**14 June 2022**

**STEMFest returns in 2022 with stellar support**

Prepare to take off for the best STEMFest yet as New Zealand’s largest science, technology, engineering, and mathematics festival (STEM) returns after a two-year hiatus.

More than 50 exhibitors are expected in Tauranga from all over Aotearoa for the free, family-friendly street festival on Sunday 2 October, 2022.

Highlights include an International Space Zone supported by Kiwi-led company Rocket Lab, with a nationwide space competition funded by the United States Department; and a local competition to design a new sustainability-themed STEM Superhero.

After being cancelled in both 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, STEMFest organiser, registered charity STEM Wana Trust, is planning a blockbuster interactive event to engage and inspire a new generation of scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians.

STEMFest Founder Tia Lush says: “It’s been an extremely challenging and disappointing couple of years. Now we’re in a better climate to deliver the festival, we can’t wait to gather New Zealand’s future problem solvers together for some hands-on experiments and a celebration of STEM.”

This year’s festival has attracted some heavy-hitting support in its aim to bolster the STEM sector, with Coastal Bay of Plenty and TECT signed on as principal funders.

Oscar Nathan, Tumuaki General Manager of Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi Tourism Bay of Plenty says: “STEMFest promotes the essential career paths our region needs to foster to ensure its prosperity – this festival is helping to build Tauranga’s reputation as a STEM destination.”

“It’s a privilege to support the return of this innovative and inspiring festival to the Coastal Bay of Plenty. STEMFest is one of 15 Te Moananui ā Toi events that are receiving funding from the Regional Events Fund. This Fund is being overseen by Tourism Bay of Plenty and STEMFest has also secured additional funding from TECT.”

Tauranga-based renewable electricity generator Manawa Energy joins as headline sponsor, with Community Engagement Advisor Annie Tangata saying: “STEM is at the heart of renewable energy generation which is what we do here at Manawa Energy. In the race to phase out fossil fuels, we will be calling on the young minds of today to help us design and develop new ways to harness energy that will have as little environmental impact as possible.

“STEM subjects foster critical thinking skills and promote a passion for innovation that will drive this change. We are proud to be sponsoring STEMFest this year and we hope it will inspire more young people to get excited about STEM, the future, and their place in it.”

New Zealand-founded aerospace company Rocket Lab is also on board, bringing space-focused education and a money-can’t-buy prize for the national space competition.

“Rocket Lab is proud to support community organisations doing the vital work of helping young people fall in love with STEM, and understand all the amazing opportunities available to them in Aotearoa,” says Felicity Powell, Education Program Lead at Rocket Lab.

“We were so excited to hear that STEMFest would be going ahead thanks to the hard work and perseverance of the team at STEM Wana Trust, and wanted to provide young people with a unique window into their future opportunities in the space industry through participation in these awesome events.”

There will also be a focus on the strong STEM knowledge base in the Bay of Plenty region, thanks to support from food science specialists Zespri, Ballance Agri-Nutrients, engineering leader Beca Group, and start up tech software company Lawvu. Fellow sponsors include Xero and the University of Waikato.

The event will be held during the first weekend of the October school holidays, in a bid to attract holidaying families and encourage holiday makers to the region.

Tourism Bay of Plenty’s Oscar Nathan adds: “From a tourism point of view, the festival will appeal to a wider range of potential visitors during our spring shoulder season who aren’t usually represented in our organisation’s core target markets. This presents an exciting opportunity for STEMFest attendees to explore and enjoy our region while they’re here, providing an important positive flow-on effect for our local economy.”

STEMFest will be preceded by STEM in the Community activations run by STEM Wana Trust, including an outreach programme for schools in the Bay of Plenty area.

**FREE Tickets for STEMFest will be released in September. Sign up on the website** [www.stemfest.nz](http://www.stemfest.nz) **to receive information and announcements of early bird tickets.**

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**FOR MORE COMMENT OR INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**Please follow @stemfestnz on all the social media channels for more information.**

**STEMFest 2019 video** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVOlr8TZdeE**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVOlr8TZdeE)

**NOTES:**

* STEMFest 2022 will take place Sunday 2nd October from 10-4pm in Durham Street, Tauranga.
* The inaugural Tauranga STEM Festival (STEMFest) in 2019 attracted 3,500 visitors from across New Zealand. The event also scooped the TECT Community Awards for Event Excellence for its innovation and creativity.