Touchstone Energy Cooperatives collaborate for $500,000 sponsorship of maker space in new building

Gateway to Science is pleased to announce that Touchstone Energy Cooperatives will name the second-floor maker space in the new Gateway to Science facility.

“Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have supported the science center since the beginning,” Gateway to Science Executive Director Beth Demke remarked. “I can’t think of a better place to display their name than our new maker space. It is a perfect fit with Touchstone’s Cooperative Principles—the maker space is all about education, cooperation, and community development. We are inspired by this collaboration between Great River Energy, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Minnkota Power Cooperative, and other local Touchstone Energy cooperatives.”

The 7,800-square-foot Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Innovation Space at Gateway to Science will feature movable tables, flexible seating, and a mix of high-tech and low-tech tools and resources. Visitors of all ages can design, prototype, and create using 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, electronics, and more.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives’ $500,000 commitment to the Gateway to Science capital campaign will provide an environment that helps build 21st century skills, such as collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, which are important in the classroom, the workplace, and the public sphere.

“Great River Energy values opportunities to support non-profit educational organizations that have a positive impact in our local communities. This donation is important because it will help students develop skills to succeed as future leaders in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics,” said Al Christianson, Director, Business Development and Governmental Affairs, Great River Energy.

“We are excited about the opportunity to bring the Innovation Space to life because it’s unlike anything else in North Dakota,” said Paul Sukut, Basin Electric CEO and general manager. “The STEM activities that Gateway to Science offers are a great way for students to receive hands-on learning for so many topics that are important to our industry. It is our hope that the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Innovation Space helps inspire innovative thinking in all of us!”

“We are thrilled to support the creative young minds in our state by helping improve access to first-class educational resources in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math,” said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. “The maker space will provide students and community members with the innovative resources that will prepare them for a future that is increasingly driven by technology. We thank Gateway to Science for its continued commitment to helping people across our state build bright futures.”
Gateway to Science anticipates and welcomes additional Touchstone Cooperatives to join in the sponsorship of the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Innovation Space once construction commences.

To learn more about the new Gateway to Science facility, visit gatewaytoscience.org/building.

Gateway to Science serves as central coordinator for statewide coalition connecting PPE needs and resources

North Dakota Information Technology, EduTech, Gateway to Science and Microsoft Corp., today announced a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Portal designed to help fill the growing need for PPE throughout the state. The initiative is supported by a Microsoft Philanthropies Tech Spark grant and involves a coalition of public and private sector partners engaged in supporting 21st century education as part of the state’s K-20W Initiative.

Gateway to Science and EduTech worked with those partners to formalize the effort and identify cutting-edge technologies like 3D printers that can be used to create cost-effective, reusable face shields. Vetted by North Dakota’s Department of Health, the face shields will be donated to those in need. The PPE Portal also creates a central hub for identifying broader PPE needs, connecting needs to available resources, and ensuring that PPE being produced meets medical standards.

“As a hands-on, science-focused organization, Gateway to Science saw an opportunity to bring organization, efficiency and effectiveness to the efforts of stakeholders who are finding innovative ways to help fill the need for PPE,” said Executive Director Beth Demke. “With the new portal, we can help connect our medical community and other frontline workers to a network of available resources and help those with the greatest need.”

“As North Dakotans, our desire to help is strong,” said TechSpark Manager Taya Spelhaug. “We have seen this ring true from the vast support of individuals from around the state eager to create their own 3D PPE for medical and frontline communities. We’re thrilled to support Gateway to Science’s effort to embody the North Dakota Smart mentality by harnessing technology and statewide goodwill to serve frontline healthcare professionals and other critical needs areas more efficiently and effectively.”

Individuals and organizations with 3D printers, laser cutters and CNC machines can register on the PPE Portal to help produce face shields or other high-tech solutions to COVID-19. Requests for PPE will be matched with producers in close proximity to increase efficiency in delivering products. Donations, including materials, are also welcome to help cover the cost of supplies.

“Through North Dakota’s strong STEAM ecosystem, we can leverage not only our vast network of committed stakeholders, but the innovative spirit that enables us to make a bigger impact on behalf of our citizens,” said Chief Information Officer Shawn Riley. EduTech and the K-20W Coalition will help organize technology departments in North Dakota school districts and universities to identify resources and coordinate.
involvement in the project. Industry partners are also encouraged to participate.

Serving as the central coordinator, Gateway to Science will communicate among all entities, establish production specifications, identify supply and distribution chains, and assist in the development of protocol that complies with health and medical guidelines.

Read a story done about the PPE Portal by State Scoop.

Thank you for your interest and support. For more information, please contact Lesley Icenogle, Development Director, at 701-258-1975 or lesley@gscience.org.