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Editorial



Extreme Outreach

Many of us participate in outreach activities aimed at informing the public about engineering and science and fostering interest in technical careers among students. Maybe you conducted a chemistry experiment at your child's school, judged a science fair, spoke at a career day, helped a troop of Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts earn a technology badge, took your daughter or son to work ...

When Columbia Univ. physics professor Brian Greene and journalist Tracy Day engage in public outreach, it is truly something to behold. Their project, the First Annual World Science Festival, was the largest science outreach undertaking I've ever seen. The five-day festival took place in New York City a few weeks ago, and CEP editors attended some of the events. In this issue's Update (pp. 6-12) we share a few highlights of what we experienced.

You may wonder why we would write about this local event in a global magazine for chemical engineers. Some of the events were clearly related to chemical engineering, including sessions devoted to energy and environmental issues.

At the Future Cities session, architect Blaine Brownell (www.transstudio.com) demonstrated a wide range of environmentally friendly materials: photovoltaics, illuminating tiles, windows that breathe, self-healing plastics, paint and glass that clean themselves, materials made from recycled plastics, and even an audible fabric. Virtually all of these products are commercially available, so if you plan to remodel or build a new home, you might want to consider these eco-friendly materials. Or, perhaps the descriptions and photos on pp. 9-11 will inspire you to come up with other new materials, or find new uses for some of these.

Author Josh Dorfman (www.lazynenvironmentalist.com) led the Greengenuity session, which showcased for aspiring green consumers several social-entrepreneur-driven solutions. For instance, that new house could be insulated with Greensulate, an organic, biodegradable insulation grown from mushroom spores and cellulose that was developed by Eben Bayer and Gavin McIntyre of Ecovative Design (www.ecovatedesign.com). Or maybe your community has a program like Philadelphia's RecycleBank, which replaces ordinary municipal recycling pickup with a computerized collection mechanism that grants consumers rewards based on the total weight of their recyclables.

Other events, like the play "Oxygen" (p. 12), were intended to get you thinking. Invisible Reality: The Wonderful Wierdness of the Quantum World explored quantum theory, from its technological applications to the possibility of parallel worlds. Faith and Science looked at how some scientists work to reconcile religious belief and scientific inquiry, as well as how others use science to investigate spirituality — such as neuroscientists studying what happens in the brain during religious experiences.

Even though it took place in New York City, the focus of the World Science Festival was much broader. World-renowned speakers shared their expertise, and national and international media covered the events. Subjects ranged from under the sea to outer space, from the tiniest atomic particles to the cosmos, from quantum physics to theme parks, sports, music and dance.

Most of the sessions were sold out, and lines of hopefuls gathered at the box offices in anticipation of last-minute no-shows (I'm not aware of any ticket-scalping). People of all ages, from young children to retirees, actually *paid* (as much as \$30 for some events) to see, hear, and experience science. Kids had fun and got excited about science. More important than any direct link to chemical engineering, that should give us hope.

Cynthia Mascone, Editor-in-Chief