

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



wisconsin
SCIENCE FESTIVAL?
CURIOSITY UNLEASHED. 

Dear friends, supporters and partners,

The 2021 Wisconsin Science Festival was the first of the festival's second decade and took place, like the event that preceded it, in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we had the advantage of having tested numerous ways of connecting with audiences in person, outdoors, online and more the year before. We built on those approaches and devised new ones aimed at maintaining and enhancing vital connections through our shared love of exploration, experimentation and education.

In some ways, the context of this year's festival was as different from the previous year as last year's was from everything that came before. We experienced a huge wellspring of interest from presenters around the state eager to reconnect with audiences, to share their passion for science and love of sparking excitement through hands-on activities, exploration of nature, discussion and debate, glimpses into new avenues of research and so much more. We were able to hold more than 90 events in person, ranging from street fairs to nature walks to talks indoors with masks on.

A hallmark of this year's festival was a renewed emphasis on taking science to the people of Wisconsin and meeting them where they are. Science on the Square in downtown Madison shared the streets with the Madison Night Market and brought over **40 hands-on activities**, demos and science shows to more than **12,500 curious participants** on a clear and chilly Friday night. More than **35 schools engaged** with **17 scientists** through field trips from the comfort and safety of their classrooms. And for the first time, more than **2,000 science kits** and activities were delivered to families throughout the state by **35 libraries** in **26 counties** through the inaugural Science in a Bag program.

All told, more than **43,000 people** across Wisconsin once again connected to one another and to science practitioners and professionals from **87 partner organizations** at more than **170 unique events in 91 communities in 44 Wisconsin counties**. This tremendous engagement was made possible thanks to the more than **18 sponsor organizations**, **150 community partners**, **60 volunteers**, **200 STEM professionals** and our supporting organizations: WARF, UW-Madison, the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery and the Morgridge Institute for Research.

Thank you for another fantastic year and here's to our next decade of unleashing our curiosity together!

Yours in curiosity,

Laura Heisler

Director, Wisconsin Science Festival

Director of Programming, Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation

Director of Outreach, Morgridge Institute for Research



About the Wisconsin Science Festival

The Wisconsin Science Festival is a statewide celebration of science, technology, engineering, art and math. With events encompassing hands-on science exhibitions, demonstrations, performances, pub nights, workshops and more, the festival truly offers something for everyone. We aim to inspire and engage everyone in the enterprise of science and discovery; to cultivate curiosity; to communicate the power of knowledge and creativity to change our world view; to promote innovation and to cultivate the next generation of global citizens. As a grassroots movement of enthusiasts throughout the state, the Wisconsin Science Festival is presented by a growing coalition of Wisconsin's science and arts communities each fall.

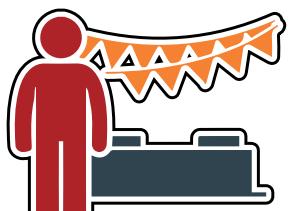


AT A GLANCE

2021



1 Weekend



331
Events



43,000 Attendees



120,848
website page views



18
SPONSORS



44
counties

64% of events were
outside Dane County



100+
STEM professionals



SPONSORS

2021

The Wisconsin Science Festival would not be possible without the financial and in-kind contributions of our sponsors and partners. From providing funding to hosting events and serving as volunteers, thank you for making this annual Wisconsin tradition possible.

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#WiSciFest Press

3 million

impressions via mobile, online, radio, TV and print advertising

33 news outlets

reaching more than 3 million news and media website viewers

#WiSciFest webpages were viewed over

120,000 times in October



WISCONSIN
SCIENCE FESTIVAL®
CURIOSITY UNLEASHED.?

STATEWIDE STORIES

2021

Science in a Bag

A hallmark of the Wisconsin Science Festival is the expo at the Discovery Building, which draws in thousands of school groups and families from across the state and beyond each year. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we had to cancel the expo for the second consecutive year. In its place, we pioneered a new initiative that we hope to continue for years to come: Science in a Bag.

In collaboration with key UW-Madison partners and stakeholders, we produced eight different sets of hands-on kits with activities related to science, technology, engineering, art and math for young scientists to explore. Kit topics ranged from nitrogen fixing in soil to building a triboelectric nanogenerator. Digital activities and videos helped supplement the activities for the eager young scientists who wanted to explore even more fun.

With the help of our many dedicated volunteers, these kits were packaged into 2,000 Wisconsin Science Festival drawstring backpacks and sent out to 35 different libraries throughout Wisconsin including locations in Superior, Kenosha, Algoma, Lancaster and many more in between. Several locations reported the kits drew in new people and were claimed in a matter of hours.

The activities were not only engaging and fun experiments, but each had a meaningful connection to science and research happening in our state. The Science in a Bag program truly embodies the Wisconsin Idea at its core and was a successful way to allow young scientists to safely and profoundly experience our state's innovation firsthand.

