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**Invent the Future Challenge Summit:
Today's Middle School Students Solve Tomorrow's Problems**

On Sunday, May 20th, at the Invent the Future Challenge Summit, the community will get a glimpse of the future as hundreds of students from the region showcase their prototyped solutions to environmental problems. But anyone who focuses solely on the students' innovative designs will miss the bigger story. The Invent the Future Challenge represents a new, district-wide approach that's transforming STEM education in our region, and providing our kids with the skills they'll need to invent the future with creativity and confidence.

The Invent the Future Challenge is the cornerstone of a groundbreaking public-private partnership between KID Museum, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery County, and private sponsors, designed to build interest in STEM and promote innovative thinking. Over 500 students have taken part in the Challenge this school year, the majority of whom are students of from low-income families and communities traditionally underrepresented in STEM careers.

Through hands-on, maker-based learning, small teams of students tackled some of our planet's biggest challenges. Milan, a 7th grade girl from Argyle Middle School, along with her team, designed tiny robots that can pollinate plants to address the declining bee population. Erik's team built a prototype box that uses solar energy to produce heat and light to help the victims of hurricanes. Milan and Erik, along with hundreds of other middle schoolers, were trained in hands-on skills like coding and fabrication at KID Museum. And through the act of designing their own inventions, they learned to think critically, persevere through failure, collaborate with

others, and solve problems creatively — the same skills cited by Google and others as critical for workplace success.

“This initiative is about more than teaching kids to use a power saw or program an Arduino,” says Cara Lesser, Founder and CEO of KID Museum. “It’s about empowering kids to drive their own learning, while teaching them skills that they will rely on throughout their lives.”

“We want all of our students to benefit from high-quality science, technology, engineering, and math learning opportunities,” states Dr. Jack Smith, Superintendent of MCPS. “Schools cannot do it alone. Our partnership with KID Museum allows us to work together to prepare our children for the future workforce, where success increasingly depends upon creative problem-solving and innovative thinking.”

Especially important is reaching girls, students of color, and students from low-income families — those recently identified as “lost Einsteins,” kids whose potential is lost because of lack of opportunity. The Equality of Opportunity Project study that coined this phrase rightly identifies this as a loss for not only those children, but for our society as a whole. The Invent the Future Challenge, which intentionally reaches traditionally underserved students, is helping to close this gap.

The Summit — the Challenge’s culminating event — is free and open to the public, and will be held on *May 20th, from 1:00 - 4:00, at Magruder High School in Rockville*. The event is a celebration of innovation, where students of all backgrounds will showcase their prototyped inventions and highlight the invention process. A team of expert judges will award prizes in five categories: originality, team collaboration, design process, potential impact, and presentation. Guest speakers include Alan Gregerman, whose work focuses on helping people and organizations to ‘unlock their genius,’ and Kristof Grina, Founder of Up Top Acres, an initiative that transforms rooftops into urban gardens.

“The students who’ve been a part of this program are often the ones that fly under the radar.” says Stephanie Seo, STEM Team Leader for Parkland Middle School, which has been a part of KID Museum invention programming for four years. “But here, in this program, they’re given a chance to shine. The students are learning in ways that are fun, which is what a classroom should look like — and it can be done!”

About KID Museum

KID Museum is an independent, mission-driven nonprofit serving 55,000 people annually in its creative learning space, on-site at schools, and at community events. A national leader in maker-based education, the museum seeks to spark the creative potential of all children, and inspire the next generation of innovators. Core to its mission is ensuring that all youth, especially those who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields, have access to transformative learning opportunities that will pave the way for their future success — and the shared success of our community. For more information, please visit www.kid-museum.org.