

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Science City Unveils New Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains Exhibit Exploring How Light Shapes Our World

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Science City at Union Station Kansas City proudly unveiled Light Lab, a more than \$1 million innovative exhibit inspired by students from Delta Woods Middle School in the Blue Springs School District. The latest winning concept from the Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains competition, Light Lab offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore how light shapes our world through interactive experiences.

The student team's proposal [took the top spot](#) out of 740 entries, earning the school a \$50,000 STEM grant and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to collaborate with professionals at [Science City](#) and [Burns & McDonnell](#) to design and build the concept into a permanent exhibit.

“These students put in an incredible amount of work to make this exhibit happen — from imagining a creative concept to collaborating on the design of the space at Science City, this process really showcases how student innovation drives meaningful change in STEM education,” says [Leslie M. Duke, chair and CEO of Burns & McDonnell](#). “Seeing their vision come to life and watching their faces light up at the grand opening was unforgettable.”

Light Lab spans almost 3,100 square feet on the ground floor of Science City and features nine interactive exhibit zones that explore the science, energy and creativity of light.

“Light Lab is a brilliant example of how student-led innovation can create real impact,” says George Guastello, president and CEO of Union Station Kansas City. “Thanks to our partnership with Burns & McDonnell, Science City continues to grow as a national leader in hands-on STEM education.”

With the addition of Light Lab, Burns & McDonnell has now designed and built eight large-scale, student-inspired exhibits at Science City, reimagining over half of the center's 100,000 square feet of interactive learning space. Together, these exhibits represent more than \$10 million in STEM investment.

“It's moments like today's grand opening that remind us why we started Battle of the Brains — to empower the next generation of STEM leaders,” says [Julee Koncak](#), director of the Burns & McDonnell Foundation. “I'm excited for kids to experience all the fun, unique exhibits within Light Lab.”

Battle of the Brains is one of the nation's most ambitious K-12 STEM programs. Participation has grown from 2,500 students in 2011 to 6,800 students in 2023. Since its inception, the competition has engaged over 38,000 students from schools across 50 districts.

“Our students were amazed to learn all the steps it takes to turn a concept into reality,” says Annalisa Stonner, science instructional coach in the Blue Springs School District. “From writing their proposal to working alongside architects, designers and construction professionals, this has been an amazing experience.”

Light Lab visitors can dive into nine experiences: Color Fusion, Vein Vision, Spectral Inspector, Cosmic Comms, Laser Quest, Refraction Action, Harness the Light, Vivid Van Glow and Silhouette Shuffle. Each zone offers unique opportunities to discover how light — and the electromagnetic spectrum — shapes our daily lives.

“We are incredibly grateful to the team at Burns & McDonnell for their continued support of STEM education throughout the Greater Kansas City Region,” says Dr. Bob Jerome, Superintendent of the Blue Springs School District. “The Battle of the Brains competition has served as a platform for inspiration and innovation for thousands of students and our school community always looks forward to the opportunity to compete. More importantly, the learning and growth experienced by our students at Delta Woods Middle School is one example of the amazing work happening daily in schools throughout our region.”

Jerome added, “Our students continue to excel, guided and supported by the outstanding teachers and staff throughout the BSSD. I’m excited for everyone to experience what our students have created.”

With Light Lab now open, Science City, in partnership with Burns & McDonnell, continues its mission as a leader in hands-on STEM education. The next Burns & McDonnell Battle of the Brains competition launches in July 2025, offering more students the chance to dream big and bring their ideas to life.

About Burns & McDonnell

Working from more than 75 offices around the world, Burns & McDonnell designs and builds critical infrastructure. Our family of companies — driven by engineers, construction professionals, architects, planners, technologists and scientists — delivers projects grounded in safety and a desire to make a difference as we make our clients successful. Founded in 1898, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned. [Learn more.](#)

About Science City



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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.