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PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE AND DALLAS AFTERSCHOOL TEAM UP TO PROVIDE 15,000 HANDS-ON *Wonder Kits*® FOR NORTH TEXAS KIDS AT SCHOOLS, NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THIS SUMMER

From renewable energy to bridge building, the fun and engaging Wonder Kits® – an extension of the Perot Museum’s TECH Truck program – are designed to help counter summer learning loss and spark interest in science and future STEM careers

DALLAS (July 20, 2021) – Summer learning loss has been prevalent for decades, but this year the problem is bigger, considering the tumultuous year young people faced with hybrid and remote learning. Science education – a challenging subject to teach, especially remotely – may have suffered the most.

To help counter the situation, the **Perot Museum of Nature and Science** has teamed up with nonprofit **Dallas Afterschool** to provide 15,000 hands-on *Wonder Kits*® through the Museum’s *TECH Truck* program which is dedicated to creating equitable access to high-quality educational resources. Thanks to a generous gift from **ExxonMobil**, the STEM-based *Wonder Kits*® allow children the opportunity to participate in highly engaging science activities and experiments. Created by Dallas Afterschool, the kits focus on building bridges and wind-powered cars, and are being distributed to schools, nonprofits and community organizations throughout the summer.

The driving force behind the Museum’s greatly expanded focus on outreach activities, including this partnership, is to spark children’s interest in science at an early age. The goal is to keep that interest burning so that careers in STEM are perceived as exciting and remain top of mind in young people.

“The pandemic pushed us to find new and innovative ways to reach children throughout North Texas, and that’s especially important as we face increased learning loss, particularly in the sciences,” said Dr. Linda Silver, Eugene McDermott Chief Executive Officer of the Perot Museum. “With many 21st-century careers requiring STEM skills, this joint effort with Dallas Afterschool delivers enriching learning experiences outside the classroom and beyond the Museum’s walls, while helping to better equip our future workforce in an increasingly competitive global market.”

The *Wonder Kits*® are filling a gap left when the pandemic hit, which forced *TECH Truck*’s science-on-wheels outreach to a halt. That meant a lot of kids were missing out, considering that in 2019 the Museum’s two *TECH Trucks* traveled across North Texas, delivering in-person activities and fun to more than 65,000 participants.

So the Museum pivoted to virtual programming for their outreach efforts but were looking to scale their efforts. They found a perfect fit in Dallas Afterschool, whose mission is to help working families by leveling the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds through increased quality and availability of out-of-school programming in Dallas County.

“We are thrilled to partner with the Perot Museum to bring our *Wonder Kits* to *even more* students in Dallas,” says Christina K. Hanger, CEO of Dallas Afterschool. “Our kits reinforce STEM skills in a fun and interactive way. We hope that by teaming up, we can help prevent further learning loss for children in our community.”

Designed for grades 3-5, the TEKS-aligned kits are delivered to schools, community and youth organizations in advance of a live virtual presentation led by Perot Museum *TECH Truck* educators. The session/science lesson takes approximately 45-60 minutes, during which students can build along with the educator, interact with participants and ask questions. They will also have an opportunity to test and redesign their creations

In addition to support from Dallas Afterschool and ExxonMobil, the Perot Museum is deeply grateful to the **U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)**, whose recent grant of nearly \$500,000 is helping fund the salaries of *TECH Truck* educators and virtual programming equipment.

And while virtual *TECH Truck* activities will continue to be offered on an ongoing basis, the Perot Museum is expected to hit the road with three *TECH Trucks* (another was recently purchased) making on-site presentations this fall.

For details on *Wonder Kits*® or to schedule a *TECH Truck* visit, contact 214.428.5555 ext. 8 or reserve@perotmuseum.org or go to perotmuseum.org.

NOTE: To obtain the news release, photos of the *TECH Truck* and *Wonder Kits*, please go to perotmuseum.org/press.

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About the Perot Museum of Nature and Science. A top cultural attraction in Dallas/Fort Worth and a Michelin Green Guide three-star destination, the Perot Museum of Nature and Science is a nonprofit educational organization located in the heart of Dallas, Texas. With a mission to inspire minds through nature and science, the Perot Museum delivers exciting, engaging and innovative visitor and outreach experiences through its education, exhibition, and research and collections programming for children, students, teachers, families and life-long learners. A trusted science resource for all of North Texas, the Museum is committed to preparing the next generation of STEM workers by supporting K-12 schools and educators through highly accessible programs. The 180,000-square-foot facility in Victory Park opened in December 2012 and is now recognized as the symbolic gateway to the Dallas Arts District. Future scientists, mathematicians and engineers will find inspiration and enlightenment through 11 permanent exhibit halls on five floors of public space; a children's museum; a flexible-space, traveling exhibition hall; and a theater. Designed by 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis Architects, the Victory Park museum has been lauded for its artistry and sustainability. To learn more, please visit perotmuseum.org.

About Dallas Afterschool. Dallas Afterschool is a nonprofit organization leading the charge to help working families and level the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds by increasing the quality and availability of out-of-school time programming in Dallas County. Dallas Afterschool provides vital support, training, and resources (including *Wonder Kits*®) to afterschool providers and helps parents find afterschool programs that meet their needs. More information is available at dallasafterschool.org.