

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Burns & McDonnell, Union Station Crews Surprise Top 20 Student Finalist Teams in Kansas City's First STEM Competition**

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (Dec. 7, 2023) — Families who visit [Science City at Union Station](#) can step into the world of robotics, explore STEM concepts through carnival games or learn about the science of energy, along with other amazing experiences. Over the years these and many other exhibits at Science City were inspired by students who participated in the [Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains](#) competition, where schools compete for the chance to inspire a \$1 million exhibit.

Nearly 740 teams across the Greater Kansas City region submitted proposals as part of this year's Battle of the Brains K-12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) competition and on Thursday crews announced to students and teachers that judges selected their exhibit ideas as [top 20 finalists](#).

Carrying signs, banners and megaphones, representatives with Burns & McDonnell and Union Station boarded "battle buses" to surprise the finalist teams and hand students and teachers an invitation to the Jan. 23 awards ceremony at Union Station, where the winning exhibit will be revealed.

"Seeing so many young faces fired up about STEM is proof of the incredible impact the Battle of the Brains program is having on kids across KC," says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO of Burns & McDonnell. "Surprising these teams on top 20 day is one of the most special days."

Each top 20 finalist team is guaranteed to win a piece of over \$155,000 in grant money for the team's school to use toward STEM initiatives. The grand prize-winning team will receive a \$50,000 grant, along with the opportunity to work alongside STEM professionals from Burns & McDonnell and Science City to transform their winning idea into a permanent exhibit at Science City.

More than 6,800 students from 245 schools across 50 school districts participated in this year's competition. Judges — STEM professionals from Burns & McDonnell and Science City — followed a stringent evaluation process to rank entries according to specific criteria, ranging from creativity and inspiration to how interactive and engaging the exhibit could be for visitors.

These are the top 20 finalist teams listed in alphabetical order, in this year's Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains competition along with their exhibit title:

- STAR Gifted Program, Belton School District, "Food Undercover"
- Blue Springs South High School, Blue Springs School District, "System of a Sound"
- Cordill-Mason Elementary School, Blue Springs School District, "Watt's Light? A Bright Idea!"
- De Soto High School, USD 232, "The Green Zone"
- Delta Woods Middle School, Blue Springs School District, "ElectroMAGNIFICENT!"
- Delta Woods Middle School, Blue Springs School District, "Super Science!"

- Hillcrest Elementary School, Lawrence Public Schools, “Celestial Stops!”
- KCKPS Quest, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, “The Might of Flight”
- Lawrence Free State High School, Lawrence Public Schools, “Nature’s Blueprint: A World of Animal Architects”
- Lee’s Summit West High School, Lee’s Summit R-7 School District, “AirFaire”
- Lone Jack Elementary School, Lone Jack School District, “Mass Matters”
- Olathe East High School, Olathe Public Schools, “Catch the Wave”
- Oxford Middle School, Blue Valley Schools, “Busy Bugs”
- Pioneer Ridge Middle School, Independence School District, “Infinite Abilities”
- Pleasant Ridge High School, Easton School District, “Descending Discoveries”
- Prairie Star Elementary School, Blue Valley Schools, “Plant Power”
- Ridgeview Elementary School, Liberty Public Schools, “Artmazeum: A Colorful STEM Experience”
- Sni-A-Bar Elementary School, Grain Valley Schools, “Disaster Strikes”
- Timber Creek Elementary School, Blue Valley Schools, “The Spectacular Space Base”
- Turner High School, Turner School District, “Unveiling the Spectrum”

“This year’s competition had a near-record number of smart and imaginative entries — 740! — which is phenomenal,” says George Guastello, president and CEO of Union Station Kansas City. “And this is on top of what will be a record year for overall Science City attendance. Burns & McDonnell and their Battle of the Brains program has taken our world-class science center to heights that were once unimaginable, and that directly translates to more and more young minds being inspired by STEM opportunities and even careers. We can’t wait to launch the next fun, hands-on exhibit for families to enjoy.”

Since 2011, students who participated in the Battle of the Brains competition have inspired seven exhibits at Science City, including [Riveting Robots](#), which opened in August.

About Burns & McDonnell

Burns & McDonnell is a family of companies bringing together an unmatched team of more than 13,500 engineers, construction and craft professionals, architects, planners, technologists, and scientists to design and build our critical infrastructure. With an integrated construction and design mindset, we offer full-service capabilities. Founded in 1898 and working from 70 offices globally, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned. Learn how we are [designed to build](#).

About Science City

Centrally located in the heart of Kansas City and part of the historic and acclaimed Union Station complex, Science City boasts more than 325 interactive and static exhibits covering nearly 100,000 sq. ft. of inside and outdoor space. Internationally awarded for “Visitor Experience” by ASTC and regionally awarded “Favorite Family Friendly Attraction” by Visit KC Visitors Choice Awards, Science City powered by Burns & McDonnell is named one of the country’s TOP 25 science centers. Annually, it educates and entertains hundreds of thousands of science-thirsty children of all ages. Kansas City’s Science Center is THE place for inquisitive young minds to create, explore, and experiment with the BIG world of science through hands-on learning and non-stop fun. Visit SCIENCECITY.COM for details.