



Media Contact:
Kim Lehman
717-599-0891
kalehman@ptd.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHITAKER CENTER DROPS THE SLEDGEHAMMER TO ENHANCE STEM LEARNING FOR YOUTH IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

Whitaker Center Celebrates 20th Anniversary and Re-imagines the Future

Harrisburg, PA (August 27, 2019) — In celebration of its 20th Anniversary, Whitaker Center broke ground on its new STEM Design Studios with a sledgehammer event in Harsco Science Center today. The newly-designed studios will be the hub of Whitaker Center's educational programming, offering Girl Scout, Girls in STEM and Discovery Camp workshops. Additionally, the studios will feature Drop-in STEM labs which will be open to all patrons and include STEM activities including circuitry, K'NEX design challenges, iPad activities, Pre-K activities, 3D printing and introductory coding and robotics. The new STEM Design Studios are scheduled to open in early November 2019.

The recent STEM statistics are compelling. According to a research study posted on the Smithsonian website, by the end of 2018 2.4 million STEM jobs were projected to go unfilled. The same study revealed that between 2017 and 2027, the number of STEM jobs will grow 13 percent compared to 9 percent for non-STEM jobs. And since 1990, according to PEW Research Center, employment in STEM occupations has grown 79% - increasing from 9.7 million to 17.3 million.

"Our Education Department is not only excited about the renovated physical spaces for our guests, but also about the hands-on inquiry-based learning and curriculum programming that will be offered to our patrons and school groups," said Jessica Rice, Director of Education at Whitaker Center. "We have a wonderful opportunity to better prepare youth in our region for future STEM-related jobs and that is exciting."

"This new program promises to educate and encourage students to experience STEM-related activities," said Dauphin County Chairman Jeff Haste. "We're proud to support it with a \$125,000 tourism grant."

Commissioner Mike Pries agreed, "Whitaker Center has been and continues to be on the cutting edge offering programs unlike any other in our region."

"We applaud Whitaker Center for enhancing the programming at Harsco Science Center with imaginative, hands-on activities," added Commissioner George P. Hartwick, III.

"I couldn't be prouder of the significant impact we have made on the arts and science culture in the Central PA region for the past 20 years," said Ted Black, CEO of Whitaker Center. "Since we opened our doors, it has been our mission to continue re-imagining our future so we can stay relevant for our visitors. I am excited about what our future holds and the positive impact we will continue to make on the youth in our region as they experience our new STEM Design Studios and innovative arts and science programming."

- more -

Members of the community can help support STEM education in Central Pennsylvania by contributing to the “Operation Stuff Our STEM Studios” campaign beginning on August 27 through September 30. The Whitaker Center educational team has a goal of raising \$10,000 worth of supplies. For a complete list of individual supplies or to buy a “share” of a larger needed package, visit <https://www.whitakercenter.org/events/detail/operation-stuff-our-stem-studios>.

Black added, “We are grateful for the phenomenal corporate and community support for the STEM Design Studios including funding provided by the Dauphin County Commissioners, Vibra Healthcare, Très Bonne Année, and The Stabler Foundation.

For updates about the new STEM Design Studios, visit www.whitakercenter.org/stemdesignstudios or follow us on Facebook at Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts.

Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts is a non-profit center for the arts, education, entertainment and cultural enrichment located in the heart of Harrisburg’s vibrant downtown. Whitaker Center is home to Sunoco Performance Theater, Harsco Science Center and Select Medical Digital Cinema featuring a four story premium large format theater with a recently upgraded 4K laser projection system. Visit whitakercenter.org for a full list of events, shows, hours of operation, and ticket rates.

###