

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Judges Surprise Student Finalists in Kansas City's Largest STEM Competition *School-Bound Battle Buses Announce the Top 20 Finalists of the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains Competition*

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Crews from Burns & McDonnell and Science City boarded “battle buses” and drove to schools across the Greater Kansas City area to surprise students and teachers with exciting news — that they have been selected among the top 20 finalist teams in the [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains competition](#). More than 6,400 students entered Kansas City’s STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) competition, in which schools can win grant money and a chance to inspire the next \$1 million exhibit at [Science City](#).

Armed with everything from streamers and banners to megaphones and Silly String, the judges surprised the winners at their schools and hand-delivered invitations to the Battle of the Brains awards ceremony at Union Station in January.

“Nothing makes me more excited than seeing so many teachers and students excited about STEM,” says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO, Burns & McDonnell, who was part of the caravan traveling to 20 winning schools in the metro. “We rolled out an actual red carpet for them because their STEM accomplishments deserve the red carpet treatment.”

Each top 20 finalist team is guaranteed to win a piece of \$155,000 in grant money for the team’s school to use toward STEM education. The grand prize-winning team will receive a \$50,000 grant, along with the opportunity to work alongside STEM professionals from Burns & McDonnell and Science City to transform the winning idea into a \$1 million permanent exhibit at Science City. Over the past decade, students in the competition have inspired six exhibits now on display at Science City.

“More than 30,000 students have participated in Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains since we started the competition 10 years ago,” says [Julee Koncak](#), director of the Burns & McDonnell Foundation. “We’ve even hired former participants as interns and full-time employee-owners. To me, that shows the impact this competition can make in empowering students to pursue STEM careers, and that makes all the employee-owners at Burns & McDonnell incredibly excited.”

Battle of the Brains sparked participation across the metro area this year:

- 6,400 students
- 240 schools
- 750 submissions
- 50 school districts

The top 20 finalists in the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains, listed with their city and their exhibit title, are:

- Belton STAR Gifted Program, Belton, Missouri, “Inside the Sciences of Superheroes”
- Bonner Springs, Edwardsville, and Delaware Ridge Elementary schools, Edwardsville, Kansas, “Cyber Security Sleuths (C.S.S.)”
- Cordill-Mason Elementary School, Blue Springs, Missouri, “Earth Rocks!”
- Delta Woods Middle School, Lee’s Summit, Missouri, “Laser Lounge”
- Gordon Parks Elementary School, Kansas City, Missouri, “HIVE Alive!”
- Harmony Elementary School, Overland Park, Kansas, “Sports of All Sorts”
- Mill Creek Middle School, Lenexa, Kansas, “Fantastic Forensics”
- Moreland Ridge Middle School, Blue Springs, Missouri, “Project Planet”
- Northland Innovation Center, Gladstone, Missouri, “A World of Robotics”
- Olathe North High School, Olathe, Kansas, “Inside the Immune System!”
- Oxford Middle School, Overland Park, Kansas, “Laughter for Life”
- Oxford Middle School, Overland Park, Kansas, “Visible Vibrations”
- Platte City Middle School, Platte City, Missouri, “Circles of Light”
- Pleasant Ridge High School, Easton, Kansas, “Wacky Waves”
- Raytown Challenge, Kansas City, Missouri, “Expect the Unex-Spectrum”
- Raytown Challenge, Kansas City, Missouri, “Riveting Robotics”
- Shawnee Mission School District Northwest Enhanced Learning Program, Shawnee, Kansas, “Green Idea — A Pollution Solution!”
- St. Teresa’s Academy, Kansas City, Missouri, “Science of Sound”
- The Barstow School, Kansas City, Missouri, “Lights, Camera, Action! 2”
- Wolf Springs Elementary School, Bucyrus, Kansas, “Mission: Mars”

Judges — STEM professionals from Burns & McDonnell and Science City — followed a stringent evaluation process to rank entries according to specific criteria, ranging from creativity and inspiration to how interactive and engaging the exhibit could be for visitors.

“I’m so proud that amazing exhibits in our internationally awarded Science City have been designed by kids, for kids,” says George Guastello, president and CEO, Union Station. “This once-in-a-lifetime educational opportunity is powerful not only for the individual students and teachers, but also for our schools, businesses and economy.”

The public gets to weigh in for the final round of the judging process beginning Dec. 6. Everyone is invited to vote for their favorite entry by visiting botbkc.com. The public vote counts for 30% of the final selection. More than 50,000 votes were cast during the last competition. Online voting ends at 11:59 p.m. Dec. 17, 2021. The grand prize-winning team will be revealed at the awards ceremony on Jan. 19, 2022, at Union Station.

###

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. Founded in 1898 and working from more than 60 offices globally, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned. 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.