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LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER'S INAUGURAL "GENIUS OF NEW JERSEY" TO HONOR INNOVATORS WHO MAKE THE STATE A WORLD LEADER IN CUTTING-EDGE APPLIED SCIENCE

Ceremony to host Bonnie Bassler, molecular biologist and microbe fighter; Robert J. Hariri, stem cell and human longevity expert; and David Rosenberg, world leader in urban vertical farming

*Plus a special honoree from California whom LSC is feting because he's a tech badass:
AI giant Sebastian Thrun, the godfather of the self-driving car*

JERSEY CITY, N.J., NOVEMBER 25, 2019 – New Jersey is home to some of the world's most accomplished innovators in applied science. Three of them who are pioneering research and solutions in antibacterial therapies, genetics, human life extension, and food production are being honored by Liberty Science Center at its inaugural "The Genius of NJ" celebration on Monday, December 2.

The celebration starts at 5:30 pm with cocktails and unique technology demonstrations: a full-body 3D scanner from [Lenscloud](#) that can scan a person in half a second with 120 cameras and create a realistic 3D avatar; bomb-disposing robots and an autonomous fighting robot from Picatinny Arsenal; and Flyer, a personal aerial vehicle from [Kitty Hawk](#), headquartered in Mountain View, CA.

The New Jersey honorees are **Bonnie Bassler**, Chair of Molecular Biology at Princeton University, who is developing novel antimicrobial therapies to render pathogenic bacteria harmless; **Dr. Robert J. Hariri**, Chairman, Founder & CEO of Celularity, Inc. who is pioneering the use of stem cells to cure disease and slow aging; and **David Rosenberg**, CEO and Co-Founder of AeroFarms, the world's leader in mass-scale vertical indoor farming.

"Our inaugural Genius of NJ Award Winners represent the best this state and the world have to offer in harnessing science for the betterment of humanity," said Liberty Science Center President and CEO Paul Hoffman. "Each is using his or her exceptional intellect and creative abilities to disrupt and innovate both in their respective fields and in their commitment to making the world healthier and safer."

Bonnie Bassler is the Squibb Professor of Molecular Biology and Chair of the Department of Molecular Biology at Princeton University, as well as a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator. Professor Bassler deciphered the chemical language bacteria cells use to communicate by studying a harmless marine bacterium called *Vibrio fischeri*, known to "bioluminesce," or make light, like fireflies do. She is a winner of the MacArthur Genius Grant and is now developing therapies that disrupt communication among harmful bacteria and strengthen communication among helpful bacteria. At a time when an increasing number of bacteria are resistant to traditional kinds of antibiotics, Dr. Bassler offers a promising new approach to antimicrobial therapy.

The Chairman, Founder and CEO of Celularity, Inc., in Warren, NJ, and Co-Founder and Vice Chairman of Human Longevity, Inc., **Dr. Robert Hariri** is the quintessential renaissance man. He's a

neurosurgeon, a medical researcher, and a serial entrepreneur in two technology sectors: aerospace and biomedicine. Dr. Hariri has advised the Vatican on genetics, and in 2018, Pope Francis bestowed on him the Pontifical Key Award for Innovation. Dr. Hariri's path to discovering that the placenta, a temporary organ discarded after birth, was a potent source of stem cells began in the 80s when he viewed a first trimester ultrasound of his oldest daughter and wondered why the placenta was so large. Today Dr. Hariri is working to use placental stem cells to cure disease, slow aging, and augment healthy human lifespan.

Prominent entrepreneur **David Rosenberg**, CEO and Co-Founder of AeroFarms, set out to reinvent one of the most basic aspects of food production, farming. AeroFarms has grown 800 species of plants indoors and can grow them 365 days a year without sun or soil, achieving yields 130 times greater than conventional farming. His system uses 95 percent less water than field farming and no pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides. Rosenberg's adoption of cutting-edge technology has been a cornerstone of AeroFarms, which set up its first indoor vertical farms in abandoned warehouses in Newark. He employs plant biologists, microbiologists, geneticists, systems engineers, and data scientists. AeroFarms' innovations in indoor vertical farming have improved not just plant yields but also taste, texture, nutritional density, and shelf life.

Additionally, LSC will honor non-New Jerseyian **Sebastian Thrun**, CEO of Kitty Hawk, a company spun off from a moonshot effort to "free the world from traffic." Kitty Hawk is developing all-electric, vertical take-off flying machines for everyday use. Known as the godfather of self-driving cars, as a Stanford professor in 2005, Thrun led a team that won the \$2-million Defense Department Grand Challenge to build an autonomous vehicle which drove itself unassisted on a 132-mile course across the Mojave Desert. His winning entry, Stanley, is now on display at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. While at Stanford, in 2011 he and colleague Peter Norvig offered their "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" course online to anyone, for free. Over 160,000 students in more than 190 countries enrolled! The MOOC (which stands for Massive Open Online Course) was born, and Thrun founded the online education company Udacity, with the goal of democratizing education. Thrun relinquished his tenured Stanford professorship to join Google and founded the company's semi-secret R&D division called Google X (now called simply X) to develop breakthrough technologies, such as self-driving cars, that make the world a radically better place.

Ticket prices for "The Genius of NJ" start at \$750 per guest with options for table sponsorship from \$12,500 to \$50,000. For more details, please visit "The Genius of NJ" [online](#). All proceeds from this event will support LSC's mission to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.

About Liberty Science Center

Liberty Science Center (LSC.org) is a 300,000-square-foot nonprofit 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.