

Discovering Earth and Space: Family Fun at Exploration Station

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The 2011 Fall Meeting started off with a bang (or at least a homemade construction paper rocket) at Exploration Station, a science exhibition geared toward children and families. This annual event, held on Sunday, 4 December, last year, featured members of the various AGU sections and focus groups who led interactive demonstrations on topics spanning the deep Earth to distant stars. The event was 4 hours long, free, and open to the public. Visitors made their way through 25 exhibits that offered a variety of easy, family friendly, and hands-on activities. Equally important, they had an opportunity to interact one-on-one with scientists and education specialists.

Exploration Station included the usual strong representation from the Space Physics and Aeronomy section as well as the

Planetary Sciences section. Members teamed up to create an eight-booth-long hands-on display about the electromagnetic spectrum, featuring an infrared camera that allowed students to see how heat can be visualized and an activity that measured the speed of light using marshmallows heated in microwaves; other exhibits included the ever popular inflatable Discovery Dome planetarium, where families viewed short movies on space exploration and extreme weather.

These Exploration Station regulars were joined by new booths with a geoscience focus, including one in which children played an Xbox Kinect game called Quake Catcher, developed by researchers at the University of California, San Diego. Other booths featured a weather and climate exhibit from the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR); a special kids' zone for the youngest visitors; and the first ever public reading of

The Wizard Who Saved The World, an inspiring book for kids on climate change mitigation by AGU member Jeffrey Bennett.

More than 300 attendees visited 2011's Exploration Station. On average, groups with children spent almost 2 hours at the event. Ninety-two percent of attendees gave the event either a four or a five on a five-point scale, with five being "really enjoyed." In addition, 79% of attendees said that they were "likely" or "very likely" to look up more information online or in books, based on something they saw at the event.

AGU's education and public outreach staff are committed to continuing to increase the size of both the exhibitor pool and the number of attendees at Exploration Station. If you are interested in joining us to share your science with the public, please contact Bethany Holm Adamec (see below) or Pranoti Asher (pasher@agu.org).

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