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NanoDays Shows Kids and Families the Value and Fun of Nanoscale Technology

(Source: KATC.com)

Learn about nanoscale science and technology during a nationwide festival celebrating the science of ultra-small matter. Two family friendly events will take place at the Highland Road Park Observatory on Saturday, March 24, and at the Louisiana Art & Science Museum, or LASM, on Saturday, March 31, as part of NanoDays, a national event of educational programs about nanoscale science and engineering. The event at the observatory is free of charge, but regular museum admission applies at the LASM.

When reduced to the width of a human hair or smaller, ordinary materials often take on extraordinary properties. For example, the iridescent colors in butterfly wings are not created by pigments but instead by tiny patterns on the wings. Similarly, tinted glass in old cathedrals was made by mixing different sizes of gold particles to create a wide variety of colors. But it is just now that we are beginning to understand these fascinating phenomena and their potential uses in everyday life. Nanotechnology promises advanced information processing and storage, new medical treatments, and much more.

NanoDays will feature several hands-on activities for children of all ages. Visitors will be able to see how big they are compared to nanoscale objects, understand how a scanning probe microscope allows scientists to explore the nanoworld, experience the effect of reducing the size of regular objects by trying to pour water out of a nano-cup and learn about nanomaterials used in the manufacture of stain-free clothes. Children and adults will also have a chance to build models of nanoscale structures, play with liquid crystals and make some fluids magically part in the middle by applying magnets to them.

In parallel with the demonstrations, public talks will provide overviews of the nanoscale world and the tools that allow individuals to "see" it. On Saturday, March 24, at 4 p.m. in the Highland Road Park Observatory, John DiTusa of LSU's Department of Physics & Astronomy will present "Nanomagnets as a path to new computers." On Saturday, March 31, at 2 p.m. in the LASM, Phillip Sprunger, also of LSU's Department of Physics & Astronomy, will present "Through the STM Looking-glass: Nanoland" at 2 p.m. LSU physicist Juana Moreno will display a "Scanning Tunneling Microscope" that measures the surface of objects at the atomic level several times during the day.

Faculty, students and staff from the LSU Center for Computation & Technology, or CCT; the LSU Department of Physics & Astronomy; the LSU Department of Chemistry; the Society of Physics Students; and the National Science Foundation-funded Louisiana Alliance for Simulation-Guided Materials Applications, or LA-SiGMA, are volunteering their time to make these events a success.

NanoDays, organized by the Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network, or NISE Net, takes place nationally March 24-April 1 at more than 200 science museums, research centers and universities across the country. For more information, visit the LSU Nanoscience & Nanotechnology website at http://www.pirealps.org/nano/ or contact Juana Moreno at moreno@lsu.edu.

Two family-friendly events:

Saturday, March 24, 2-6 p.m. at the Highland Road Park Observatory
Saturday, March 31, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Louisiana Arts & Science Museum

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