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**LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER'S 14TH ANNUAL GENIUS GALA RAISES RECORD
\$3.2 MILLION FOR STEM PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, HONORS DOCTOR WHO UTILIZES AI
TO FIND OFF-LABEL USES OF EXISTING DRUGS TO TREAT "INCURABLE" DISEASES;
ONE OF AI'S GODFATHERS AND META'S FORMER CHIEF AI SCIENTIST;
AND CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER OF THE COMPANY WORKING TO BRING BACK THE WOOLLY MAMMOTH**

STEM Advocate, NJ Business Legend, and Long-Time LSC Supporter Josh Weston Receives LSC Icon Award

JERSEY CITY, NJ, May 18, 2026 – It was a night of pure “magic” at Liberty Science Center’s 14th Annual Genius Gala. Indeed, not only did 10-year-old magician **Shoji Naruishi**, known as “The Amazing Shoji,” wow the more than 700 business, civic, community, and philanthropic leaders in attendance with some mind-boggling tricks, but the event also raised a magical – and record-setting – \$3.2 million-plus for STEM programs for children. And if that wasn’t enough “magic,” the Genius Award, the highest honor conferred by the Center, was bestowed upon three extraordinary visionaries whose groundbreaking work has reshaped science, technology, and society. The awardees were **Dr. David Fajgenbaum, founder of Every Cure; Yann LeCun, Executive Chairman of AMI Labs and former chief AI scientist at Meta, and Beth Shapiro, chief science officer at Colossal Biosciences**, who were cited in recognition of their pioneering achievements in artificial intelligence, immunology, and evolutionary bio-engineering.

And speaking of “magic,” LSC also paid special tribute to a New Jersey business innovator whose philanthropy has proven to be “magical” to all those whose lives have been transformed through his largesse. To be sure, long-time Center supporter **Josh Weston**, CEO of Automatic Data Processing (ADP) for 15 years before retiring in 1998, received the 2026 LSC Icon Award.

Paul Hoffman, the Center’s President and CEO and creator of the Genius Awards, produced a little “magic” of his own during the program, announcing a \$1 million gift from Dr. Richard Hodosh, longtime LSC trustee, neurosurgeon, and philanthropist. It is the first major gift to the Center for its Project Supernova, the ambitious and far-reaching expansion that will include a river otter habitat, the world’s most amazing physics-based mini-golf course, a goat playground, a technology upgrade of LSC’s storied planetarium, and more.

The Genius Gala is an annual commemoration of innovation, accomplishment, creativity, science, and technology designed to bring attention to and celebrate creative individuals who are changing our world for the better through science.

“This year’s class of Genius Award honorees exemplifies the power of curiosity, perseverance, and fearless innovation,” Hoffman said. “Each of these individuals is pushing the boundaries of what is achievable in their respective fields and, in so doing, they are making what was thought to be impossible possible – all while inspiring others to think boldly and dream big.”

Fajgenbaum, a physician and immunologist, is the founding director of the Center for Cytokine Storm Treatment & Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and the co-founder of Every Cure, a non-profit initiative to use AI to identify existing drugs that might prove to be “off-label” therapies for incurable diseases. He is the author of the memoir *Chasing My Cure*, which chronicles his arduous journey starting while a third-year medical student at Penn dying of a rare inflammatory immune-system disorder called idiopathic

multicentric Castleman disease that had no known cure. To save his own life, he successfully repurposed a drug designed to keep the immune systems of organ-donor recipients from rejecting transplanted organs.

Today, he and his team have repurposed existing drugs to treat 14 heretofore incurable diseases. Of the approximately 18,000 diseases recognized by medical science, only 4,000 have approved treatments; more than 300 million people globally have a disease with no FDA-approved treatment. For rare diseases that afflict too few patients for conventional drug development to be commercially viable, he has pioneered the power of AI to achieve an alternative approach.

LeCun is the Executive Chairman of AMI Labs and a professor at NYU. He was the chief AI scientist of Meta as well as the founding director of Meta-FAIR and of the NYU Center for Data Science. Regarded as one of “the three godfathers of AI,” LeCun did pioneering work in machine learning, computer vision, robotics, and computational neuroscience. Starting with his PhD research in the 1980s at the Sorbonne in Paris and continuing into the 1990s at Bell Labs and AT&T in New Jersey, LeCun developed neural-network techniques that enabled machines to better recognize handwritten and printed text; an early application was automatic check scanning, which transformed banking.

LeCun believes that the current LLM (Large Language Model) AIs, which are favored by OpenAI, Google, Microsoft, Anthropic, and Meta, will not get us to general machine intelligence. He is pioneering an alternative, “world models” approach to AI and co-founded the startup AMI Labs, backed by more than \$1B in funding, to develop it.

