TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2009

Pittsburgh continues to celebrate Darwin’s 200th birthday throughout the year! This month offers performances and activities at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, as well as new Spiral of Life murals at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium and the National Aviary.

Read on to learn about how Pittsburgh Public Schools have integrated Darwin2009 into their science curriculum.

Darwin Weekend at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

November 7 & 8

“How Bobby, the Rat-Catcher, Changed the World”
1:30 pm & 2:30 pm in the Theater

“You care for nothing but hunting, playing with dogs and catching rats!” said Robert Darwin to his young son, Charles Darwin. A storyteller acts out the tale of young Darwin, the curious boy who was nicknamed the “Rat-Catcher” for his rambunctious interest in the natural world. Hop aboard the HMS Beagle, and help

Ongoing Events

Darwin Weekend
Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh
Nov 7 & 8

Spiral of Life Murals
Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
National Aviary

Ask Darwin – The Darwin Synthetic Interview
Carnegie Science Center
Permanent exhibit, 4th floor

Our Cells, Our Selves planetarium show
Carnegie Science Center
Buhl Planetarium, call for show times

News

“If a Starfish Can Grow a New Arm, Why Can’t I?” new exhibit at the Carnegie Science Center

Pittsburgh Public Schools adopt Darwin2009 materials to teach evolution

Partnership in Education receives
Darwin observe the world's diverse life-forms and collect specimens!

In between performances, kids can create their own animals and other “treasures” or pieces of evidence that will let them discover life’s diversity and relatedness.

Learn more about the event

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New Spiral of Life Murals at the Pittsburgh Zoo and the National Aviary

Now Open

Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
Discovery Building in Kid’s Kingdom

Discover the evolution and relatedness of many different animal species in “Spiral of Life III: Animal Evolution.” Through a fun activity, answer a variety of questions about different animals. Does it have a backbone? Does it live in land or water? Then draw your favorite animal and find out where it fits in the mural’s evolutionary spiral!

Contact the Pittsburgh Zoo for admission, hours, directions and more info.

DNA and Evolution

What is the role of DNA in evolution? Where does variation come from? These and more questions are answered in “Spiral of Life IV: DNA and Evolution.” Originally exhibited during DNA Day of 2009 (April 25), the mural is now available as a poster that can be integrated into studies in DNA and
evolution.

To get a copy, please e-mail John Pollock at pollock@duq.edu.

**National Aviary**

Located near Penguin Point

Did you know that birds descend from dinosaurs? “Spiral of Life V: Bird Evolution” highlights the first appearance of birds almost 150 million years ago. Explore the lineage of kiwis, cardinals, penguins, eagles, birds of paradise and many more of our feathered friends while touring the National Aviary’s collection.

Contact the National Aviary for admission, hours, directions and more info.

Learn more about this innovative mural series.

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**Pittsburgh Public Schools adopt Darwin2009 teaching tools**

This September, the Pittsburgh Public School District integrated two Darwin2009 teaching resources into their 9th grade science curriculum: the Darwin Synthetic Interview software and Horse Feet Evolution Models. Both were added to the biology course to bring new and interactive dimension to studies in evolution.

The models add a 3-D experience to the 2-D drawings depicting horse evolution that were already being used in the course, while the Darwin Synthetic Interview allows students to go beyond reading about Charles
Darwin. The software format lets students have a virtual conversation with the naturalist about his life, career, likes and dislikes, the principle of evolution and much more.

The Partnership in Education donated copies of the Darwin Synthetic Interview DVD and lesson plans, while the school district purchased 30 sets of the horse feet models from our partner Jason Bannister of Mechanimal, Inc. Mechanimal is the 3-D modeling company that fabricated the horse feet. Both the Darwin SI and the horse feet models were first exhibited in the informal science setting of the Darwin2009 cultural institutions–Darwin Synthetic Interview at the Carnegie Science Center and horse feet models at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The adoption of these pieces into the formal curriculum of schools shows the potential for creative, interactive science education tools that can engage students, teachers and the public alike.

Learn more about Darwin SI and Horse Feet Evolution Models.

“If a Starfish Can Grow a New Arm, Why Can’t I?” at the Carnegie Science Center

Now Open

A new permanent installation at the Carnegie Science Center takes learning about tissue engineering to a whole new level. Headed by Joan Schanck of the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative (PTEI) and funded by a Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA), the multifaceted exhibit explores the field of tissue engineering through several interactive kiosks.

Highlights include interactive microscopes and puzzles, a cell structure diorama, animation, video
interviews with tissue engineering patients and scientists in the field, and even a quiz that addresses ethical questions.

The Partnership in Education collaborated with PTEI to create “Dr. Allevable’s Laboratory,” a kiosk with three video games that lets visitors interact with stem cells inside the body and direct them to grow new tissue. Also available to view upon request are the planetarium shows “Dr. Allevable’s Unbelievable Laboratory: Bone and Heart” and “Regenerobot and the Robot Science Fair,” both created by PTEI and the Partnership in Education.

Learn more about the exhibit.

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**Partnership receives funding from U.S. Department of Education**

This September, Dr. Pollock of Duquesne University received $285,000 in funds from the U.S. Department of Education for the Partnership in Education. Pennsylvania congressman Mike Doyle worked to secure the funding in the fiscal year 2009 Omnibus bill, (H.R. 1105). The funding will help the Partnership to continue to create planetarium shows, movies and other multimedia.

Since January 2009, Pollock has continued to receive funding from a SEPA grant ($250,000) and an associated ARRA Administrative supplement ($230,000), plus support from the John Templeton Foundation and UPMC Health Plan for a total of nearly $840,000.
Alumna – What are you doing now?

Amelia Possanza, improving science education in Ecuador

While I was a high school student I interned for the Partnership in Education during the Summer of 2007 and again in 2008 to work on the Darwin project. Since then I’ve gone off to Swarthmore College and discovered new projects that inspire me. Currently I am working for the Village Education Project (www.villageeducation.org), a non-profit that pays the full cost of secondary education for children living in Ecuador’s rural highlands. The Village Education Project offers a summer program taught by volunteers to bring students up to grade-level, and hopes to create a new secondary school in the rural highlands. I volunteered in Ecuador this past summer and worked with many of the students who receive the benefits of this organization. The students are highly motivated and eager to learn but unfortunately are not provided with the resources necessary for them to succeed in school. Back on campus I am at work on improving the curriculum for their summer program.

In addition to drawing on my experiences in Ecuador, I have also found that my experience working with a diverse group of talented individuals on the Darwin project has given me a multitude of ideas about how to make learning fun for kids. The Partnership in Education’s emphasis on presenting material in unique ways, such as through imagery and games, has really played into the way I design new lesson plans for the kids in Ecuador.
This project is funded by Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) award from the National Center for Research Resources, a component of the National Institutes of Health.