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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **STEM Matters morphs to monthlong celebration throughout February**

*Idaho Governor declares February 2023 STEM Matters Month*

BOISE, Idaho (Feb. 3, 2023) — In its eighth year, STEM Matters has morphed from a one-day celebration at the Idaho State Capitol to a weeklong virtual event during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to a monthlong statewide celebration during February 2023.

Idaho STEM Action Center hosted a kickoff at Trailhead, a Boise co-working space for entrepreneurs and business professionals, Wednesday where Idaho Gov. Brad Little read his proclamation declaring February STEM Matters Month.

“In our ever-changing economy, Idaho STEM Action Center is uniquely situated to connect young Idahoans with the education and training our industry leaders want in a workforce,” Gov. Little said. “From logging to computer science, mining to healthcare, or teaching to business, the skills that STEM education fosters will propel Idaho students into high-paying, meaningful careers.”

Other state and business leaders were in attendance and discussed the importance of STEM education in today’s technology- and knowledge-based economy.

“Here is why STEM really matters: INL conducts world-class research, but to continue making scientific breakthroughs, we need to prepare a STEM workforce for the future,” Jennifer Jackson, STEM education and early workforce development program manager at INL and chair of the STEM Action Center board, said. “Our partners all over the state also need a STEM prepared workforce. Idaho’s economy depends on it. STEM education is an essential early workforce development strategy for Idaho.”

Deni Hoehne, director of talent development at WinCo Foods and chair of the Idaho Workforce Development Council, concurred, emphasizing STEM is everywhere.

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“Every job is a STEM job,” Hoehne said. “And the 37 members of the council constantly talk about that every time we’re together — what can we also be doing and thinking about STEM? For example, I am in the retail grocery industry. Do you know that the cart clerk operates a robot? The manager of a grocery store uses probably five different pieces of software just to get the products on the shelf right. The space planning department uses geometry constantly to figure out how many gelatin boxes can really fit if we also add some pudding there. It’s all about geometry. If you want to teach your kids STEM, go to the grocery store. It’s right there in front of them every day.”

Tiam Rastegar, Trailhead’s CEO and executive director and co-chair of Boise Entrepreneur Week, Idaho’s largest entrepreneur-focused event, said its partnership with Idaho STEM Action Center is crucial to the event’s Youth Innovation Challenge. The competition tasks students with proposing solutions to real-world problem statements BEW has sourced from its community partners, including local business and community leaders.

“I really wanted to take this opportunity to bring to life what STEM really means to Trailhead: It’s about planting seeds,” Rastegar said. “These are our future entrepreneurs who will help us build businesses right here in Idaho.”

STEM Action Center executive director Caty Solace said early STEM education is paramount.

“The ‘action’ that the STEM Action Center is all about is that long game,” Solace said. “Looking at Idaho’s youth and saying, ‘Okay, how do we spark excitement about the world of work for them tomorrow?’”

Watch a stream of the event at [www.youtube.com/live/YqWF2qT58jc?feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/live/YqWF2qT58jc?feature=share) courtesy of Idaho Public Television.

As part of STEM Matters Month, Idaho STEM Action Center is hosting virtual discussions with leading employers and helping spotlight other events statewide that highlight careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. Visit [stem.idaho.gov/stem-matters](https://stem.idaho.gov/stem-matters) for more details about the events happening during STEM Matters Month.

According to Solace, STEM knowledge and skills are important to the future of Idaho.

“STEM learning helps students develop creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration skills,” she said. “These durable skills are in high demand by Idaho employers that want to solve problems in our communities and beyond.”

Solace said STEM jobs in Idaho are projected to grow 15.4 percent by 2030, outpacing the national average of STEM job growth at 10 percent, and that 90 percent of jobs will require digital literacy within a decade.

“STEM jobs are incredibly interesting and include careers in healthcare, engineering, software development, finance, agriculture, and construction,” she said. “In addition to being personally rewarding, they’re financially rewarding, too, with STEM jobs paying nearly twice as much as non-STEM jobs.”

Participants are encouraged to use the hashtag #STEMMattersIdaho when posting about STEM Matters Month to social media, as well as #Idaho and #STEM.

### ***About Idaho STEM Action Center***

Idaho STEM Action Center is an education and growth catalyst helping educators, businesses, families, and communities prepare the workforce of tomorrow. An incubator, connector, and advocate of STEM thinking and initiatives, the agency provides resources, support, and problem solving that spark innovation and offer paths to prosperity based on Idahoans’ shared values of hard work, collaboration, self-determination, family, and community stability. Learn more at [stem.idaho.gov](http://stem.idaho.gov) and visit [stem.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation](http://stem.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation) to make a tax-deductible donation to its 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation 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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## **Text of Idaho 2023 STEM Matters Month Proclamation**

WHEREAS, talent development for a highly skilled workforce is critical to Idaho and the nation’s competitiveness; and

WHEREAS, Idaho students require a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills to succeed in growing Idaho’s economy; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho STEM Action Center was founded to prepare Idahoans for STEM connected career opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho STEM Action Center, Idaho State Department of Education, the Idaho State Board of Education, Idaho Workforce Development Council, Idaho employers, and higher education have partnered to establish pipelines to STEM careers; and

WHEREAS, educators, employers, students, parents, and others will come together Feb. 1-28, 2023, across the state to highlight Idaho’s deep passion for STEM knowledge, career awareness, and STEM integration into their educational environment as they prepare students to compete in today’s technology and knowledge-based economy; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BRAD LITTLE, *Governor of the State of Idaho*, do hereby proclaim the month of February to be *STEM Matters Month*

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And encourage educators and leaders in the government, business, technology, and science communities to continue this STEM partnership to help Idaho students better analyze, reason, access technology and communicate solutions to the challenges of tomorrow, and to consider engagement in the Idaho STEM talent pipeline by choosing a STEM career needed in Idaho.

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