A recipient of the Turing Prize, the “Nobel Prize of computer science,” LeCun says that his interest in machine intelligence dates back to his childhood fascination with HAL, the murderous mainframe in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. To protect people from rogue AIs in the future, LeCun says we must build into current AIs the notions of empathy and “submission to humans.”

Shapiro, an evolutionary molecular biologist and author of *Life as We Made It: How 50,000 Years of Human Innovation Refined—and Redefined—Nature*, is Chief Science Officer at Colossal Biosciences, the de-extinction company that aims to bring back the woolly mammoth—or, more precisely, a hirsute cold-resistant elephant with all the core biological traits of the woolly mammoth. Earlier this year, Colossal took the historic first step toward reviving a long-extinct species by bioengineering three large white canines, named Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, with core traits of dire wolves, which have been extinct for 10,000 years.

Today, animals are going extinct at an alarming rate. Biologists estimate that approximately 30,000 animal species per year are being driven to extinction, and nearly half of all animal species could become extinct by 2050. Colossal has a ground-breaking and controversial approach to promoting biodiversity: Reverse and curtail extinction by bioengineering charismatic megafauna and other animals with genes that better enable them to survive a warming, less hospitable planet.

Weston holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from City College of New York, and a Master of Arts in economics from the University of New Zealand. Weston is a Fulbright Scholar who also holds several honorary degrees. Weston’s commitment to education and human rights is evident in his extensive and enduring board service. He currently serves on many pro bono boards, including: Liberty Science Center, International Rescue Committee, WNET (PBS), NJ Performing Arts Center, NJ Food Bank, Tel Aviv Foundation, Boys Town Jerusalem, Safe Water Network, American-Israel Friendship League, KIPP-NJ Schools, and FIRST Robotics. He also has served on the President’s Task Force to Improve Veterans’ Healthcare, the National Commission to Restructure the IRS, GAO Advisory Board, and DOD Tail-to-Tooth Commission.

The Genius Gala program also featured **Sean Atitsogbe**, known as “Sean the Science Kid,” who is a STEM educator and influencer with over 1.8 million followers on social media. A member of Mensa since age 4, Atitsogbe aspires to be the world’s first neurocardio surgeon.

The Gala serves as Liberty Science Center’s chief fundraising event. Since its inception, the gala has raised some \$30 million to benefit LSC's STEM education programs, helping to make world-class science learning accessible to students, teachers, and families, most notably for those in high-needs, underserved communities.

Not just a fundraiser, the event brings attention to creative individuals who are changing our world for the better through science. The 800,000+ visitors to the Center this year will find the 2026 inductees in the Center’s permanent Genius Gallery display, along with past recipients: Andrea “Annie” Kritcher, Nicholas Schiff, Dr. Joseph L. Graves, Jr., John C. Mather, Katalin Karikó, Dr. Uma Valeti, Hugh Herr, Priyamvada Natarajan, Dr. Robert Montgomery, William Conan Davis, Jennifer A. Lewis, Moshe Safdie, 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, Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz, Jennifer Doudna, Edgar MacGregor, and Leo Villareal.

Chairpersons included a veritable “Who’s Who” of New Jersey’s business and industry, government, philanthropic, healthcare and civic leadership.

Caroline Tillett, PhD, Chief Scientific Officer, Kenvue, was the Corporate Chair of the event. The Innovation Chairs were **Bruce L. Levy**, President and CEO, BMR Energy; **Timothy Tracy**, Global Client Service Partner, Americas Private Equity Leader, EY; **Gregory Tusar**, Head of Institutional Product, Coinbase; and **Mr. Weston**, Honorary Chairman, ADP.

The Co-Chairs were **David Barry**, Founder and CEO, Urby; **Lindsay Hans**, President and Co-Head, Merrill Wealth Management; **Richard Hodosh**, MD, and Lisa Brooking; **Chirag Patel**, Co-CEO and President, Amneal Pharmaceuticals; **Al Reba**, SVP, Immunology & Cardiovascular Commercialization, Bristol Myers Squibb; **Anthony T. Skiadas**, EVP, CFO, Verizon Communications; **Clarissa Weber**, CFO, Global Product & Technology, Global Security, Strategy and Procurement, ADP; and **Jennifer Yettke & Alex Haro**.

In addition to the conferral of the Genius Awards, the program included talented young performers, robots, and surprises.

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 280,000 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 800,000 visitors annually, LSC is the largest cultural institution in New Jersey and the largest interactive science center in the NYC-NJ metropolitan area.