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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Genome in Me Exhibition Connects Cutting-edge Science to Programs, STEM Career Connections and Hands-on Learning

The Jackson Laboratory and Chase-Bear-Dyer Family Dedicate Premier Permanent Exhibition about Genomics

Hartford, CT (November 10, 2021) – At a celebration to dedicate the Connecticut Science Center’s new permanent exhibition, *Genome in Me*, presented by the Chase-Bear-Dyer Family and The Jackson Laboratory (JAX), the Science Center announced a full calendar of programs, events and learning opportunities centered around the cutting-edge science of Genomics. These robust programs expand on the concepts presented in the exhibition with opportunities for families, school groups and people of all ages, including adults.

The *Genome in Me* Exhibition shows that our DNA reveals hidden worlds of information that can be used to better understand our species, our ancestry, evolution, healthcare, forensics, and more. The immersive gallery invites visitors to take a closer look at genomics to discover how we are both unique and connected to others because of our genome.

The exhibition features five content areas: The Cell, Genetic Engineering, The Food We Eat, Forensics, and Ancestry, and is connected to the Genomics Lab on Level 5 of the iconic Connecticut Science Center. The Genomics Lab is a state-of-the-art learning lab that hosts exciting and impactful public programs, events, and hands-on science concerning DNA and genetics.

The Science Center selected this topic area because it is an important and emerging area of science, and it is our mission to communicate complex science concepts to a broad audience.

On hand to mark the occasion by cutting the celebratory “DNA Ribbon” was [Charles Lee](#), Ph.D., FACMG, director and professor, The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine and Science Center Trustee; Cheryl Chase, Science Center Trustee, former chair and longtime supporter and Connecticut Department of Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker.

“It is an advantage and an opportunity for Connecticut’s educators, families, and students to have access to the educational programs and hands-on experiences presented in the *Genome in Me* Exhibition,” said Connecticut Education Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker. “School-family-community partnerships are instrumental to student success, and this exhibition invites families to learn alongside their children about the science of genomics and its connection to our health and our community.”

One of the key goals of the exhibition is to share with all visitors the growing fields of genomics. The exhibit highlights the growing areas of genetic engineering, bioinformatics, forensics, and more to share with

visitors and students the opportunities that advanced technology and an improved understanding of our genome have created.

“Here in Connecticut, industry leaders like JAX are helping us better understand genetics and their implications on healthcare, cancer, disease detection and more,” said Matt Fleury, Connecticut Science Center President and CEO. “We want students to understand and be inspired by the groundbreaking science that is happening here in our state. By breaking down what genomics is for our students, we can build more awareness of the real world topics scientists and engineers are working on now and for the future.”

“At The Jackson Laboratory we are committed to advancing science and improving health through education for learners of all ages. We are proud to support this exciting exhibition at the Connecticut Science Center,” said Dr. Lee. “Our genome can unlock the secrets to human disease and is enormously important to understand. *Genome in Me* will not only provide an educational experience for families, but we hope that it will also inspire the next generation of scientists to pursue careers in genomics.”

Sarah Wojiski, Ph.D., director of education at The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine was part of the Genomics Exhibit Advisory Committee who guided the Science Center's exhibit development team in the completion of the comprehensive project. Wojiski was also in attendance for the ribbon cutting ceremony and will be collaborating with the Connecticut Science Center team on continued programming.

In order to inspire young people to consider careers in genetic research, JAX will continue its support of the *Genome in Me* exhibition by participating in STEM Career Showcases with students across the State. Together, JAX and the Connecticut Science Center will develop creative ways for students to engage with programming and exhibits, highlight JAX scientists and professionals to expose students to various STEM careers and promote bioscience careers for young people in Connecticut. This includes developing student programs that align with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and offer support materials for educators in the classroom.

The *Genome in Me* Exhibition is the most recent integration of genetics-related programs and content to the Science Center. Since 2017, the Connecticut Science Center has been providing genomics education through public programming, standards-aligned classroom experiences, and virtual online content. Topics include genetic engineering, DNA extraction, epigenetics, ancestry, forensics, and more. Within the next year, the Science Center will launch three new Genomics Lab programs designed for the public along with new genetics classes for first grade, middle school, and high school to support the content in the *Genome in Me* Exhibition and give students a place to explore the growing field of genomics.

Melissa Garafola, Connecticut Science Center Professional Learning Specialist and Genomics Coordinator has been developing and facilitating Genomics programming since the opening of the Genomics Lab. “I have had the privilege of developing and facilitating Genomics programs for visitors of all ages. These interactions, along with the expertise of STEM professionals like our partners at JAX, Ensign Bickford, EnviroLogix, and Boehringer Ingelheim, have helped us to create a truly meaningful experience,” Garafala added. “Our lab programs and the exhibit experiences provide the ability to make science learning more indicative of the work of scientists in the real world to inspire and better prepare students for advanced studies, careers, and success in genetics, science, and the world.”

The Connecticut Science Center events and programs include opportunities for all ages, and seek to engage people from all social and cultural backgrounds while demonstrating the relevance of science in everyone's life.

To ensure that the programs are accessible to the most students, programs will be offered in a variety of formats. This includes onsite at the Science Center, through the Science Center's Science-in-Motion program (traveling to schools and in the community), and in a virtual format.

The *Genome in Me* is included with General Admission or Membership. All visitors must follow the Science Center's Safety at Play protocols including cloth face coverings for all guests over 2 years of age. Reserve tickets and learn more at CTScienceCenter.org.

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About the Connecticut Science Center: The LEED- Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving more than 3.5 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries, covering a range of topics including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include the state's only year-round butterfly habitat, five educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, and ongoing events for all ages.

The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is the home to the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers, offering powerful professional development for educators. *More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.*

About STEM Career Connections at the Connecticut Science Center: STEM Career Connections is the Connecticut Science Center's comprehensive initiative to inspire students to consider futures in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). It represents a deepening commitment to the illumination of STEM opportunities and pathways available in Connecticut and beyond. The program aims to develop team-oriented thinkers, innovators, and communicators by integrating STEM-related career content into our programs, exhibits, and events, fueling a diverse and successful STEM workforce for the next generation. The program is made possible by the support of The Hartford and Cognizant U.S. Foundation with founding support from The Mandell-Braunstein Family. More information: <https://ctsciencecenter.org/stem/>.

About The Jackson Laboratory

The Jackson Laboratory is an independent, nonprofit biomedical research institution with a National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center and nearly 3,000 employees in locations across the United States (Maine, Connecticut, California) and Japan, as well as a joint venture in China. Its mission is to discover precise genomic solutions for disease and empower the global biomedical community in the shared quest to improve human health. For more information, please visit www.jax.org.

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