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LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER'S ANNUAL GENIUS GALA GOES VIRTUAL FOR 2020

Sept. 21 Event to Honor World-Renowned Architect Moshe Safdie, 3D Bioprinting Pioneer Jennifer Lewis of Harvard, and Food Chemist William Conan Davis of Instant Mashed Potatoes and Soft-Serve Ice Cream Fame

LSC to also Spotlight "Covid Challengers," Scientists and Public Health Experts Working to Defeat the Pandemic, as well as Teen Scientists Already Making Remarkable Discoveries

JERSEY CITY, N.J., Sept. 15, 2020 – For the first time in its nine-year history, Liberty Science Center's Genius Gala will be going virtual.

The 2020 Genius Gala called **I Stand For Science** will take place on Monday, Sept. 21, at 8:00 pm as a celebration of visionary scientific achievement in support of LSC's mission to inspire and prepare the next generation of scientists and engineers. The event will honor the creativity and ingenuity of women and men of science who have made breakthrough innovations in applied science.

"This challenging year has shown how much we need science," said LSC President and CEO Paul Hoffman. "Whether it's those who have been pioneering innovation in the form of life-altering medical procedures, buildings we occupy, or foods we enjoy, we've seen how 'genius' can transform everyday life. And in the case of those in the race against the coronavirus, we are seeing 'genius' in action on a daily basis."

Three Genius Award recipients will be joined at the virtual gala by four **Covid Challengers**, innovative scientists who are challenging the coronavirus and challenging misconceptions about the virus.

- **Dr. Tal Zaks**, Chief Medical Officer at Moderna Therapeutics, shares his optimism about the first candidate Covid-19 vaccine in the U.S. to enter Phase III clinical trials.
- **Dr. Perry Halkitis**, Dean of Rutgers School of Public Health and a research psychologist who studies the LGBTQ population, talks about Rutgers' work with the NJ Department of Health recruiting contact tracers and his own research on the mental and physical health of LGBTQ individuals during Covid-19.
- **Dr. Jeanette Kowalik**, Commissioner of Public Health for the city of Milwaukee, the first city to declare racism a public health crisis (now 80 cities and counties have followed Milwaukee's lead), speaks about her health department's discovery early in the pandemic that middle-aged Black men were of greater risk of Covid-19 than Americans who had traveled internationally.
- **Dr. George Church**, Professor of Genetics at Harvard Medical School and serial genomics entrepreneur, speaks about the DIY Covid-19 vaccine that he administered to himself.

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As always, the highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the Genius Awards, the Center's highest honor. For the ninth year, LSC will recognize three inspiring individuals:

- **Dr. William Conan Davis**, a pioneering African-American food chemist whose research resulted in the development of instant mashed potatoes, “perfect” evenly cooked potato chips, soft-serve ice cream, and the formula for Dasani bottled water. The 94-year-old Korean War veteran and Purple Heart recipient was inspired to pursue his chosen field after attending a workshop with George Washington Carver, the most prominent African-American scientist and inventor of the 20th century. Davis is a Professor Emeritus in the Natural Sciences Department at St. Phillips College in San Antonio, where the science building bears his name.
- **Dr. Jennifer A. Lewis**, the Wyss Professor of Biologically Inspired Engineering at the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. The 56-year-old is a pioneer in 3D bioprinting whose team developed a method that allows for the creation of thick vascularized tissues and 3D organs such as a kidney, skin graft, and even a human heart, using a custom-built 3D printer and unique inks that contain the building blocks of human tissue. One critical advance from her team is the engineering and construction of a network of tubes that mimic blood vessels. A vascular system to deliver nutrients throughout bio-printed tissue will be essential to its survival.
- **Moshe Safdie**, world-renowned architect and the principal of his eponymous architectural firm. His work has spanned the globe, from Singapore, Jerusalem, Montreal, and Boston, and is guided by the principle of bringing light, greenery and water into the world's densest urban areas—or, as he has put it: “For everyone, a garden.” This vision is manifested in such works as the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, a trio of sweeping towers topped by an expansive green pavilion; and Jewel Changi Airport, where a four-story tiered garden surrounds the world's tallest indoor waterfall, the 130-foot Rain Vortex. The 81-year-old's designs also include world-leading museums, such as Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; Virasat-e-Khalsa, the museum of Sikhism, in India; and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

“Our 2020 Genius Award winners are visionary women and men of science who are busting paradigms,” Hoffman declared. “Each personifies what it means to be a genius; each is using his or her exceptional intellectual and creative abilities to disrupt and innovate both in their respective fields and, more importantly, for the betterment of humanity.”

