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Union Station's Science City Receives $167,000 Partnership Agreement to Expand Computer Science Education throughout Region

New Partnership with Code.org will work toward vision that every student in every school should have the opportunity to learn computer science, just like biology, chemistry or algebra

Kansas City, MO (December 13, 2017) Union Station officials today announced a recent and substantial partnership with Code.org, a non-profit dedicated to expanding nationwide participation in computer science education. This $167,000 agreement will fund the delivery of critical computer science training to regional K-12 educators for the next two years. This commitment also expands a site affiliate partnership with Science City that began in 2015 and further validates the priority both organizations put on meeting the rapidly growing demand for computer science qualified job seekers.

"Union Station's commitment to science education is deep and long-standing," George Guastello, Union Station president & CEO, said. "This regional partnership with Code.org is another great opportunity to expand science education accessibility for educators and extend our powerful reach. It also compliments programming we already have in place with classes such as ScienceWise and Fundamentals Coding."

Behind this new partnership are compelling statistics from Code.org:

-   Computing jobs are the #1 source of all new U.S. wages and represent 2/3rds of projected new STEM jobs.
-   Missouri currently has over 9,600 open/unfilled computing jobs with just over 1,100 computer science graduates. Kansas has nearly 2,700 open computing jobs with only 338 computer science graduates.
-   Only 14% of Missouri schools with Advanced Placement (AP) Class programs offered AP Computer Science courses in the 2015/2016 school year. That number drops to 10% of Kansas Schools with AP programs in the same year.

Currently neither Kansas nor Missouri require high schools to offer computer science content, even with 90% of all parents believing it's important that their children study computer science. In addition, neither state has curriculum standards for grades K-12 nor offer state funding for continuing education among educators who teach computer science. In fact, when computer science classes are offered, they are often taught by math, business or even history teachers with minimal computer science training.

"To affect an increase in the number of computer science graduates, students need to receive an integrated computer science curriculum that begins in elementary school and extends through high school," LeAnn Smith, Science City Director of STEM Programming & Outreach, said. "To accomplish that school districts are in need of a cohesive curriculum and trained educators to teach the varied components of the curriculum such as web and app development, programming and algorithms, and even cybersecurity."

As a regional partner site, Science City will offer Code.org Professional Learning Programs (PLP) extending its reach to K-12 educators throughout Kansas and Western Missouri. These programs will focus on *Computer Science Discoveries* geared towards grades 6-10 and *Computer Science Principles* for grades 9-12. Already in place since 2015 are free Code.org K-5 Computer Science Fundamentals Courses, which will continue to be presented through Science City's ScienceWise program.

"Regional businesses are taking note of what we're doing here at Science City," Jerry Baber, Union Station Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, said. "Through programs like Code.org, we're helping build a pipeline of qualified future employees for industries constantly searching for trained STEM applicants. That's powerful and compelling and fits perfectly into our core mission of science education. We're thrilled to be recognized by and partnering with Code.org on this important undertaking."

For more information on the FREE Code.org Professional Learning Programs and how to get your district involved please contact Emily Meyer at Code@UnionStation.org.

Union Station Kansas City -- a 501(c)3 non-profit organization -- is a 103-year-old historical landmark and celebrated civic asset renovated and reopened to the public in 1999. Recently selected as "Attraction of the Year", the organization -- dedicated to science education, celebration of community and preservation of history -- is home to Kansas City's internationally-awarded Science City; the new Arvin Gottlieb Planetarium; the Regnier Extreme Screen Theatre; the popular Model Railroad Experience; H&R Block City Stage featuring live theater, and a selection of unique shops and restaurants. Union Station is also home to prominent area civic organizations and businesses, and regularly hosts world-class traveling exhibitions. Awarded "Top Banquet Facilities in KC" by KC Business Journal, the facility regularly hosts community events and private celebrations of all sizes. Visit **WWW.UNIONSTATION.ORG** for details. Also, follow us on **FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM**, and **YOUTUBE.**

Science City, Kansas City's Science Center - Internationally awarded for "Visitor Experience" by ASTC and named one of the country's TOP 25 science centers, Science City annually educates and entertains hundreds of thousands of science-thirsty children of all ages. Kansas City's Science Center – opened in 1999 -- 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. Featuring over 200 interactive exhibits and host to countless STEM-based events -- including the annual Greater Kansas City Science & Engineering Fair -- Science City leads the region in recognition from educators, parents, caregivers AND children alike.

Code.org® is a non-profit dedicated to expanding access to computer science and increasing participation by women and underrepresented minorities. Our vision is that every student in every school should have the opportunity to learn computer science, just like biology, chemistry or algebra. Code.org organizes the annual Hour of Code campaign which has engaged 10% of all students in the world and provides the leading curriculum for K-12 computer science in the largest school districts in the United States. Code.org is supported by generous donors including Microsoft, Facebook, the Infosys Foundation, Google, Omidyar Network, and many more.