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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Think Make Create mobile makerspaces deploying statewide

BOISE, Idaho (May 12, 2021) — The Idaho Out-Of-School Network and University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development are deploying 12 mobile, pop-up makerspace trailers in rural and underserved communities with help from the Idaho STEM Action Center, Idaho State Department of Education, Idaho Division of Career & Technical Education, Gizmo-CDA, and private partners.

The collaboration unveiled its first five trailers, called Think Make Create Labs, at the Caldwell YMCA yesterday. The Treasure Valley YMCA is one of four organizations in the region and among 12 throughout Idaho receiving a fully stocked TMC Lab. Four trailers are bound for North Idaho, two are headed to Eastern Idaho, and one is headed to the Magic Valley along with a box truck that's been converted to a TMC-branded mobile makerspace. And there is sponsor interest in finding at least four more communities for labs.

Project leaders emphasized it would not be possible without generous assistance from private partners, such as Battelle Energy Alliance, Micron, Optum Idaho, Sparklight, and TrailersPlus.

Claire Sponseller, the UI Extension's 4-H STEM area extension educator, said the Think Make Create Labs are equipped with hands-on making supplies and tools that allow kids to explore STEM concepts, collaborate, and problem solve. She said the Idaho effort licensed the Think Make Create concept from Beyond School Bells, Nebraska's statewide after-school network.

"The hands-on, flexible nature of these new mobile makerspaces allow kids to get in there and explore," Sponseller said. "We really want kids to experience what it means to play and tinker and experiment and fail and try again, and the Think Make Create Labs will create great opportunities for kids to get excited and test out and see what STEM is all about."

Idaho Out-Of-School Network director Anna Almerico said this summer the mobile makerspaces will engage more than 3,000 children in rural and underserved communities.

“Our emphasis with the Think Make Create program is to help communities that don’t have much access to quality STEM education,” Almerico said. “We’re trying to increase access so Idaho kids can get the best education possible regardless of where they live.”

She anticipates the first dozen TMC Labs will serve at least 8,000 youth within a year of being deployed.

The Think Make Create Lab project is the Idaho STEM EcosySTEM’s first official initiative. According to STEM Action Center interim executive director Dr. Kaitlin Maguire, the project sprang from a chance encounter between Almerico and Sponseller at the group’s first convening in January 2020.

“It’s exciting to see how a network like the Idaho STEM EcosySTEM can be so powerful,” Dr. Maguire said. “In this instance, we had a couple people who just happened to be sitting next to each other at a conference talking about ideas and they came up with one that will benefit students across the state. And we have a variety of partners in the network who realized the value of the project and were able to help make their vision a reality.”

The Idaho STEM EcosySTEM is a network of partners from PreK-12 and higher education, out-of-school educators, business and industry, nonprofits, state agencies, and legislators, with the Idaho STEM Action Center serving as the backbone organization. It works to build awareness of and ensure equitable access to science, technology, engineering, and math education opportunities and careers. It also seeks to align STEM education with Idaho’s current and future workforce needs, create successful metrics for STEM education and programming, and build momentum for STEM within the state and nationally.

Dr. Maguire said STEM knowledge and skills are important to Idaho’s future, because they’re needed for critical and creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration.

“Nineteen of Idaho’s 20 hot jobs through 2026 require STEM skills, and STEM jobs pay about twice as much as non-STEM jobs,” she said. “Among Idaho parents who were surveyed, 99 percent believe STEM skills will play an important role in the future, and within a decade 90 percent of jobs will require digital literacy.”

About the Idaho Out-Of-School Network

The Idaho Out-of-School Network, or ION for short, seeks to ensure Idaho’s youth have access to high-quality out-of-school programs. It was founded in 2014, although the organization has roots that began in 2006 when Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne established the Idaho AfterSchool Alliance. Thanks to a grant from the C.S.Mott Foundation that is matched by Idaho dollars, ION continues to do its important work. In 2017, the network changed its name from Idaho AfterSchool Network to Idaho Out-of-School Network to better reflect the nature of its work. Visit idahooutofschool.org for more details.

