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COUNTDOWN TO YEAR OF SCIENCE CONTINUES COPUS participants build momentum for nationwide celebration of science in 2009

SARASOTA, FL – Momentum continues to build for the Year of Science 2009 as plans for the year-long celebration, led by participants in the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS), take shape. With only six months left until the festivities begin, members of the scientific community are thinking about how to leverage individual and collective efforts to provide opportunities for the general public to engage in and explore the process and nature of science in 2009.

Participants in COPUS are supporting Year of Science 2009 in a variety of ways. Judy Scotchmoor, of the COPUS Steering Committee reflects-- “By simply registering your organization, adding a Year of Science logo to your Web site and promotional materials, and spreading the word about YoS09 to your colleagues, you are supporting this initiative – it is that simple!”

COPUS participants are also elevating the importance of public understanding of science within their activities as they anticipate 2009. The Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology (SICB) will help launch Year of Science 2009 festivities at their annual meeting which begins January 3, 2009 in Boston. SICB leadership is working with members of the Boston COPUS regional hub to integrate informal outreach learning opportunities into their scientific meeting. This will help meeting attendees think about new ways and opportunities to communicate science in their local communities. Likewise, the 2009 National Science Teachers Association national conference in New Orleans will be highlighting YoS09 with the theme *Celebrating the Year of Science ... Laissez les Bons Temps Rouler!* (Let the good times roll!) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Education Council recently voted to have COPUS be their official theme for 2009.

Kendra Rand represented the Society of Physics Students at the first COPUS Regional hub meeting this past March. “In my attendance at the regional hub meeting, I caught a glimpse of the potential of this Coalition. Through discussions with representatives from science museums, science cafes, schools, and a variety of other organizations, I realized that there were many opportunities for collaborations and resource sharing between our members and these other organizations, opportunities that weren’t even on my radar!” Her enthusiasm has sparked the

formation of a student thematic hub for COPUS which focuses on student engagement in COPUS and YoS09 across scientific disciplines.

At COPUS Central, energetic individuals from diverse participating organizations are lending their expertise to guide the development of the public portal for Year of Science 2009. This Web site will build on and highlight existing resources from the scientific community, enabling the public to engage with science through the event database, explore multimedia Web resources, and locate citizen science activities in which they can participate. In keeping with the twelve themed months (available for viewing at www.yearofscience2009.org), the website will have 12 designated sections full of interactive and informative content providing a rich experience that will help make science personally meaningful and tangible for casual browsers and science enthusiasts alike.

Richard O'Grady, Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences affirms, "Excitingly, the momentum of the Year of Science 2009 initiative is growing, but we recognize that the COPUS network needs to be much larger to truly reach into our nation's communities and bring conversations about science to the dinner tables of the American people in 2009. We have set our sights high with a new target goal of 500 participating organizations by mid-September and 2000 when Year of Science launches this January." COPUS participants will be critically important in helping build the network to meet this goal. There is much potential for growth when we consider expanding the communication network to more geographic locations and types of community organizations such as schools, community groups, and beyond.

For more information about COPUS and the Year of Science 2009, please visit:

www.copusproject.org
www.yearofscience2009.org
<http://blogs.aibs.org/copus/>

About COPUS

Support for COPUS planning workshops was provided by the National Science Foundation under Grant Nos. EAR-0606600 and EAR-0628790 to the University of California Museum of Paleontology. The cognizant fiduciary body for COPUS and the Year of Science 2009 project is the American Institute of Biological Sciences Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is providing staffing support, IT, and other resources. The Geological Society of America, the University of California Museum of Paleontology, and the National Science Teachers Association are also contributing funds for COPUS and Year of Science 2009. The Steering Committee welcomes support from additional scientific organizations and is also pursuing funding from federal agencies and private foundations.