

Driving change, creating better communities

BY BRIDGETTE DONALD & STEPHANIE JONG

THE International Conference On Transnational Collaboration in STEAM Education 2013 kicked off yesterday at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) in Kota Samarahan.

The conference, held as part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Festival (STEMfest) 2013, is an international gathering of keynote speakers who are leaders of industry, policy and academia, sharing their ideas and insights.

One of the keynote speakers was Ralph L. "Skip" Boyce, President of Boeing South East Asia. He sat down with *New Sarawak Tribune* for a short interview after presenting his paper to an audience consisting of both local and international delegates at the conference yesterday morning.

"We at Boeing aim to build better communities," he began. In line with this believe, Boeing has been investing in numerous education programmes globally and in South East Asia.

"For our Global Corporate Citizenship programmes, we have a budget of US\$660,000 and we have seven projects in six different countries. Among these, the three main education projects are Malaysia Aerospace Education Day, partnerships with Kenan Institute Asia in Thailand and giving back to street children in Vietnam," he said.

"Boeing partnered with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ministry of Education together with the National Science Centre that invited 200 students from 34 schools to a Boeing sponsored event in Kuala Lumpur."

He said in China, Boeing had launched a programme called 'Soaring With Your Dream', an aviation education programme targeted at elementary schools. Launched in 2009, the programme involved 645 schools, with over 45,000 students benefiting from it.

Boeing also introduced a robotics programme in Beijing, sponsoring 40 teams and 20 schools participating in the programme.

"We consider new proposals every year. And with projects which are doing well, we continue them to benefit the local community," he continued, adding that the success rates of these projects were measured by a system called 'Matrix'.

"I'm open to proposals, and those who are interested to know more on Boeing International activities can go to our website for a better insight," he explained.

Representing Myanmar at the conference was Dr. Tin Hliang, Science Advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi. He was recently elected into the Parliamentary Committee and his immediate task is to lead the upgrading of the science programme at Yangon University.

"We are currently proposing new education laws and the draft-

ing of these new laws are currently being led by Aung San Suu Kyi. We hope that with the implementation of this new law, we will have to change the way we teach science to our younger generation. We hope that with this change, we are able to connect our country to the world in general and particularly to our Asian partners."

"We are currently at a challenging stage because our teachers lack the proper exposure and our community has no exposure from the outside world. Unfortunately, our government have not produced a well defined education policy and we've only started on drafting these policies. It will take time for these laws to be implemented. However, I hope that one day we are able to create science circuses to roam the country and move across borders, thus taking science to the masses," concluded Dr. Hliang in his presentation to the audience at the conference.

World Conference on Science and Technology Education (WorldSTE)

Meanwhile, Standing Committee member of International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE), Elaine Horne, who is also a Senior EcoEducation Officer in the Department of Environment and Conservation Government of Western Australia shared a little about her conference.

"About three years ago, Sarawak put in a bid for the world conference on science and technology to ICASE. The bid was successful, and the Sarawak Convention Bureau are to be thanked for their generous donation of funding. Since then, we've been involved in producing this large meeting and making sure we have an excellent conference with high quality speakers - that's been my major concern that we have that sort of conference," she said.

"The main thing about this conference is the quality of the professional experience and also the professional networking amongst the delegates. At the end of our conference, just before the closing, we'll be announcing the Kuching Declaration on science and technology education. There will be a large component of STEM education from ICASE, and also part of



ELAINE Horne, Co-Convenor of ICASE (International Council of Associations for Science Education).



DR Tin Hliang, Science Advisor to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar.

the declaration is on sustainability and environmental education," she continued.

"The delegates have been very good and successful in putting out their ideas and thoughts. The declaration is led by them, so it's a delegate-led/produced declaration."