Photos of Davis, Lewis and Safdie will join previous Genius Award recipients **Dr. Katherine Johnson, Ray Kurzweil, Marc Raibert and SpotMini, Frank Gehry, Jack Horner, Ellen Langer, Kip Thorne, Sir Richard Branson, Garry Kasparov, Jane Goodall, Oliver Sacks, Temple Grandin, Dean Kamen, Sylvia Earle, Craig Venter, Cori Bargmann, Ernő Rubik, Jeff Bezos, Vint Cerf, Jill Tarter, Sara Seager, George Church, Vitalik Buterin, Laurie Santos, Chris Messina, Martine Rothblatt, and Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz** in LSC's Genius Gallery, a permanent display at Liberty Science Center.

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The night will also feature a number of prominent speakers and guests, including New Jersey **Governor Phil Murphy**; Jersey City **Mayor Steven Fulop**; and reigning **Miss America, Camille Schrier**, who earned the title on the strength of her expertise as a biochemist and her advocacy for women in science and engineering. Attendees at the gala will also be treated to a look at the spectacular night sky through the Science Center's virtual planetarium; spectacular magic by virtual illusionist **Marco Tempest**; mind boggling Rubik's Cube tricks by former LSC Speedcuber-in-Residence **Anthony Brooks**; mathematical feats by **Dr. Crypton**, and a riveting conversation with three "**I Stand For Science**" teenage scientists who have discovered a planet and invented a better way to program robots.

Celebrating its ninth year, the Genius Gala benefits the Center's exhibitions and programs, specifically the science-education programs which LSC conducts for the nearly 100,000 at-risk and underserved children across the New Jersey/New York region.

Typically, LSC's Genius Gala is attended by hundreds of industry leaders and philanthropists from the NY/NJ metropolitan area. This year, the Science Center is pleased to make the virtual event free and open to the public by streaming it online beginning at 8:00 pm via [Liberty Science Center's Facebook](#) page and on [GeniusGala.org](#).

The Genius Gala would not be possible without support from generous and committed community leaders. The Virtual Genius Gala's Corporate Chairs are **Michael J. Inserra**, Senior Vice Chair and Americas Deputy Managing Partner, EY; and **Gary D. St. Hilaire**, President and CEO, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

The Innovation Chairs are **Jennifer A. Chalsty**, Director, Advisory Council, James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute, John Hopkins University; **Alma DeMetropolis**, Managing Director; Market Manager—New Jersey, J.P. Morgan Private Bank; President, New Jersey Market Leadership Team; and **Josh S. Weston**, Honorary Chairman, ADP.

The Co-Chairs of the Gala are **David Barry**, President and CEO, Ironstate Development Company; President and CEO, Urby; **Christopher S. Boerner, PhD**, EVP and Chief Commercialization Officer, Bristol-Myers Squibb; **Sheri B. Bronstein**, Chief Human Resources Officer, Bank of America; **David M. Daly**, President and COO, PSE&G; **Matthew D. Ellis**, EVP and CFO, Verizon Communications; **Bruce L. Levy**, President and CEO, BMR Energy; **Jeffrey M. Mandler**, Co-Founder and Past CEO, CarePoint Health; **Laura Bilodeau Overdeck**, Founder and President, Bedtime Math; **John Overdeck**, Co-Chairman and Co-Founder, Two Sigma; **Carlos Rodriguez**, President and CEO, ADP; **Gregory Tusar**, Head of Institutional Product, Coinbase; and **Susan Keating and Norman Worthington**, CEO and Executive Chairman, The Star2Star Communications and Blueface Companies.

About Liberty Science Center

Liberty Science Center ([LSC.org](#)) is a 300,000-square-foot not-for-profit learning center located in Liberty State Park on the Jersey City bank of the Hudson near the Statue of Liberty. Dedicated to inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers and bringing the power, promise, and pure fun of science and technology to learners of all ages, Liberty Science Center houses the largest planetarium in the Western Hemisphere, 12 museum exhibition halls, a live animal collection with 110 species, giant aquariums, a 3D theater, live simulcast surgeries, a tornado-force wind simulator, K-12 classrooms and labs, and teacher-development programs. More than 250,000 students visit the Science Center each year, and tens of thousands more participate in the Center's off-site and online programs. Welcoming more than 750,000 visitors annually, LSC is the largest interactive science center in the NYC-NJ metropolitan area.