

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 24, 2021

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Illinois DoIT to Present Tech Prairie STEAM EXPO at 2021 Illinois State Fair *Last Call for Expo Sponsors and Exhibitors*

Springfield, IL - The Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) will debut the Tech Prairie STEAM Expo at this year's Illinois State Fair. The event will provide fairgoers with opportunities to experience the many ways Illinois is advancing the areas of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics).

Along with DoIT, the STEAM Expo is being presented by the University of Illinois Extension 4-H, Illinois Innovation Network, Learning Technology Center of Illinois and Illinois Digital Educators Alliance (IDEA). The Expo will be held from August 18-22, 2021 in the Orr Building and will highlight Drone and Esports competitions, as well as many innovations and emerging career and educational opportunities in STEAM fields being advanced throughout the state.

"We are excited to kick off the Tech Prairie STEAM Expo, where fairgoers can engage with innovative technologies and presentations from organizations across Illinois," said **Jennifer Ricker, DoIT Acting Secretary and State of Illinois CIO**. "The Expo provides an opportunity to showcase the breadth and importance of STEAM initiatives, which play a critical role in cultivating our future technology leaders for Illinois."

As part of Tech Prairie, the first State Fair drone competition is scheduled for Friday, August 20, 2021 in the Multi-Purpose Arena on the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Pilots, age 10 and up, are welcome to compete and there is no fee to enter. The competition is sponsored by "Grow Our Own" Minority Participation Program, which is supported by the City of Springfield, Sangamon County and Hanson Professional Services Inc. The Central Illinois Drone Racers are managing the event and prizes will be awarded to winners.

An Esports competition is planned for Saturday, August 21, 2021 in the Tech Prairie STEAM Expo. Four separate games will be part of the in-person competition with prize money awarded in each age category and game. There is no fee to enter. The Esports competition is organized by the University of Illinois Extension 4-H.

The STEAM Expo will run during the second half of the Fair to highlight K-12 and postsecondary education, business, industry, research, and development related to STEAM in Illinois. Feature attractions planned include a mobile CNC lab, flight simulator, virtual reality opportunities, health sciences stations, aerospace exhibits, and the Hip Hop Xpress Bus. Tech Playground interactive activities planned include virtual reality exhibitions.

More information on the Tech Prairie STEAM Expo can be found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/doi-steam/Pages/2021-STEAM-Expo.aspx> and those interested in participating as an exhibitor or sponsor may contact DoIT.Steam@Illinois.gov.

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