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Spotlight: COMPASS Outreach Grant Recipients Spring/Summer 2018

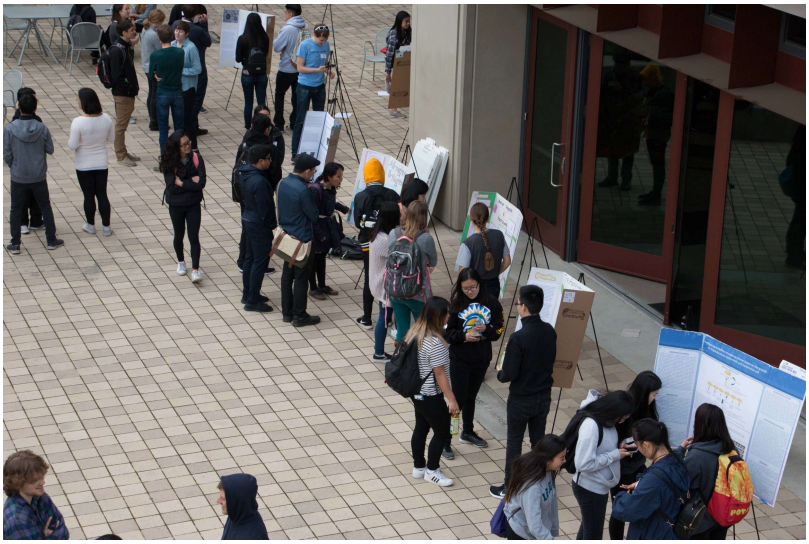
by Amanda Haage

Science is an endeavor that impacts everyone. The ultimate goal of science is the advancement of humankind, through exploration, medical technology, or conservation of our surroundings. Despite this overarching goal, much of the public remains uninvolved in the deep and confusing world of scientific research. It's our job as scientists to engage the public in our work; to shed light on what we do, explain how our efforts impact the greater community, and ultimately make a clear case as to why they should keep paying us to do it! To this end, the ASCB COMPASS Outreach subcommittee offers grants up to $1,000 for projects in public outreach. Detailed below are 12 recently funded projects.

Do you have an idea for an outreach activity within your local community? The next grant deadline is September 15 2018!

EdGE After-school Programs – The Maine Seacoast Mission is a program dedicated to serving the isolated eastern coast of Maine and accompanying islands. The EdGE after-school program provides a free service to many elementary schools in this area with innovative activities. Throughout April 2018 students were able to participate in a science program that introduced them to the scientific method, isolating DNA, and comparing both *Drosophila* and *C. elegans* under a microscope.

The FAST Program – Future Advancers of Science and Technology (FAST) is a partnership between Stanford University graduate students and Andrew Hill High School. Here, graduate students mentor upperclassman in the completion of a science project throughout the fall, with the goal of presenting their work at high school science fairs, the state science fair, and a symposium at Stanford University in the spring.



2nd Annual Charlottesville March for Science – Marches for science began across the world after the inaugural event on Earth Day 2017 (April 22) in Washington, DC. The purpose of the marches is a general promotion of science and how it impacts everyone's daily lives. This year's March for Science in Charlottesville, VA, included a family-oriented science fair and short 5-minute talks from students and faculty of the University of Virginia aimed at communicating to the public what these scientists do.

Sharon STEM Talks – Founded in April 2016, these Science Café style talks in Sharon, MA, have been going strong with ASCB COMPASS Outreach grant funding. They have hosted monthly talks for the general public, with topics ranging from epigenetics to astrophysics.

Making an Impact with Microbiology – This newly funded program just finished its first semester in spring 2018. Graduate students from the University of Colorado Boulder were able to visit two local high schools on a regular basis to conduct research experiments. Students were able to investigate tardigrades, gene expression, and their own microbiome.

Agarose gel with DNA bands. Students from Colorado High School Charter and Noel Community Arts School working the micropipettes to set up molecular biology experiments

REPU – The Research Experience Peruvian Undergraduate (REPU) Program organizes short research internships in Peru for undergraduate students interested in research. The students typically complete a 12-week internship at an international university under the supervision of a graduate student or postdoc. They recently started a REPU seminar at the end of the internship period, giving the undergraduates an opportunity to present their work and what they learned.

GO College – This program is an initiative between Erie (PA) Public Schools and Gannon University, aimed at prepping underserved high school students for a college career. Among other programs, such as tutors, career coaching, and financial aid application help, GO College offers immersive academic experiences. This summer, students got to use Foldscopes and look at samples collected from Lake Erie.

The COMPASS of Life Series – The brainchild of a University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill postdoc, this event encompasses lesson plans for scientists to use in elementary school classrooms on a variety of life science topics. Kits covering different topics will be created, including recorded videos, story lines with puppets, and prompts for a question and answer sessions. Scientists will then use these kits when they visit local elementary school classrooms.

Meet A Scientist Bar Nights – This is an expanding program out of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Over the summer, scientists attended the Ann Arbor Art Fair, wearing their "I'm a scientist, ask me about my research" t-shirts. Participating scientists have attended a number of workshops on science communication. This program will expand through the fall as scientists go to bars outside of the academic bubble of Ann Arbor with their t-shirt-based engagement.

Skype A Scientist – This well-loved and established program is expanding! Skype A Scientist pairs a scientist with a group of people, generally in a classroom, who want to know more about science in general and the scientist's particular area of expertise. They are always looking to add to their bank of participating scientists— you can sign up here!

Art in the Lab – Founded in 2015, this series of free workshops invites adults to complete an at-the-bench science experiment, reinterpreting the results as art. Works from all the events are displayed at an annual exhibition. This year, ASCB COMPASS funded a workshop on cell division and looking at the onion root tip.

Science/Art Collaboration in Georgia – Upcoming in October in Athens, GA, high school science students and artists will team up to create a piece of art to display to the greater Athens community. Students will get the chance to create their own pigment using chemistry that then will be incorporated in a collaborative work with a local artist. The student and the artist will then present their work to the local community during an art walk event.

About the Author:

Amanda Haage is a newly minted assistant professor at the University of North Dakota. She previously trained as a postdoctoral fellow in Guy Tanentzapf's Lab at the University of British Columbia and received her PhD in 2014 from Iowa State University in Ian Schneider's Lab. She is generally interested in how the microenvironment regulates cellular behavior as well as promoting diversity and inclusion in science. Twitter: @mandy_ridd and Email: amanda.haage@und.edu