

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Introducing Step Right Up! Science City Opens Brilliant New Exhibit,  
Courtesy of the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains***Tonganoxie Students Celebrate the Opening of Million-Dollar Exhibit They Inspired*

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Cheered by their families, teachers and hundreds of proud fans in the community via livestream, 12 students from [Tonganoxie Middle School](#) took the stage to unveil [Step Right Up!, Science City's newest exhibit](#). Today, the students experienced the \$1 million interactive exhibit inspired by their winning proposal in [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains](#).

“Seeing the students up there today — knowing all the changes they, their teachers and parents have had to navigate in the last year when it comes to their education — is a deeply moving experience,” says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO, Burns & McDonnell. “Investing in the next generation of STEM leaders is more important than ever. From discovering cures for diseases to inventing new technologies, STEM is critical to our future. That’s why we will never stop mentoring and why the Battle of the Brains program is so important.”

The [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains](#) is one of the nation’s most unique K-12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) competitions, with thousands of students competing to transform their idea into a permanent exhibit at Science City at Union Station. Since launching the program more than a decade ago, Burns & McDonnell has hired six former participants as full-time employee-owners in a range of STEM career paths such as CAD (computer-aided design) technology, environmental science and electrical engineering — and Kowalik hopes the trend continues.

In November 2019, the proposal from Tonganoxie Middle School edged out 840 entries from 270 schools. Since then, STEM professionals at Burns & McDonnell and Science City have donated more than 3,800 hours to designing, constructing and branding the exhibit. Regular update meetings were conducted via Zoom to keep students informed on all aspects of the project, and the team was able to visit the construction site.

“From engineers, designers, construction professionals and manufacturers, our students have explored a variety of STEM careers throughout this experience,” says Tracey Waldeier, teacher, Tonganoxie Middle School, whose team also earned a \$50,000 grant from the competition. “Thanks to our grant, we purchased equipment in support of a robotics program, and plan to allocate other funds for science projects and a greenhouse. We’re grateful this program doesn’t only benefit the Step Right Up! student team, but promotes STEM learning for our entire school.”

Step Right Up! is the sixth exhibit from the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains program at Science City. The vibrant exhibit explores STEM concepts through classic carnival games: The difference between winning and losing is in understanding probability, statistics, the laws of physics and your body’s natural

ability to connect sight and movements. Designed to help guests overcome the games' deception and learn to win, Step Right Up! contains 11 features, including:

- **KINETIC COLLISIONS** dares to see how high spheres can fly, where combining conservation of momentum and a transfer of energy provides visual insight into the startling effects of Isaac Newton's third law of motion.
- **ROLLER BOWLER** is where velocity and acceleration are the name of the game. Getting a ball over a hill and stopping it in a valley below requires just the right touch. Guests can try their hand in either of two lanes.
- **RAMP IT UP** tests visitors' readiness to turn potential energy into kinetic energy when they roll a ball up a ramp. Guests can attempt both lanes and see what it takes to make the adjustment to score with an obstacle in their path.
- **TRICK SHOT** gives visitors the opportunity to show off their basketball skills by using trajectories and force to score.
- **BOTTLE BALANCE** requires careful hand-eye coordination to stand up the bottles using only a fishing pole and line. Guests can attempt to stand up all three and adjust their strategy to win as each bottle has a different center of mass.
- **FUNHOUSE MIRRORS** invite guests to peer into a fascinating display of mirrors — including a showstopping mirrored ceiling — and demonstrate how the manipulation of reflected light can distort images.

"For more than a decade, the Battle of the Brains program has reached nearly 25,000 students from more than 55 school districts," says George Guastello, president and CEO, Union Station. "Our partnership with Burns & McDonnell and joint mission to spark an interest in STEM for students across our city is powerful for our schools, businesses and economy. These kids don't just win a competition, but the chance to experience an immersive, once-in-a-lifetime educational opportunity."

Over more than a decade, Burns & McDonnell has designed and built seven major exhibits that have transformed Science City. Thanks to Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains, Guastello says, the creativity of Kansas City area kids has inspired more than half of the nearly 100,000 square feet of the science center's interactive exhibit space.

"Especially in a time where so many gatherings and special occasions have been canceled, we've taken extra precautions today to safely celebrate these students' accomplishments with a small group of families, educators and STEM professionals who have supported and rooted for them along the way," Guastello says. "From providing virtual programming to creating a confident space for students to learn and find inspiration, I'm proud of how our internationally awarded Science City is always adapting to meet the needs of kids, families, caregivers and educators in our community."

With the new exhibit just hours old, Burns & McDonnell announces the launch of its sixth Battle of the Brains competition and Union Station officials are already in search of the perfect spot for the next student-inspired exhibit. In late 2018, Union Station formalized the science center's partnership with Burns & McDonnell — renaming it [Science City Powered by Burns & McDonnell](#) and bringing the total investment to more than \$8 million. The next Battle of the Brains competition will kick off this fall.

“The employee-owners at Burns & McDonnell are committed to inspiring and developing our future STEM professionals,” Kowalik says. “We’re passionate about supporting our city’s premier science center and helping kids discover the fun and meaningful opportunities found in STEM careers.”

To learn more about the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains competition and how schools can participate, visit [www.botbkc.com](http://www.botbkc.com).

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### **About Burns & McDonnell**

Burns & McDonnell is a family of companies bringing together an unmatched team of 7,600 engineers, construction professionals, architects, planners, technologists and scientists to design and build our critical infrastructure. With an integrated construction and design mindset, we offer full-service capabilities with more than 60 offices globally. Founded in 1898, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned and proud to be on *Fortune’s* list of 100 Best Companies to Work For. Learn how we are [designed to build](#).

### **About Science City**

Internationally awarded for “Visitor Experience” by ASTC and regionally awarded “Favorite Family Friendly Attraction” by Visit KC Visitors Choice Awards, Science City powered by Burns & McDonnell is named one of the country’s TOP 25 science centers. Annually, it educates and entertains hundreds of thousands of science-thirsty children of all ages, including the very youngest learners in its four new, expansive Early Learning additions. Kansas City’s Science Center is THE place for inquisitive young minds to create, explore, and experiment with the BIG world of science through hands-on learning and non-stop fun. Featuring over 300 interactive exhibits and host to countless STEM-based events — including the annual Greater Kansas City Science & Engineering Fair — Science City leads the region in recognition from educators, parents, caregivers AND children alike. Continually evolving and always inventing new ways to make science meaningful and fun, Science City has become THE regional destination for families, groups, special events and even “Science City On The Road” outreach. Union Station Members enjoy Science City visits free of charge. To learn more, please visit [ScienceCity.com](http://ScienceCity.com).