

DISCOVERY EXPO COMMUNITY DAY

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Discovering the science of light and color with the ScienceBrite during the Discovery Expo. (Ueda Photography)

Brains, potatoes, space, robots - the Discovery Expo Community Day on Saturday October 19th had it all! From 10am-1pm, the Discovery Building on UW-Madison's campus hosted over 100 presenters sharing their science at over 40 unique hands-on exploration stations, with activities ranging from virtual reality, health and medicine, chemistry and physics demonstrations, and more!



Beesly, the Wisconsin Science Festival mascot, interacts with a robot from the Wisconsin Robotics exploration station. (Ueda Photography)

The Discovery Expo Community Day, presented in partnership with the Morgridge Institute for Research Community Engagement Team, was part of the statewide 2024 Wisconsin Science Festival: a weeklong celebration of science, art, and technology spanning 52 counties in Wisconsin. This year's theme was agriculture and highlighted the interconnectedness of agriculture within our state's economy, society, well-being, and the overall future of humanity through the lens of science, art, and technology.



Beesly learns about potatoes from the USDA and UW-Madison Horticulture hands-on station. (Morgan Ramsey)

The Discovery Expo featured presenters from not only the agriculture sector but also from across science disciplines and gave community members the opportunity to interact with science in unique ways. One station featured remote controlled robots while another taught guests to make a beaded bracelet that represented their initials in binary code. Visitors could jump from station to station learning how potatoes grow, interacting with live calves, holding a model (or a real) brain, exploring archeological finds, and so much more. A presenter added, "it was super fun to engage with the community and share our science! I also loved seeing all of the other interesting science happening on-campus and around Madison." With a wide variety of disciplines showcased, there was something for everyone and endless possibilities to learn something new, even for experienced scientists.



Guests experience hands-on discovery of biology and organs at the Discovery Expo Community Day. (Morgan Ramsey)

One of the stations highlighted archaeology and gave community members the opportunity to interact with an artifact exploration activity. An anthropology student presenting their work explains "it was such a wonderful experience to interact with the community and share our knowledge of archaeology. I loved seeing the excitement on kids' faces as they handled artifacts and learned about what archaeologists do." Another presenter with the Wisconsin West Rocket Club describes how, "[their] presenters had a wonderful time sharing their passion for science with the community. It was so fun to see all of their smiling faces when launching their rockets!" Unique experiences offering hands-on science like this to children, families, and all lifelong learners are the focus of the Discovery Expo.



Bucky and Bassam Shkhashiri demonstrate the wonders of science during *Celebrating the Joy of Science and the Arts with Bassam Shkhashiri and Friends*. (Ueda Photography)

The Discovery Expo Community Day was followed by *Celebrating the Joy of Science and the Arts with Bassam Shkhashiri and Friends*. The show featured live science experiments that wowed audiences of all ages and included special guests Bucky Badger and Beesly - the Wisconsin Science Festival honey bee mascot! Bassam created the show to foster public awareness and appreciation of science and art through engaging demonstrations - blending art, science experiments, explanations, and music. Bassam Shkhashiri, an original visionary behind the Wisconsin Science Festival, is a retired UW-Madison Chemistry professor who was known for his colorful and entertaining chemistry demonstrations, including an annual Christmas science presentation. The Wisconsin Science Festival was honored to host one of his famous shows this year.



A young attendee uses a microscope to get a closer look at biological samples. (Ueda Photography)

Overall, the 14th Wisconsin Science Festival and the Discovery Expo Community Day were very successful events, bringing scientists and the community together to explore and engage with science, art, and technology in our state. We are already looking forward to next year's festival and hope to see you there in 2025!