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**Step Right Up! Carnival-Inspired STEM Exhibit Earns Tonganoxie Middle School
Grand Prize in Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains**

Students to Work with STEM Pros to Design, Build \$1 Million Exhibit at Science City

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Step right up and meet the student team inspiring the next permanent exhibit at Science City. Organizers of Kansas City’s most beloved K-12 competition for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) presented Tonganoxie Middle School with the grand prize in [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains](#). The seven-student team’s carnival-themed exhibit earned the school \$50,000 in grant money and the opportunity to work with STEM professionals at Burns & McDonnell to transform the idea into a \$1 million exhibit at [Science City](#).

“For most people, carnivals are about games, rides and cotton candy,” says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO, Burns & McDonnell. “The team from Tonganoxie Middle School went a step further and uncovered the physics behind all of the fun. That’s the magic of STEM: It’s part of everything around us. Our hope is these ‘a-ha’ moments will make kids more curious about STEM and, ultimately, STEM careers.”

Tonganoxie Middle School’s exhibit explores STEM concepts through popular carnival games. While knocking down a pyramid of milk jugs may appear easy, these types of games are often difficult to win. Instead of skill or coordination, students spotlight how these games are based on the laws of physics. Learning the science behind carnival games helps increase the chances of winning.

Today, hundreds of students and teachers attended an awards ceremony at Union Station. Burns & McDonnell distributed more than \$155,000 in grant money among the [top 20 finalist teams](#). Each of the finalists received at least \$2,500, with the top five winners receiving the following grant amounts:

- Grand Prize: \$50,000 – “Step Right Up,” Tonganoxie Middle School, Tonganoxie School District
- Second Place: \$25,000 – “Color and Light District,” Olathe East High School, Olathe School District
- Third Place: \$20,000 – “Puzzling Patterns,” Wolf Springs Elementary, Blue Valley School District
- Fourth Place: \$15,000 – “Welcome to DenCITY!,” Delta Woods Middle School, Blue Springs School District
- Fifth Place: \$10,000 – “Backyard Explorers,” Alexander Doniphan Elementary, Liberty School District

The 20 finalist teams represented the top 2% of the exhibit submissions in a year that produced record participation:

- 840 proposals
- 7,250 students
- 270 schools



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- 50 school districts

Judges, comprised of 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 with visitors. More than 50,000 public votes were cast for the top 20 exhibits, accounting for 30% of the judging.

“We literally travel the world to find the most unique, memorable and engaging exhibits for our visitors to experience,” says George Guastello, president and CEO, Union Station. “Some of our most popular exhibits, however, continue to be those dreamed up by area kids — most not even old enough to drive. Yet, their imaginations are limitless and connect with us all, just like Tonganoxie Middle School’s STEM-focused carnival theme. I can’t wait to see it come to life at Science City.”

The exhibit inspired by Tonganoxie Middle School’s submission will be the sixth exhibit produced through Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains. Launched in 2011 with a goal of sparking greater interest in STEM education and careers, the competition has delivered five interactive exhibits at Science City, valued together at more than \$4 million: [Science of Energy](#), [Genetics: Unlock the Code](#), [Every Last Drop](#), [Simple Machines at Play](#) and [The Amazing Brain](#). In addition, Burns & McDonnell has invested in two additional exhibits: [Science on a Sphere](#) and the [Burns & McDonnell Engineerium](#). Over the last eight years, more than 25,000 metro students have participated in the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains.

About Burns & McDonnell

Founded by two entrepreneurs in 1898, Burns & McDonnell is a family of companies made up of 7,000 engineers, architects, construction professionals, scientists, consultants and innovators with offices across the country and throughout the world. We strive to create amazing success for our clients and amazing careers for our employee-owners. Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned and is proud to be on *Fortune’s* 2019 list of 100 Best Companies to Work For. For more information, visit burnsmcd.com.

About Science City, Kansas City’s Science Center

Internationally awarded for “Visitor Experience” by ASTC. Named one of the country’s TOP 25 science centers by Parents Magazine. And named “Attraction of the Year” in Heart of Kansas City Awards. Science City annually educates and entertains hundreds of thousands of science-thirsty children of all ages. Kansas City’s Science Center — opened in 1999 — is THE place for inquisitive young minds to create, explore, and experiment with the BIG world of science through hands-on learning and nonstop fun. Featuring over 200 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.