

2016 SCSC Science & Nature Conference Presenters

The Bakken Museum in Minneapolis is dedicated to inspiring a passion for science and its potential for social good. While most well known for their expertise in electricity and magnetism, the Bakken covers a wide range of topics designed to excite and intrigue audiences about science and all the possibilities that go with it.

Al Batt is a writer, speaker, storyteller and humorist. He is also a radio personality, book author, and columnist for newspapers and magazines. Al is an avid birder, writes cartoons and speaks all over the world. His mother thinks he is special.

Joanne Boettcher is a watershed scientist at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Eileen Campbell is a watershed scientist at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Dr. Tyronne E. Carter, “Dr. Fun,” is the director of marketing and curriculum design for America’s Fun Science, which offers hands-on science enrichment activities and STEM programs throughout the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. Tyronne is a licensed, experienced K-8 science teacher, licensed K-12 principal, and member of both the National Science Teachers Association and American Society for Engineering Education. He is also a certified STEM instructor through the University of Colorado Engineering School and the University of St. Thomas Engineering Education program. The goal of America’s Fun Science is to instill in students an interest and understanding of the world around them through fun, hands-on STEM activities including utilization of the engineering design process.

Grace Corbin is from Growing Green Hearts, LLC. Growing Green Hearts is all about creative science education and environmental STEM. Together they connect people with nature and play while problem-solving to love our planet’s shared resources.

Erik Davies is a “playworker” at the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in experiential education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Jordan Davis is a “playworker” at the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in experiential education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Heidi Ferris is from Growing Green Hearts, LLC. Growing Green Hearts is all about creative science education and environmental STEM. Together they connect people with nature and play while problem-solving to love our planet’s shared resources.

Alisha Flemming is a naturalist with the Prairie Ecology Bus Center and has a degree in natural resources. She loves helping learners of all ages explore the natural environment through hands-on activities and explorations to uncover the wild and secretive creatures of the woods.

James E. Gerholdt is the sole proprietor of The Remarkable Reptiles. He has been presenting programs since 1982 and worked in zoos for more than 26 years. James was one of the first zoo keepers hired by the Minnesota Zoo and worked there for more than 20 years. He also taught at the Science Museum of Minnesota for many years.

Dr. Bruce Giebink, “Bruce the Bug Guy,” is founder and manager of his own business, “The Bug Zone, LLC.” Bruce specializes in delivering a variety of educational programs about insects and related arthropods. After obtaining his doctorate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he accepted entomology positions at Michigan State University (1988 - 1990) and University of Minnesota Extension Service (1990 - 1999). Prior to founding “The Bug Zone, LLC” in 2000, Bruce coordinated pest management and water quality programs as an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota.

Brianne Hanson is a naturalist with the Prairie Ecology Bus Center and has a degree in environmental education. She loves helping learners of all ages explore the natural environment through hands-on activities and explorations to uncover the wild, gross and wonderful creatures in nature.

Lee Ann Landstrom is a retired director of Eastman Nature Center, Three Rivers Park District. She was an interpretive naturalist at Eastman and Dodge Nature Centers from 1980-2015 and a school-age instructor for the Science Museum of Minnesota. Lee Ann co-authored of the “Nature’s Yucky” award-winning non-fiction children’s book series.

Mad Science is the world’s leading science enrichment provider for children ages two through twelve. The spark imaginative learning through their interactive sessions on many STEM topics.

Minnesota Children’s Museum Educators bring the museum to your location for interactive classroom experiences. Their multi-sensory classes ignite imaginations and make learning fun!

The Minnesota Zoomobile and its team of trained naturalists travel to schools and community events throughout the state of Minnesota and beyond; providing an educational and entertaining environmental experience to a variety of audiences. Zoomobile naturalists use live animals, biological artifacts, theater techniques, storytelling and audience participation to create a dynamic, personal and fun program for all ages.

Rebecca Moen is an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry and Geology at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She will be accompanied by biochemistry lab students and assistants.

Jessie Petricka is a physics professor at Gustavus Adolphus College. His college physics majors will assist with the presentations.

