**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Who Inspired a New $1 Million Outdoor Exhibit at Kansas City’s Science Center?**

**An Elementary School Class, Winner of the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains**

*During the Grand Opening of Simple Machines At Play, Burns & McDonnell Launches the Next Battle of the Brains Competition*

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (May 2, 2017) – Nine elementary students led a marching band and nearly 500 of their classmates and teachers into the grand opening of [Science City’s](http://www.unionstation.org/sciencecity/attractions) first ever outdoor exhibit, Simple Machines At Play. The Mason Elementary students wanted their school with them to experience the interactive exhibit inspired by their winning proposal in the [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains](http://battleofthebrainskc.com/), one of the nation’s most unique K-12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) competitions.

“Seeing their faces light up when they see their classroom sketches transformed into a million dollar exhibit at one of the nation’s premiere science centers - is truly a moment I will never forget,” says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO, Burns & McDonnell. “It’s a privilege to be part of a process where children not only give STEM a chance – but discover it’s fun and cool. And they are treated like rock stars at their school!”

In November of 2015, the [proposal from Mason Elementary](http://hubs.ly/H07gYDT0) in Lee’s Summit, Missouri, edged out 510 entries from 210 schools. The students won the top prize: a $50,000 grant for their school to use for STEM education, plus the opportunity to work alongside Burns & McDonnell professionals to design and construct Simple Machines At Play.

“We didn’t just win a competition. We won a chance to experience a variety of STEM careers for more than a year,” says Jenny Reidlinger, a teacher at Mason Elementary. “We visited Burns & Mac and Science City multiple times to help shape the design and construction process. I have no doubt that there are future STEM professionals in my class thanks to Battle of the Brains.”

Simple Machines At Play is a 12,000-square-foot exhibit based on the six simple machines, or mechanical devices, that have transformed our world by letting us do more work with less effort. By changing direction and the amount of force applied, simple machines help lift, pull, push, turn, cut, split and fasten. The student-inspired exhibit features:

* **Lever Lift**, a beam that moves around a fixed point or fulcrum. It helps move a heavy load on one end when effort is applied to the other. Kids can test their strength by trying to lift a globe — one that others can sit in — using different ropes hanging from the beam.
* **Just Plane Zippy**, which has two exhilarating zip lines that double as inclined planes. Kids discover how applying force — in this case pushing off a platform — allows them to “zip” faster.
* **Acceleration Plane**, which invites kids to see how gravity works against friction by placing a variety of weighted wheels at the top of each ramp, then letting go.
* **The Wheel Deal**, demonstrating how a wheel and axle make work easier. When you apply force, a wheel rotates on an axle, reducing friction to make it easier to move an object.
* **Pulley Power**, featuring a rope looped around a wheel on an axle to pack a lot of power. By changing the direction of the force applied, you can lift a bowling ball with ease. Letting it go sends a tennis ball into the air.
* **Wedge It**, a unique climbing wall demonstrating how wedges help lift or separate objects with less effort. Here, your hands and feet also serve as wedges when climbing.
* **Screw Slider**, which lets kids discover the power behind the screws — the threads. The closer the threads, the easier it is to turn.
* **Luckey Climber**, a unique climbing structure that doubles as sculptural art. It spans three stories and provides expansive views of the entire space.

“One big reason Science City is so unique and internationally recognized is we’re turning to our customers - children, parents and educators - to help shape their own experiences. In this case, it was student inspiration that helped transform their dream into this wonderful, one-of-a-kind exhibit,” says George Guastello, president and CEO, Union Station.

Over the past nine years, Burns & McDonnell has invested nearly $6 million on six major exhibits that have transformed Science City. The Battle of the Brains competitions alone have attracted participation by 11,000 children from 50 area school districts.

“Children are learning as they explore, discover and create,” Guastello says. “These exhibits - inspired by their peers - all contain the essential elements of hands-on fun and play. From DNA to water and energy, the content areas of these experiences are importantly diverse. With the opening of *Simple Machines At Play*, we’re taking the next big step. And equally exciting is the news there’s even more to come!”

With the new exhibit just hours old, Burns & McDonnell announces the launch of its fourth Battle of the Brains competition in the Kansas City area.

“We are committed to inspiring and developing the next generation of STEM professionals,” Kowalik says. “From curing diseases to uncovering new technologies, STEM is critical to our future. That’s why we will never stop mentoring and inspiring the leaders of tomorrow.”

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

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