Today’s* “Best Children’s Museums in the U.S.,” TripAdvisor’s Certificate of Excellence “Hall of Fame,” Kids Out and About “Top 20 Places to Take Kids in Houston,” The Culture Trip’s “Top Museum and Landmark to Visit in Houston” and one of “Houston’s Must See Museums” by *Travel Channel*, the Children’s Museum of Houston is a Playground for Your Mind™. It is dedicated to transforming communities through innovative, child-centered learning with a vision to spark a passion for lifelong learning in all children. Founded in 1980 and housed in a whimsical building designed by internationally acclaimed architect Robert Venturi, the Children’s Museum of Houston offers a multitude of innovative exhibits and bilingual learning programs for kids ages birth to 12 years. The Museum serves more than 1,400,000 people annually and operates as a 501(c)(3) under the direction of a Board of Directors. For more information, please visit [www.cmhouston.org](http://www.cmhouston.org) or call (713) 522-1138. Can your mind come out to play?™

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