

# The COPUS Clarion

A monthly newsletter of the COPUS network Volume 2 Issue 5 May 2008

*The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) is a grassroots effort linking universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, advocacy groups, media, educators, government agencies, businesses, and industry in a peer network having as its goal a greater public understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.*

## The Year of Science 2009 is right around the corner - **How are you celebrating?**

*In the mid-1960s, America was awakened by the beeping of Sputnik, launched by the former Soviet Union. The nation was galvanized into action. Programs were established to attract students to scientific endeavors, and many scientists, engineers, technologists, and mathematicians—now of retirement age—were educated under the auspices of those Sputnik-generated programs. Investments in basic research soared, with widespread, intense support from the public. And the investments in science and in education paid high dividends. Today's Sputnik emits no sound, but it is just as ominous as the one launched a half-century ago.*

—Rita Colwell, *BioScience* editorial, 58:1

The Year of Science 2009 provides the scientific community with an opportunity to unify its voice, coordinate its message, and think strategically about new ways to engage the public in science... to respond to today's silent Sputnik: a complacency and lack of public engagement in scientific endeavors. By acting as a community—working together to strengthen our collective voice about the nature and process of science—we can rally the public in support of science, its research and findings. Your participation is critical to the success of these endeavors.

There are many ways that you can participate in Year of Science 2009; consider this list to get started:

**Add a Year of Science logo to your Web site, marketing materials, programs.** You can grab logos in two places on the COPUS site: <http://copusproject.org/newsroom.php/> or <http://www.copusproject.org/participate/index.php?globalnav=logos>

**Think about how to leverage what you are already doing to make Year of Science 2009 successful.**

How can you reframe an existing program to place more emphasis on the process and nature of science in 2009? How can you use that program to reach a new audience? How can you work with others in your community to leverage resources to improve promotion and accessibility of your events in 2009?

**Think locally, regionally, and nationally.** Encourage your organization's members, your community colleagues, and your local schools and community groups to register their organization, department, school, or business for participation in COPUS <http://www.copusproject.org/register>, expanding our communication network and our national presence.

**Draft a press release** about your organization's participation in Year of Science 2009 and share with local members of the media. (Don't forget to share it with COPUS Central so we can add it to the newsroom.)

**Think about how you can connect with the general public in your community in a new way in 2009.** Consider a nature walk, an open house in your lab, speaking at a local school or in the local library or even the local grocery store! Take the Science Café model and apply it in a new venue. Don't be afraid to keep it simple—a nature walk with a small unsuspecting group of park/zoo visitors may have more impact than a lecture hall full of eager science enthusiasts!

**Share your ideas** with colleagues and brainstorm new ways to get the message out about science! Get your brain in gear by checking out the recommendations on this page: <http://www.copusproject.org/yearofscience2009/suggestions.php>. Share your great ideas on the COPUS blog by contacting [spotter@copusproject.org](mailto:spotter@copusproject.org).

**Register your events** for 2009 in the COPUS Directory of Programs and Events. <http://www.copusproject.org/participate/> This same database will fuel the Year of Science 2009 database of programs and events on the public-oriented Web site that will debut this summer.

**Think about how you can use the monthly themes for 2009** to leverage what you are already doing and to help coordinate your activities with others. Review the themes online here [http://www.copusproject.org/yearofscience2009/themed\\_approach.php](http://www.copusproject.org/yearofscience2009/themed_approach.php)

### Quick Checklist for YoS09:

- Add logo to your Web site, marketing materials, event programs!
- Register all of your collaborating organizations and encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Draft a press release about your participation in YoS09 and why it matters.
- Plan an event to reach a new audience in 09
- Reach out to others in your community to work together.

# Featured Program: *Portal to the Public*

## Scientists engaging the public through a new 'Portal'

Lauren Russell and Crystal Clarity, Pacific Science Center

The Pacific Science Center puts science in a context and language that is relevant to our community. We connect experts in informal science communication with local scientists to bring current research into museum programs and facilitate face-to-face interactions between scientists and the public.

Take our annual Polar Science Weekend that occurs each March. Scientists from the University of Washington's Polar Science Center – including undergraduate and graduate students, staff researchers and professors, alongside members of the US Coast Guard – team up with science center staff to bring visitors a weekend of exciting, highly-interactive science.

To this end, graduate students use Silly Putty to describe how glaciers flow. Senior scientists share stories and perform demonstrations to explain how polar research, such as determining the thickness of sea ice, is conducted.

The success of this annual program inspired *Portal to the Public*, a nationwide, three-year collaborative initiative led by Pacific Science Center and funded by the National Science Foundation. The goal of *Portal to the Public* is to develop, research and disseminate a scalable program model that brings current science research to the public at informal science education organizations like Pacific Science Center. We've partnered with several other organizations in this initiative: Explora in Albuquerque, NM; the North Museum of Natural History and Science in Lancaster, PA; and the Institute for Learning Innovation in Annapolis, MD.

Now in our first project year, the three science centers are engaging local research organizations in partnership, delivering professional development experiences for scientists, and hosting public programs that bring scientists and the public together in rich interactions. The Institute for Learning Innovation is studying the initiative's impact on all parties—the scientists, the public and the informal science educators.

*Portal to the Public* intends to share its sustainable and scalable program model with other institutions to engage scientists and the public in face-to-face interactions that promote the appreciation and understanding of current scientific research.

<http://www.pacificsciencecenter.org/>



## PORTAL to the Public

### Welcome New Participants!

- Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture
- Emory College Center for Science Education
- Entomological Society of Canada
- Florida State University
- Informal Learning Experiences
- The League of Imaginary Scientists
- MIT Teacher Education Program
- Museum of Science, Boston
- Personal Genome Project
- PS 107 PTA Eco-Science Committee, Brooklyn, NY
- San Diego Science Festival
- Species Explorer
- Stern Communications
- University Corporation for Atmospheric Research



Questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact Sheri Potter at [spotter@copusproject.org](mailto:spotter@copusproject.org).

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