

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual sySTEMnow Conference

On October 20-21, 2009, the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual sySTEMnow Conference was held at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Downtown Campus and the Bradley Center. With the theme, "Transitions," this year's conference was presented by Gateway Technical College, Milwaukee area Technical College and Waukesha County Technical College.

Evolving from its original one day format to an exciting two day event, the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual sySTEMnow Conference boasted a pre-conference STEM Summit, STEM in Action tours, an evening banquet, nine stimulating breakout sessions and two keynote addresses.

With over 350 attendees from a wide variety of backgrounds including K-12 education, higher education, and STEM workforce, the sySTEMnow Conference continued to live up to its billing as Wisconsin's #1 forum for developing, promoting, and implementing STEM partnerships.

Engineers and Scientists of Milwaukee's Executive Director Van Walling and President Jerry Chudzik joined Business Journal Publisher Mark Sabljak as he presented the 2009 Excellence in STEM Awards (*The Stemmys*) to deserving recipients in the following categories:

- Education- The Southwest Academy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Excellence
- Partnership (Honorable Mention)- Urban Ecology Center and Milwaukee Public Schools
- Partnership- P&H Mining Equipment and Fritsche Middle School
- Individual- David Ruszkiewicz, MATC

Keynote speaker John Abele, Founder and Chairman of Boston Scientific and Chair of *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), took the stage following the awards and wowed the audience with an inspirational speech about the impact of technical advancements on history and the future.

"Technological advancement grows exponentially," explained Mr. Abele. "We learn more about our world in a day than someone 400 years ago learned in a lifetime." Mr. Abele emphasized the importance of cultivating these changes positively by enabling children to meet advancement head-on with programs like *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* LEGO® League.

Mike Gousha, Distinguished Fellow in Law and Public Policy at Marquette University Law School of Marquette University and contributing anchor and reporter at WISN-TV, began the second day of the conference by moderating a

stimulating panel discussion, Benchmarking Wisconsin's STEM Efforts+ featuring STEM experts from Iowa and Ohio.

Breakout sessions included:

- Headwaters: Building the Water Generation
- Diversifying STEM
- Reinventing Your STEM Career
- Project Lead The Way: The New Biomedical Sciences Curriculum
- Demystifying Science and Math: Keeping Kids Engaged & Interested in STEM
- The ROI for STEM Outreach Efforts: Quantifying Corporate Social Responsibility
- Milwaukee We Have a Solution: MPS Teachers Report from Space Camp
- Counseling: Providing Encouragement to Pursue STEM Careers
- Technical College Perspectives on STEM: Where are STEM Jobs and How Do You Get Them?

The conference's STEM Expo+included STEM exhibits like MATC's Virtual Milwaukee+and information on the region's top STEM colleges and universities. Attendees could also visit Generation STEM+and experience the efforts and enthusiasm of tomorrow's STEM workforce as the students showcased their involvement with *FIRST* robotics programs, Rube Goldberg Machine Contest, and Future City Competition.

Dr. Joan Prince, Vice-Chancellor at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee served as emcee during the afternoon general session. "STEM education is] a community effort,+Dr. Prince explained. "It's not about competition between schools or businesses, it's about collaboration.+

Governor Jim Doyle continued that thought with his keynote speech on Wisconsin and STEM. "We rank number four in the country when it comes to our STEM efforts but four can turn into forty real fast.+ Governor Doyle stressed how important it is for Wisconsin to continue making strides in STEM education- providing support for our teachers, offering affordable education to all those who want to learn, and encouraging the growth of technology and business in STEM to sustain the future workforce of Wisconsin.