Driving change, creating better communities

BY BRIDGETTE DONALD & STEPHANE JONG

The International Conference On International Collaboration in STEAM Education 2013 kicked off yesterday in Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) in Kota Samarahan.

The conference, held as part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Festival 2013, is an international gathering of national 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 Southeast Asia. He sat down with Sarawak Tribune for a short interview after presenting his paper, 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, 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$960,000 and we have seven projects in six different countries. Among these, the three main education projects are in Malaysia, Vietnam, and partnerships with Kenan-Flagler Business School in the United States and the Thai-Japanese School in Thailand.

"We see education as a key driving force in building communities, and we believe that by investing in education, we are investing in the future of our communities." Boyce said.

Meanwhile, Standing Committee member of International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE), Elaine Horne, who is also a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Environmental and Conservation Science, University of Western Australia, shared a little about her conference.

"ICASE's 2013 conference, which was held in 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 that it brings together the different aspects of science education in an unusual way. It's about bringing together different perspectives and ideas."

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

"Our bidding to host Sarawak to become the host for the STEMFest was a very competitive one. We used our State's attributes as well as 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 a short interview with 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 these 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 for further progress," said Dr. Khairuddin.

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

A closer look at the Apollonius app for iPad.

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

ADOLFO Rodriguez, 27-year-old software developer / mathematician (PhD) of Mercllar at 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 can 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.

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