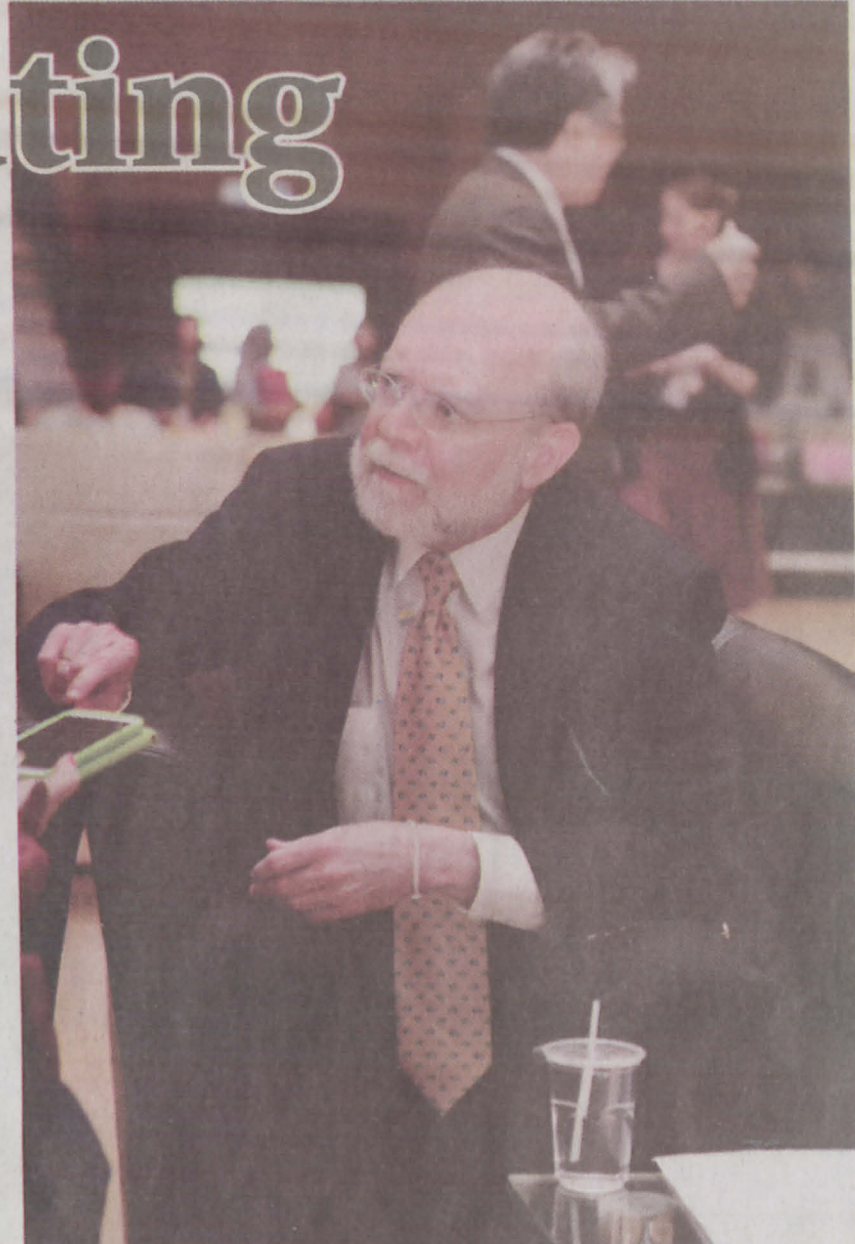
"We thank the government of Sarawak for hosting us, and particularly Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) for hosting this conference. The venue they have provided is a brilliant world-class conference venue. We also thank their previous and current Vice Chancellors very much for providing this beautiful place for us to gather," Elaine concluded with a smile.

Dr. Khairuddin on STEMfest 2013

We got hold of Professor Datuk

Dr. Khairuddin Abd Hamid, STEMfest's Head of Local Organising Committee, and Lecturer (Faculty of Engineering) of Unimas, to elaborate more on STEMfest and its connection with Sarawak as its host.

"Our bidding for Sarawak to become the host for STEMfest was a very competitive one. We used our State's attributes as selling points, such as the Sarawak tourism and of course Kuching City itself. When they (organisers) came here, they were very impressed with the support from the Sarawak Government and other committees. No doubt, they agreed to have Kuching as the venue for this event," he said in a short interview



RALPH L. 'Skip' Boyce, President of Boeing Southeast Asia. PHOTOS: LESTER GERES

with *New Sarawak Tribune*.

