



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Hester Vermaak, PR Manager
Phone: (607) 272-0600, ext. 14
Email: hvermaak@sciencenter.org

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601 First St.
Ithaca, NY 14850-3507
<http://www.sciencenter.org>

COOL DISCUSSION ABOUT HOT TOPIC AT THE SCIENCENTER

ITHACA, NY — At the Sciencenter's premier of "Full of Hot Air" on February 17, families were treated to a very playful, game-show style event that helped to demystify a serious topic: global warming.

This interactive family forum used cutting-edge remote polling technology to tally audience members' attitudes and opinions about climate change. Armed with "clickers" each family logged in their answers to a variety of questions about global warming. Questions such as "Do you think global warming will affect your life?" invited visitors to consider whether this issue was relevant to their lives.

But to understand the buzz behind global warming requires one to become familiar with scientific principles that may seem rather abstract. Leave it to the Sciencenter to make it fun!

Want to know what it might feel like to be the Earth warming, as greenhouse gases accumulate in our atmosphere over time? Just ask David Fuller, a young audience member who volunteered to play "the Earth." David was positioned near the "Sun" (a warming lamp casting a red glow), and was then wrapped in layer upon layer of blankets each representing accumulated greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide or methane, being added to our atmosphere over time.

As Trautmann provided a historical storyboard, he wrapped another blanket around David. "This blanket is for all of the CO₂ added by cars and power plant emissions in the last 50 years." Soon David was in a cocoon of blankets and warming fast. "Earth – are you hot?" The audience chuckled, David nodded and said "Too hot!" Trautmann then removed the blankets, quickly freeing David, and also illustrating that it will take the removal of greenhouse gases from our atmosphere now to curb the current warming trend.

Trautmann then showed mounting evidence scientists are monitoring to evaluate the effects of global warming: melted glaciers, disrupted ocean ecosystems,

disappearing habitats and animals that are now believed to be extinct due to changes in climate.

But, “Full of Hot Air” was not all doom and gloom.

Trautmann reminded the audience that each of us can do our part to improve the outlook on global warming. Simple things, like using compact fluorescent light bulbs, which are 75% more energy efficient than traditional light bulbs, is a great place to start. Other steps we can take include ensuring that the tires on your car are optimally inflated to get better gas mileage, choosing to wash your clothes in warm/cold water (not hot), and talking to others to help spread the message. (Visit climatecrisis.net for a list of ways to conserve energy.)

Another audience member, Marcia Poulsen, remarked on how helpful it can be to share with kids that every time we flick off a light switch, we decrease our energy draw from power plants. This helps to save the planet by preventing the excess burning of fossil fuels that would be needed to light your room. “You might not see the greenhouse gasses that are released into the atmosphere, but somewhere coal or fossil fuels are being burnt to support our lifestyles.”

With simple demonstrations and objects, Trautmann conveyed how fragile the earth’s atmosphere is. By holding up a single egg, he said that if you blasted off to the moon and looked back at the earth, the earth would be about the size of an egg. “The eggshell represents our atmosphere. Our atmosphere is this delicate, thin layer. It’s fragile and we need to take good care of it,” he emphasized.

After the family forum presentation, Sciencenter visitors explored hands-on activities to investigate the greenhouse effect and the science of ice.

The “Full of Hot Air” family forum and accompanying hands-on activities are slated to be included in an online toolkit of activities being made available to science museums worldwide by the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), the Washington, D.C.-based association representing science museums around the world. This online toolkit is part of an ongoing effort to promote global warming education. The toolkit will be posted on ASTC’s website www.astc.org/iglo on March 1. This date correlates with the official launch date of International Polar Year, a worldwide research and educational effort to focus on changes in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

As part of a continued celebration of the Sciencenter’s role in this international educational initiative, the public is invited to “Calculate Your Carbon Footprint” at the Sciencenter on **Free Sunday, March 4**, from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. On this day, this activity and admission to the museum is free.

The Sciencenter is a hands-on science museum for people of all ages with over 200 exhibits, educational programs, a gift shop, an outdoor science park, and a

seasonal 19-hole miniature golf course. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, \$4 for children 3-17 years, and free to Sciencenter members and children under 3. For more information, visit the Sciencenter online at www.sciencenter.org. The Sciencenter is a proud member of Ithaca's Discovery Trail, more information can be found at www.DiscoveryTrail.com.

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