

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Tuesday, 3 May 2016

A world of interactive opportunities at Agfest 2016

Patrons will experience interactive hands-on learning across several fields when they step inside the world of the University of Tasmania at Agfest this year.

This year sees the University build upon a successful inaugural partnership with the Agfest committee in 2015, where it sowed seeds to grow its educational presence at the premier rural event.

Working closely with Agfest representatives, the University has devised an even bigger program for 2016 that is highly engaging and insightful for all ages, while encouraging patrons to contemplate cultivating careers through higher education.

AGFEST MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

HITLab virtual realities and mind reading experience

The HITLab is a specialist human interface technology teaching and research centre, developed by the University of Tasmania. This year it will showcase a range of virtual and augmented reality equipment, demonstrating how and why it is used. Patrons will be invited to enter imagined realities and witness how a mind reading headset works.

IMAS live touch tanks

The Institute of Marine and Antarctic Sciences will dare onlookers to dip their hands into live touch tanks of marine species. Different researchers will be on site each day to present work on topics which include: “*Fish Guts – what’s what?*” (**Thursday**), “*Oysters - what makes them tick?*” (**Friday**), “*Mud glorious mud*” (**Friday**), “*Sex lives of sharks*” (**Saturday**), and “*Urchin invasion*” (**Saturday**).

Australian Maritime College sailing simulator

Maritime enthusiasts will be challenged to take the helm of the AMC engineering sailing simulator. Patrons will also learn about the use of equipment from the Coastal Seafaring department which will be on display.

Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal developments

Patrons will learn how deadly facial tumour disease cells are diagnosed and can take part in simulated scenarios to analyse when a vaccine has been successful in the lab.

They will see how devils are tracked and captured in the wild, how motion activated cameras work, and learn about the impact of the disease on devil populations. Visitors will gain an understanding of the carnivorous marsupial's behaviour through several fun activities and can speak with researchers about their work to save the species: PhD students Robyn Taylor and Calum Cunningham, awarded Tasmanian Devil PhD scholarships (**Thursday**), and Honours students Chrissie Ong and Jenna Kingi, awarded Tasmanian Devil Honours Scholarships (**Saturday**).

Inspiring Australia “WhySci hands-on science”

The WhySci display will ignite an interest in the sciences through hands-on learning. Managed by University PhD students, the stall will invite patrons to experiment in making slime, participate in a boat building competition, and gain insight into soundwaves through various activities.

HealthStop tent check-ups

Visitors can receive a general health check-up which includes having their blood pressure taken. A partnership between the Faculty of Health Science, Cancer Council and the Royal College of General Practitioners, the HealthStop tent will be managed by volunteer Faculty of Health students.

Menzies Institute of Medical Research impact

Board the “Biobus”, the Menzies Institute mobile laboratory to learn how and why it collects biobanking samples. Visitors can also find out how they can participate in several studies. Three researchers will also be on site to share the leading work they are conducting into diseases affecting Tasmanians (**Thursday, 2.30pm – 3.30pm**). *Associate Professor Tracey Dickson* is contributing to the latest developments in the understanding of Parkinson's disease, dementia and motor neuron disease. *Dr Catherine Blizzard* is working on developing potential treatments for brain diseases, particularly motor neuron disease, and defining the causes. *Emily Handley* a PhD student, is looking into the changes between brain connections that take place in the early stages of fronto-temporal dementia and motor neuron disease.

University Motorsports challenge

Patrons can test their racing track prowess in the University Motorsports team's racing simulator. The team will be displaying their 2015 competition car and will challenge spectators to beat their race times for top spot on the Agfest leader board.

Daily News Feed

Journalism students will be on site gaining real world experience by crafting an online news feed, as they get the scoop on daily activities. The students will be available for interview and their stories can be accessed on the Agfest website.

Agfest Learning Trail adventure

The University will be hosting a Learning Trail initiative, an activity which challenges young students to travel around Agfest and collect stamps for their passports through participating in hands-on activities. Students will be issued certificates on completion of their adventure. Passports can be downloaded from the Agfest website, collected at the gate or from the University tent.

The University of Tasmania tent can be found on site 404 along 4th Avenue.

Information released by:

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