



Year of Science 2009 Kicks Off this Week across the Nation

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Washington, DC - The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) kicked off Year of Science 2009 (YoS2009) -- a national, yearlong, grassroots celebration -- this week in Boston at the annual meeting of the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology. COPUS, which represents more than 500 organizations, is celebrating how science works, who scientists are, and why science matters. Ira Flatow, host of *Science Friday*, broadcast every week on National Public Radio, launched the week's events with a plenary presentation encouraging scientists to get involved in communicating and sharing the excitement of science at every opportunity.

Flatow said: "If you don't stand up for science, then no one else is going to do it. We as journalists and scientists have to figure out ways to share science in plain English whenever possible." This call to action is what drives YoS2009: it is a call for scientists to step out of their laboratories and into the public eye.

COPUS participants—museums, federal agencies, K–12 schools, universities, scientific societies, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations from all 50 states and 13 countries—will host events in celebration of YoS2009. Regionally connected COPUS participants are bringing science to their local communities in innovative ways. Some of the activities taking place in different regions of the country are described below.

Florida

Charlie Crist of Florida was the first governor to issue a statewide proclamation of YoS2009. The proclamation will be formally presented in an event bringing together representatives from the Girl Scouts, local schools, the National Football League's (NFL) Environmental Program, and Florida's Division of Forestry, among many other diverse organizations, in a day of celebrating science through hands-on activities showcasing rich and diverse science resources.

Washington, DC

The nation's capital will be the site of a week-long "Meet the Scientist" effort in which leading scientists will go to schools, community groups, and science festivals to share their science with the general public and explain how they know what they know about science.

Berkeley, California

The University of California (UC) Berkeley maintains the Web site [Science@Cal](http://scienceatcal.berkeley.edu) (<http://scienceatcal.berkeley.edu>) to promote the depth and breadth of science on campus.

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The site highlights opportunities for the public to meet UC scientists at the East Bay Science Café. Also, scientists can teach people how they do their work by hosting Flat Stanley at their labs and institutions (www.flatstanley.com/yearofscience2009/intro.htm).

Seattle, Washington

At Northwest School, the annual Winterfest celebration will highlight YoS2009 themes with rocket launches, flaming chemistry demonstrations, mousetrap cars, a play based on the Fibonacci number series, Rube Goldberg machines, and more!

Nationally

A special Web site (www.yearofscience2009.org) will help the general public learn more about this yearlong, national event. The site will feature a different scientific theme each month, complemented by blogs from scientists and science communicators about those topics and their fields of expertise. Highlights from the dynamic YoS2009 Web site include the integration of components from the newly launched **Understanding Science** Web site (www.understandingscience.org), Flat Stanley explorations of science, the opportunity to name a new species of jellyfish or adopt a species for the Encyclopedia of Life, and a contest to build the most scientific pizza.

All of these events and activities foster innovative new partnerships that will bring science and the public closer together locally, regionally, and nationally—all in a growing celebration of science!

Rita Colwell, former director of the National Science Foundation, states: "In this Year of Science 2009, scientists around the globe collectively are shining a spotlight on their work to highlight the achievements of modern science in the public square. This year provides a special opportunity to be optimistic and express hope for a better future. Through their passion and dedication, scientists and nonscientists alike are able to share in the thrill of scientific discovery."

COPUS, which began with support from the National Science Foundation, has grown to be an inclusive grassroots endeavor spurring communication and collaboration in the scientific community while shining the spotlight on science in 2009. Still growing, the COPUS network of more than 500 organizations includes a broad range of participants from large federal agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency to local groups such as the Banana Slug String Band from Santa Cruz, California, and TalkingScience, a New York City nonprofit that is organizing a "Rock-it Science" concert in 2009. Major sponsors of the Year of Science 2009 include the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the University of California Museum of Paleontology, the Geological Society of America, and the National Science Teachers Association. To register as a participant or to learn more, visit www.copusproject.org.

For more information about COPUS and the Year of Science 2009, please visit

- www.copusproject.org
- www.yearofscience2009.org
- <http://blogs.aibs.org/copus/>

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About COPUS

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Science 2009 project is the American Institute of Biological Sciences Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is providing staffing support and IT and other resources. The Geological Society of America, the University of California Museum of Paleontology, and the National Science Teachers Association are also contributing funds for COPUS and Year of Science 2009.

Year of Science sponsorship opportunities are available now! For more information, contact Sheri Potter (e-mail: spotter@copusproject.org).