



CHILDREN'S SCIENCE CENTER VOLUNTEER AND EVENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is STEM?

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

What are MWOWs?

MWOW or "Museum Without Walls" programming was developed so that we could engage the community with hands-on activities and exhibits before the Children's Science Center even opened its doors. The objective of these activities and exhibits is to engage and excite children in STEM learning through the use of an educational, interactive, hands-on medium and to inform adult visitors about the importance of early STEM education and the efforts to establish the Children's Science Center in our local community. The activities and exhibits have a range of topics and are presented at various venues throughout Northern Virginia.

What are "Mobile Labs"?

Mobile Labs Family Science Nights are an extension of our MWOW programming geared toward bringing many of our MWOW activities to schools across Northern Virginia. They are two-hour evening programs that combine science learning and family bonding. They include hands-on activities that demonstrate a variety of scientific principles and make STEM learning fun, accessible, and more appealing to today's students. Exhibits and activities are most appropriate for students in Kindergarten through grade 6, align with the Virginia Standards of Science Learning, and are designed for parents to self-guide their students through each station. All supplies and equipment provided for twelve activities.

What are "Mini Labs"?

Mini Labs are a "mini" series of our popular "Mobile Labs" Family Science events that will be held at Fairfax County Public Libraries across Northern Virginia in summer 2013. Parents and caregivers should contact individual libraries regarding registration processes and recommended age levels.

What do Mobile Labs cost?

The cost is \$500 for up to 350 students. Title I schools are exempt from this fee.

What is required for a school to participate in Mobile Labs?

The Children's Science Center is a virtually 100% volunteer-run organization. Therefore we ask schools to provide adult volunteers to help staff the event. A minimum of 15 adult volunteers is required, although 30 volunteers are optimal. We also ask schools to provide 15 free-standing, six-foot tables.

When are Mobile Labs events held?

Mobile Labs are held on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday evenings from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. with an hour required for set up and another hour for clean up. That means the Children's Science Center will need access to the space (i.e., gym or cafeteria) from 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Why aren't Mobile Labs held during the day?

Mobile Labs Family Science Nights are intended to promote *family learning*. Research shows that when parents participate in their student's learning, children are more likely to retain an interest in STEM learning and pursue higher levels of education in STEM subjects. In addition, the Children's Science Center is almost entirely volunteer-run; therefore, our volunteers have limited daytime availability.

Are Mobile Labs open to the public?

No, Mobile Labs are open solely to children and families that attend the school at which it is held due to the cost associated with the event and the fact that the school is providing the funds for the event.

How do I get my school signed up for Mobile Labs?

Please see the requirements under "What is required for a school to participate in Mobile Labs?" and contact MuseumWithoutWalls@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org for more information.

How do I sign up to volunteer?

First, visit our [volunteer information webpage](#) to learn more about volunteering then next [fill out our Volunteer Candidate Information Form](#) on Volunteer Matters. This will give us an idea of in what capacity you want to volunteer and our New Volunteer Liaison will contact you. Finally, you can contact volunteer@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org with specific questions.

For which events can I sign up?

There are many events for which we need hands-on volunteers. Please check our [online calendar](#) and sign up for hands-on events on Volunteer Matters!

How do I sign up to volunteer for an event?

After you have filled out the Volunteer Candidate Information Form on Volunteer Matters, you will be given a username and password for the site. Please [sign in at Volunteer Matters](#) and click on "Volunteer". This will bring up a calendar detailing volunteer opportunities. Click on the date in which you are interested and, finally, click "Sign Up Now!" Then you're all set! If you have any questions, contact volunteer@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org.

How far in advance should I sign up to volunteer for a particular event?

We prefer to have our volunteers defined about a month prior to the event if it is possible - this ensures that we are adequately staffed for an event (and can assign individuals to particular stations). This means that we know the event will run smoothly and we can re-staff if we have any cancellations (sometimes we have last minute openings up to the day before and use a wait-list to fill these positions, but we try to avoid this if at all possible).

How many volunteers would you like/be able to handle per event?

The number of volunteers needed depends on the particular event. For MWOW events, it depends on the venue and length of event (generally anywhere between 7 and 30 volunteers are needed for multiple shifts). For Mobile Labs events, we generally look for 7-14 individuals (we also request that the school provides volunteers). For Mini Labs, we request 8 volunteers.

Do I need to be an expert to volunteer?

No need to be an Einstein (although we're open to that!). Volunteer training is provided either online or in person prior to the event date.

Do volunteers need to attend any training prior to the event?

Yes and no. For all events, volunteers receive a packet prior to the event explaining logistics, details, and the particular activity to which they are assigned. Importantly, some of the more complicated activities also have videos associated with them.

We are currently developing additional in-person training for our volunteers. Starting in fall 2013, a one time in-person training session will be required for all volunteers. The training sessions will be offered at least quarterly and offered at different times to try to accommodate all schedules. We are working hard to ensure that each volunteer has everything they need to provide the best experience for the visitors including providing a one-page Facilitator Guide for each activity that volunteers can bring along with them to the event(s).

Are volunteers expected to stay for the entire event? How long are volunteer shifts?

Yes, volunteers are expected to arrive and depart at the times for which they sign up. Sometimes events have more than one shift and volunteers are expected to stay for their entire shift. Volunteer shifts are generally 2-4 hours.

What other kinds of volunteer opportunities are there?

We have a number of volunteer positions - some that require hands-on time and others that can be done at home. There are generally positions available in the following: Museum without Walls, Education, Community Ambassador, Special Events, Marketing, Communications, Grant writing, Fundraising, and Administration. If you are interested in getting involved in another capacity, please e-mail volunteer@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org. These are advertised on the [online calendar](#) or e-mailed out periodically.

Can kids help? If so what age range?

Youth can help in some cases! For Mobile Labs and Mini Labs, we require volunteers to be 16 years of age or older and have the ability to transport themselves to and from the event. For MWOW events, we do have a limited number of openings for children 13-16, but a parent is expected to volunteer alongside in a parent/child "pair". We are also starting to develop additional opportunities for kids 16 and under - stay tuned!

Starting in the fall of 2013, we will have a special opportunity for students between the ages of 10-16. The Education Outreach Team invites Youth Leaders to be involved in Fusion Science Theater (FST). FST will debut at Mobile Labs events in the fall and students will be able to start steadily progressing to volunteering for opportunities that require increasingly more complex understanding of science content knowledge and audience interaction. Students will rehearse throughout the event year. The time commitment throughout the year will include one in-person meeting

each month on a Wednesday evening, periodic teleconference or web meetings as needed, and any Mobile Labs events for which they are scheduled to attend as a part of the FST program. Interested students should contact Cynthia Hurlbert (Education@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org) for more information.

Are there opportunities to sponsor events?

Yes. This is a great way for your business to show its support. We have two levels of sponsorships available with benefits associated for each level. To learn more, please contact Donations@TheChildrensScienceCenter.org.