



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **SciTech Announces New Executive Director, Board Members, Office Location, Partnerships, and Website to Launch a 2.0 Vision for 2024**

*Batavia, IL:* “New” is the 2024 theme for SciTech 2.0 as it re-introduces itself to the Fox River Valley as a mobile STEM education provider. Nick Scanlan, SciTech Board President, comments, “SciTech has made a big pivot from hosting a museum to being a mobile STEM service provider, where we go to the learners.” Scanlan continues, “A key driver to moving SciTech’s 2.0 vision forward as a mobile STEM provider was hiring an entrepreneurial-minded educator to lead the organization. We are happy to announce that Amanda Mistretta is the new SciTech Executive Director.” Mistretta filled the vacancy left in June 2023 when Faith Slowinski resigned.

Amanda Mistretta, formerly the SciTech Director of Education, shares, “I am honored and excited to embark on this new journey as the Executive Director of SciTech. With over a decade of experience in education and a background in entrepreneurship, I am committed to driving innovation and fostering a dynamic learning environment that empowers the next generation of STEM innovators and problem solvers.” Mistretta is already making an impact, from collaborating with interns from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and potential partners to helping the organization size its assets and operations to the right degree. Matching the 2.0 vision for SciTech is a new location for their office at 336 McKee Street in Batavia, IL. The new location helps the organization right-size its operational space and expenses and provides a central location for serving the Fox River Valley. The new Batavia location is not customer-facing but rather an office to operate the mobile STEM programs.

Also, on behalf of the board of directors, Scanlan is pleased to announce the addition of three new board members who joined SciTech in the fall of 2023:

William “Will” Perkins: Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Chief Mission & Impact Officer

Donna Allen: ComEd, Exelon, and Quality Training Systems, Program Manager (retired)

Amanda Pammer: Ford & Britton, P.C., Attorney

Matching the new Executive Director, location, and board members is the vision to serve the Fox Valley as a mobile STEM provider instead of a museum. The new direction as a mobile STEM startup harkens back to SciTech’s origins, when its founder, Dr. Ernest Malamud would lead STEM demonstrations in living rooms before there was museum space. Aligned with the new direction, SciTech is developing a new curriculum to reflect priority areas identified in their 2019 Master Planning and recent 2.0 Input sessions with key stakeholders. The 2024 theme for SciTech is “EcoExplorers of the Fox Valley: STEM in Nature and All Around Us.” Development and delivery partners include Friends of the Fox River and IMSA (interns). New programs kick off on January 27th, starting with the Batavia Public Library Science Fair from 11 am to 2 pm. Moving forward, SciTech is engaging with Fox Valley public libraries, park districts, community centers, and organizations to promote STEM learning for young learners.

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More information is available at their new website: [GoSciTech.org](https://www.goscitech.org). SciTech is also on social media at “SciTech” on Facebook and “scitechfoxvalley” on Instagram.

For more information about SciTech, contact Amanda Mistretta at [director.scitech@gmail.com](mailto:director.scitech@gmail.com) or visit their website at [GoScitech.org](https://www.goscitech.org).

### **SciTech History Highlights:**

Inspired by his sabbatical work at the San Francisco Exploratorium in 1982, Fermilab scientist Dr. Ernest Malamud began a quest to establish a STEM hands-on science museum in Chicago’s western suburbs. The vision included input from an international panel in 1987 that imagined a children’s science museum accessible to all children. In 1988, SciTech was recognized as a business in DuPage County and began programming. Starting small with science Show-and-Tell meetings in his living room, Dr. Malamud launched SciTech at the Benedictine College Krasna Center. Growth during a one-year temporary residence at the 7,000 square foot donated space at the Iroquois Center in Naperville, found SciTech looking for larger space. Coincidentally, the City of Aurora had recently acquired the old post office at 18 W. Benton St. and was looking for an anchor tenant to draw people to downtown as part of its downtown revitalization plan. A timely editorial by community activist and SciTech board member Marie Wilkinson, led to an agreement, making 18 W. Benton Street SciTech’s new home in June of 1990.

The 1990s brought the growth of new exhibits and the renovation of the SciTech’s basement to host exhibits, classrooms, and outreach to schools. In 2000, Ronen Mir became the Executive Director, and major capital improvements were made by developing a Mezzanine level and auditorium. The Great Recession created uncertainty for SciTech’s future; the founders had mostly retired by 2008, and many SciTech staff were laid off in 2009. By 2011, SciTech once again found footing and expanded plans, adding an outdoor park, expanding the gift shop, and adding new exhibits. A grant from the Dunham Fund helped launch the SciTech Discovery Preschool, unique with its STEM focus.

In 2013, Arlene Hawks became the Executive Director, creating multiple new exhibits under her tenure. Fueled by a grant from NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab for a new STEAM computer lab, as well as Google Earth and augmented reality exhibits helped to bring updated features to the science museum.

2017 saw area pre-schools adopting their own STEAM curriculum, which resulted in a decline in enrollment and then the closure of SciTech’s preschool. Available museum spaces were converted, and “Life on the Fox River” exhibit debuted. The need for a bigger vision became evident and found SciTech at a crossroads in 2019. The next steps needed to be taken towards a more serious science museum and destination. The SciTech board responded by involving the community in developing a multi-million-dollar comprehensive plan for reimagining the museum. In 2020, when the new plan’s fundraising should have commenced and the vision moved forward, SciTech’s doors closed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

A turnover of Executive Directors followed, with SciTech’s doors remaining closed for two years due to the pandemic. SciTech innovated early in the pandemic, providing online offerings, and surviving with the support of PPP grants and reserves. In April of 2021, Faith Slowinski became the Executive Director during an extremely uncertain shut-down scenario. A lack of funds and the ongoing toll of the pandemic led to the layoff of SciTech’s staff and the pausing of capital plans. SciTech worked with the City of Aurora to try and make plans for the museum viable, and in late 2021, it was even offered the Benton Street building if SciTech made major capital improvements. Lacking available capital funds for 18 W. Benton, the SciTech board voted to vacate the building in the spring of 2022 to enable the City of Aurora’s plans for new redevelopment. SciTech then relocated temporarily to 105 E. Galena Blvd in downtown Aurora for one year to recalibrate and, in August 2023, moved their office to Batavia, IL, at 336 McKee Street to serve the community as a mobile STEM education provider.