About University of Idaho Extension

University of Idaho Extension provides reliable, research-based education and information to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future. Through its statewide network of faculty and staff in 42 counties, three federally recognized tribes, and nine College of Agricultural and Life Sciences research and extension centers, UI Extension works to transform knowledge into solutions that work. It focuses on contemporary topics, including small and large-scale sustainable agriculture, home horticulture, natural resources, health and nutrition, food safety, personal financial management, and youth and community development. Visit uidaho.edu/extension for more details.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase equitable access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit STEM.idaho.gov for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.

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Think Make Create Lab mobile makerspace fleet deployment

EASTERN IDAHO

TMC Lab #2 — This lab is in the final build-out stage by middle and secondary school students with the American Indian Services PREP program in Fort Hall. Gooding High Skills USA students led woodworking and materials preparation. K-6 youth on the **Shoshone-Bannock Reservation** will begin using it in June. Battelle Energy Alliance is the lead partner for this lab.

TMC Lab #12 — The Bannock County Extension 4-H program is hosting this lab and will base its operations out of **Pocatello**. Sparklight is the lead partner for it.

NORTH IDAHO

TMC Lab #6 — The **Coeur d'Alene Reservation** Extension 4-H program is building this lab, and Optum Idaho is the lead partner for this lab.

TMC Lab #9 — The **Boys and Girls Clubs of the Lewis-Clark Valley** will be stocking and using their TMC lab in early June. Lewiston High Schools Skills USA is currently constructing and building out the trailer.

TMC Lab #10 — The **Lapwai-based UI Extension 4-H program** servicing Orofino, Kamiah, and the Nez Perce Reservation will begin using this lab in June. Lewiston High School Skills USA is building the unit. Optum Idaho is the lead partner for this lab.

TMC Lab #11 — Youth participating in a summer program for middle-school girls will build this lab in Coeur d'Alene at **Gizmo-CdA**. The unit will service communities throughout North Idaho. Optum Idaho is sponsoring the lab.

SOUTHERN IDAHO

TMC Lab #3 — The **Boys and Girls Clubs of Magic Valley** will have a fully stocked TMC lab by launch day to serve the Twin Falls area. One Stone High School in Boise helped conduct the woodworking required for the unit. Battelle Energy Alliance is the lead partner for the lab.

TMC Lab #7 — The **Children's Museum of Magic Valley** has recently launched its first direct programming with the help of TMC labs. This lab is set up inside a box truck rather than a trailer. Gooding High School Skills USA program assisted with woodworking and materials preparation. Battelle Energy Alliance is the lead partner for this lab.

SOUTHWEST IDAHO

TMC Lab #1 — The University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development Program owns the Idaho's pilot TMC trailer. Gizmo-CDA built the unit last September, and it is now being used by

TMC staff and trainers. It is based out of the **UI Extension's Ada County Extension Office** also available for use by groups statewide for youth STEM engagement upon request.

TMC Lab #4 — Ridgevue High School in Nampa completed the exterior graphic design for this lab, and One Stone High School in Boise led the interior build-out. By launch date, the **Treasure Valley Family YMCA** will be trained and ready to take over operations from TMC staff. Caldwell youth will be able to use the lab for the first time at the launch event. Micron Technology is the lead partner for this lab.

TMC Lab #5 — The **UI Extension's Canyon County Extension 4-H program and Sacajawea Community School** are both hosting this lab in the Nampa area. The unit will be available for community events across Canyon County upon arrangement with the hosts. The students at One Stone High School in Boise led the full build-out. Micron Technology is the lead partner for this lab.

TMC Lab #8 — The **Boys and Girls Club of Payette** will receive its TMC lab June 1. Optum Idaho is the lead partner for this unit.

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