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ChEs and IYC

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2011 the International Year of Chemistry (IYC 2011), a worldwide celebration of the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of people everywhere. With the theme of *Chemistry — our life, our future*, the goals of IYC 2011 are increasing public appreciation of chemistry in meeting the world's needs, encouraging interest in chemistry and chemical engineering among young people, generating enthusiasm for the creative future of chemistry and chemical engineering, and celebrating the achievements of Marie Curie (the year marks the centennial of her Nobel Prize) and the contributions of women to chemistry and chemical engineering. The major themes focus on meeting the global challenges of clean air, safe water, dependable medicines, advanced materials, and sustainable energy.

While known as the “central science,” chemistry is often misconstrued as a source of many of the problems in the modern world, rather than their solution. IYC represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for outreach on behalf of both chemistry and engineering.

Why not highlight the special chemistry of your city or region? A working group of AICHE, the American Chemical Society (ACS), the American Chemistry Council (ACC), and the Chemical Heritage Foundation (CHF) has created materials to support outreach, including “how-to” tools for school labs, science cafés, book clubs, writing press releases, and more. Many activities can be tailored to spotlight the special role that chemical engineers have played in your area's history, economy, and quality of life. You can find these materials at www.aiche.org under “About AICHE.”

CHF will host the U.S. kick-off of IYC 2011 on Feb. 1 in Philadelphia. The main event will be a panel discussion featuring renowned thought-leaders from industry, academia, and the research community. The theme of the panel, which will be webcast, is “Global Challenges: Chemistry Solutions.”

In conjunction with this kick-off, Philadelphia-area AICHE local section and student chapter volunteers will be working with their ACS counterparts on science cafés and a family fun day at a museum. CHF will also open a new exhibit, “Elemental Matters: Artists Imagine Chemistry,” on Friday, Feb. 4.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry are preparing a Global Chemistry Experiment — a set of activities to entice students to learn about the chemistry of water and its uses. Students will conduct four activities, two focused on water quality and two on water purification, and their data will be collected in a single database. The result is expected to be an interactive global map, demonstrating the value of international cooperation.

Back here at *CEP*, in this month's We're History column on the last page of the magazine, CHF's Neil Gussman has spotlighted some of the many great achievements of chemistry over the last 100 years.

Of course, AICHE also plans to feature special IYC events in conjunction with its major 2011 meetings. Right now, we're working with our friends at CHF and our sister societies on plans for culminating IYC events at our 2011 Annual Meeting in Minneapolis. We'll keep you posted; and, please, keep us posted on your IYC activities.

Stephen R. Smith, Publisher