James Rife is a professor in the chemistry and geology department at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where he has been on the faculty for more than 25 years. He has a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Jim has been doing service projects with elementary age students for many years. He will be accompanied by biochemistry lab students and assistants.

Erin Rupp has been an informal science educator for her adult life and a beekeeper for the past nine years. She founded Pollinate Minnesota in January 2015 to connect students and teachers of all ages to live honey bees and the science, policy and media story of pollinator decline. Erin loves experiential inquiry education, the Midwest, insects, and how the seemingly tiny work bees and other pollinators do connects directly to our role in ecosystems. She strives to teach in a way both second graders and state representatives can discover and understand. While incubating the programming that is now Pollinate Minnesota within the Minneapolis beekeeping business the Beez Kneez for three years, Erin experienced, along with two beekeepers, an acute pesticide kill of one of her Beez Kneez hives. She and others mobilized out of that experience and in 2014, helped to get two nationally unprecedented pollinator protection laws passed in Minnesota. Pollinate Minnesota continues this focus on pollinator advocacy and Erin works with municipalities and our state and region to become pollinator friendly.

Dr. Theresa Salerno teaches allied health chemistry and biochemistry at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is a biochemist and member of the chemistry and geology department. Terry will be accompanied by biochemistry lab students and assistants.

Melanie Schmidt is the youth development program coordinator for Mankato Area Public Schools' Community Education and Recreation Department. She also coaches speech and debate and presents at student conferences across the state.

Andrea Schneider is the owner and operator of I Know My Way, LLC, Orienteering USA (OUSA) Certified Coach Level I. By training, Andrea is a physicist and plastics engineer, but by passion an orienteering coach, who learned to read maps well before learning to read books. She started competitive orienteering at the age of eight, and has coached her sons, one on the U.S. National Junior team and one on the U.S. National team. Having enjoyed this sport for many years in the form of competition, mapping, teaching and coaching, Andrea recently founded I Know My Way, LLC, to bring the life skill of navigation to school curricula and field trips.

Science Museum of Minnesota educators are highly qualified instructors with varied backgrounds and specialties.

Melonie Shipman is "the Travelling Naturalist." Combine dressing up as a World War II soldier in the Aleutian Islands, working with Native culture-keepers at a seal harvest, leading nature hikes, sneaking up on shorebirds, presenting over 20 nature-related slide programs and you will have a small bit of her professional background and experience. Add to this her personal experiences with wild nature from the grey whales of Baja, Mexico to dog sledding vacations to sea kayaking expeditions in remote locations. Melonie brings a diverse and personal variety of firsthand information and stories to her programs.

Caleb, Stephanie and Ross Smith, STEM Bunnies founder and educators, teach kids about STEM while caring for and playing with rabbits in the classroom and homes. In the past year they have shared the program with more than 4,000 students in five states. Presenters are members of the Livestock Conservancy, Minnesota Science Teachers Association and American Rabbit Breeders Association. The youth presenters recently won 16 blue ribbons at the Minnesota State Fair competing against adults and professional breeders!

Art and Barb Straub are retired elementary school instructors who volunteer out of Henderson Feathers Mini Science Museum and the J. R. Brown Minnesota River Center in Henderson, Minnesota. They have been active in environmental education for 55 years and desire to share the fantastic natural phenology of the Minnesota River Valley with anyone who is interested.

Freya Thurmer is the executive director of the Prairie Ecology Bus Center and has a degree in agricultural education. She loves helping learners of all ages explore the natural environment through hands-on activities and learning how to feel at home in the natural world using traditional skills.

Jerry Wenzel retired in 2007 after teaching middle school life science for 35 years in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. He continues to inspire students with his science magic presentations in schools across Minnesota.

The Works is a museum in Bloomington, Minnesota, whose mission is to inspire the next generation of innovators, engineers and creative problem solvers. Dreams need doing, and exploring engineering gives a child the power to make stuff, break stuff and make it better! We need the imagination and skill of engineers to solve the problems and address the challenges of our modern world. Engineering fuels collaboration, persistence and problem solving; critical skills for every child from every walk of life. The Works Museum welcomes you to explore engineering and stretch your imagination. Their exhibits, programs and design challenges engage kids in science, technology and engineering and make learning memorable and fun. Learn more at www.theworks.org.