"We got the blessing from the State Government to have this fest as part of an event in celebration of Sarawak's 50th independence in Malaysia. A lot of parties are working together to make sure this event is a success."

"Another beneficial outcome of STEMfest is from the many important people brought down to Kuching by organisers - those from Boeing, Microsoft, established universities, and experienced scientists - to name a few. We hope that lecturers, teachers, students, and general local citizens can learn from those individuals. As far as Sarawak is concerned, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education are going to be critical components of the

future development of the State," he went on saying.

"We need to break the perception that the mentioned subjects are difficult fields to understand. Therefore, teachers and practitioners must use different approaches in order to cultivate a passion in children to learn all those (subjects)."

"We hope to have Sarawak stand out in the world map through STEM education. This is something that is invaluable. All Sarawakians should feel proud, as we are not only representing our State - we represent Malaysia. I think this is the best opportunity to show to the world that Sarawak is a modern State, a State where we are ready for further progress," said Dr. Khairuddin.

noteworthy...

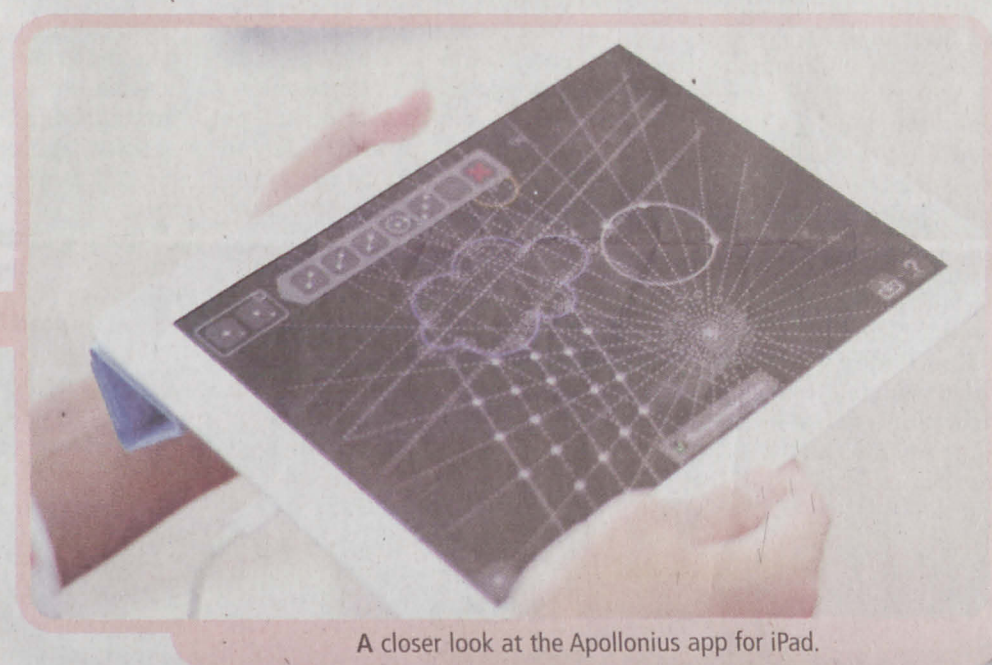


ADOLFO Rodriguez, 27-year-old software developer / mathematician (PhD) of Merchlar / UQAM in Montreal, demonstrating an app called Apollonius, which he developed for the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch.

Available for purchase at the App Store, Apollonius is an interactive geometry app for the iOS platform which is inspired by software such as GeoGebra and Cabri, but specifically designed for touch screen iOS devices, allowing for a smooth interactive experience.

Visitors to the STEMfest 2013 in Unimas, Kuching may check out Rodriguez's exhibition booth at the event, where they will be able to find out more from the young man himself about the Apollonius app for iOS.

PHOTOS: LESTER GERES



A closer look at the Apollonius app for iPad.



PROFESSOR Datuk Dr. Khairuddin Abd Hamid, STEMfest's Head of Local Organising Committee.