

# 2014 Gila County STEMfest



The Gila County STEMfest is a community event, sponsored annually by the Gila County School Superintendent's Office, that brings together representatives from businesses, government agencies, civic organizations, school groups, non-profits, and interested members of the community to not only *promote* interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) but to *celebrate* the many ways STEM affects us all.



STEMfest offers an interactive, hands-on experience that leaves lasting impressions on festival visitors regardless of their age and life experiences. With more than 40 demonstrations and fun activity booths, there is something for everyone. The educational value is profound! Statistics report that the number of students pursuing a degree in a STEM-related field remains relatively low, especially in rural areas. STEMfest brings kids face-to-face with the "magic" of science and technology, giving them the opportunity to discover just how fun – and relevant – these fields are.



Gila County School Superintendent Linda O'Dell began the county-led STEM campaign three years ago after she was inspired by the efforts of the Arizona SciTech Festival. The Arizona SciTech Festival is a state-wide celebration of STEM that takes place every spring. The festival encompasses hundreds of STEM-related events, including expos, workshops, tours, community festivals, academic lectures, and much more. That is when the idea was born to create a STEMfest in and for Gila County. "My initial goal was to raise awareness about the importance of STEM subjects and their relationship to the real world, especially for students, but also for parents and community members," explains O'Dell.



O'Dell set out to achieve three main goals with the Gila County STEMfest: to increase student achievement by generating engagement and excitement in STEM-related learning; to increase parent and community engagement in education; and to promote a culture for career and college readiness.



"Our future depends on the young people of today," believes O'Dell. "The world is steeped in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and our students need a solid educational grounding to ensure a successful future for themselves – and all of us!"



This year, the Gila County Schools Office will host two STEMfests. The first will be in Globe on Saturday, March 29 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Besh Ba Gowah Archaeological Park. The second STEMfest will be held in Payson on Saturday, May 3 from 9 a.m. to noon at Rumsey Park.



For more information on how to become involved in the Gila County STEMfest, contact Holly Sow at the Gila County Schools Office at (928) 402-8784 or by email to [hsow@gilacountyaz.gov](mailto:hsow@gilacountyaz.gov) or visit [www.gilacountyschools.org](http://www.gilacountyschools.org).