

Jim Wallace had the following reflections when initially nominated to NJIHoF:

While I'm honored to be nominated, and will take credit for starting and coordinating SSS for the first twelve years, others, especially Michael Aaron Flicker, have not only kept it going, but built a committed, on-going Committee that has sustained and in fact vastly improved the event.

We started Super Science Saturday because we believed if you can turn kids on to the wonders of science, challenge them but make it fun, there is no limit to what they will learn and what they can accomplish. The event was popular because it was non-competitive, voluntary, combined adults with kids, and was relatively easy to put together and sustain.

Realizing an invention can be a process as well as an object, below is a list of things that maybe help make SSS an "invention" worthy of being recognized. (Actually, the Award was for "Advancement of Invention and Process.") All were worked out through multiple discussions over many years at Volunteer Committee meetings:

-1) FUN, EASY, CHEAP – And Be Safe. These guided our orientation. FUN not only for those attending but for the Committee itself; EASY: put in whatever effort you can, but keep it sustainable (better to put in less effort year after year than burn yourself out in one year); CHEAP: keep expenses to a minimum; and of course, always be aware of safety.

We also wanted something the Committee and presenters would want to continue: one-half day, keep time commitment to a minimum (the Committee meets monthly starting in the Fall) and make participation in the Committee itself fun & rewarding. We don't charge admittance or use large corporate funding. (Initially the District covered the minimal major costs. Now it's the Ridgewood Educational Foundation and Valley Hospital.)

-2) We wanted something where student presenters would be side-by-side with adult-enthusiast presenters and adult-staffed "enterprises" in a non-competitive effort that lasts only half a day. (Again, the "half-day" is key to helping the longevity.)

-3) We intentionally worked to involve students from all grade levels at not only presenting but helping "put it on." (Student Electrical Teams do the necessary setups, Boy Scouts make the Tinker Table work, and High School students are part of the Volunteer Committee.)

-4) The specifics of our Volunteer Committee should be included as a key part of the invention. One would have to look around to see how other "science fairs" are put together, but I doubt you'd find one that is annually ongoing for a long period and where students were part of the committee? And persons not even from that school district take ownership! Committee members report the collaborative nature and energy of the group helps keep them coming back!

-5) The Hall of Science is unique in that it motivates science-fair type efforts in many of the elementary and middle schools. We worked hard to make this happen. Elementary schools have their own "fairs" prior to SSS so that those students can bring their work to SSS. (We have been fortunate that Sheila Brogan, Hall of Science Coordinator and Board of Education member, sustains and improves this each

year.) It also spawned other efforts, like the "after-school workshops" that Mel Powers (a former Wallace student, as is Michael Aaron) initiated and continues. ("Student presentations" is NOT unique: that's what science fairs are. But something that impacts annually a whole school district, that maybe is.)

In summary, key aspects of the invention include: 1) the design and longevity of the actual event; 2) the design and collegiality of the Volunteer Committee; and 3) the impact on science education in the district. Of course these are in addition to what science fairs and expos do: turn kids and adults on to the wonders and excitement of science and the scientific endeavor!

Jim Wallace
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