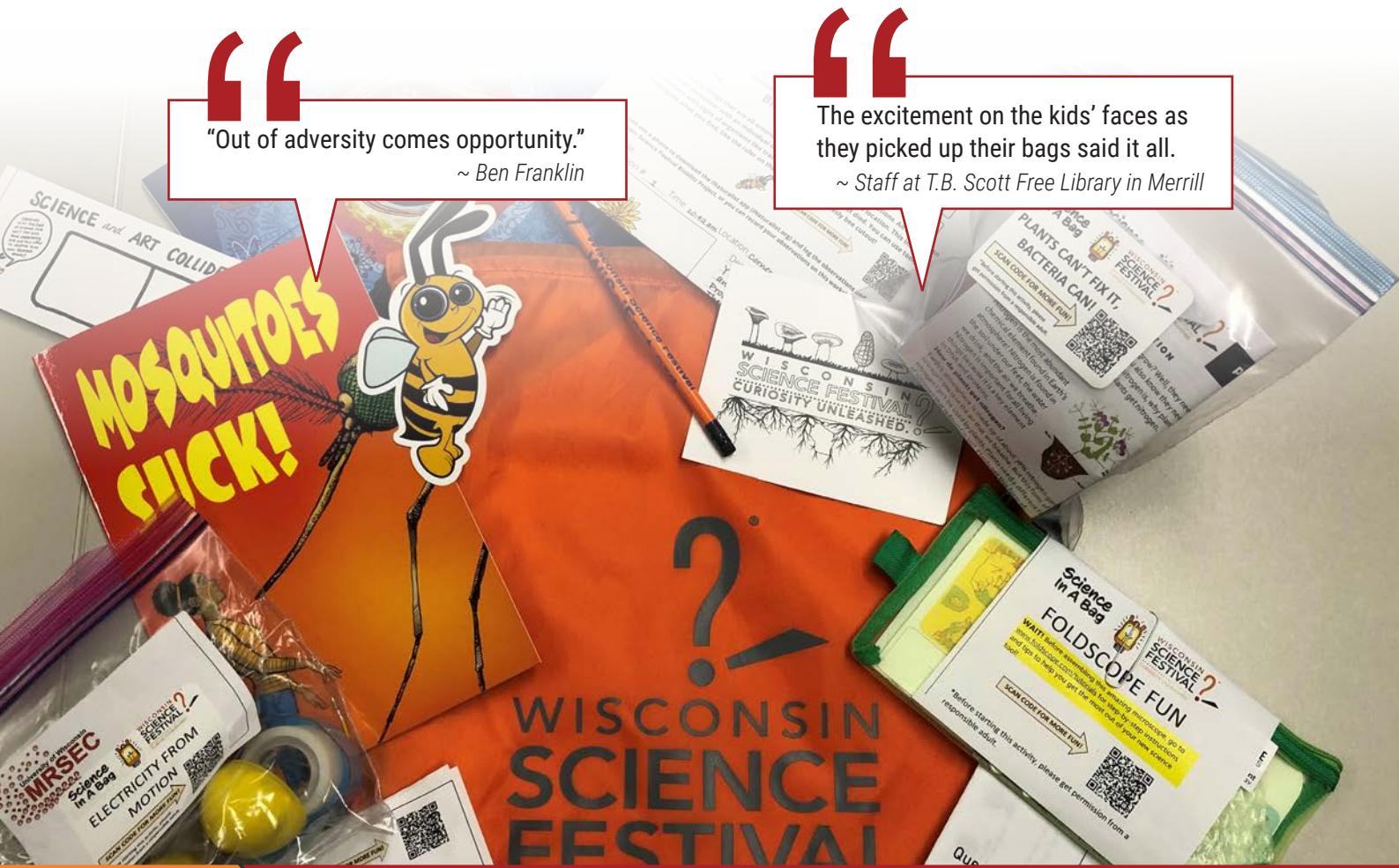


“Out of adversity comes opportunity.”

~ Ben Franklin

“The excitement on the kids' faces as they picked up their bags said it all.

~ Staff at T.B. Scott Free Library in Merrill



STATEWIDE

Fun Focus on Fungi

Fungi in Wisconsin go well beyond button mushrooms and meaty portobellos. They are important to our state in ways that range from posing serious threats to crops and ecosystems to being essential for numerous organisms and industries like brewing and cheese-making. They even hold promise for treating mental health concerns.

UW-Madison is one of the premier research universities for interdisciplinary mycology research in the world, and the 2021 Wisconsin Science Festival spotlighted the depth and breadth of this expertise through panel talks, citizen science components and even drive-in movies.

"Because fungi are found throughout Wisconsin and play such varied roles in our state, they offer a way for people to connect with science in their neighborhood and explore their curiosity," said Laura Heisler, director and co-founder of the Wisconsin Science Festival.

Specimens of mushrooms and other fungi were on display at Science on the Square. Visitors to downtown Madison explored hands-on activities from groups like the Wisconsin Mycological Society and then could really sink their teeth into the science with a slice of 'Mushroom Magic' created by Ian's Pizza just for the festival.

Two panel discussions at the Discovery Building focused on fungi and together engaged more than 450 people. Promega CEO and longtime Wisconsin Science Festival gold sponsor Bill Linton introduced the first panel, *Magic Mushrooms? Research on Fungus-Derived Hallucinogens at UW-Madison and Beyond*. This session, moderated by Wisconsin Public Radio's Steve Paulson, highlighted the new transdisciplinary center and master's degree program launched by the UW-Madison School of Pharmacy to support research on the potential value of psychedelic compounds from fungi and other plant sources to address a range of conditions. The second panel, *Fungi in Wisconsin: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, was moderated by Wisconsin Public Radio host Larry Meiller and delved into the roles that fungi play in supporting and threatening important Wisconsin habitats and industries.

Mesmerizing mushrooms and a world of wonder headlined the second annual outdoor movie night at the Madison Mallards stadium. Before the lights came down on the approximately 200 people in attendance for showings of *Fantastic Fungi* and *Alice in Wonderland*, experts from the Madison Mycological Society were on hand to answer questions and identify fungal specimens, and students from What's Eating My Plants? (WEMP, an outreach organization from UW-Madison's plant pathology department), shared examples of fungi and fungal diseases.



Field Trips

In 2020 we learned that virtual field trip opportunities for K-12 students during the festival actually increased accessibility and capacity to reach students throughout Wisconsin (and beyond!).

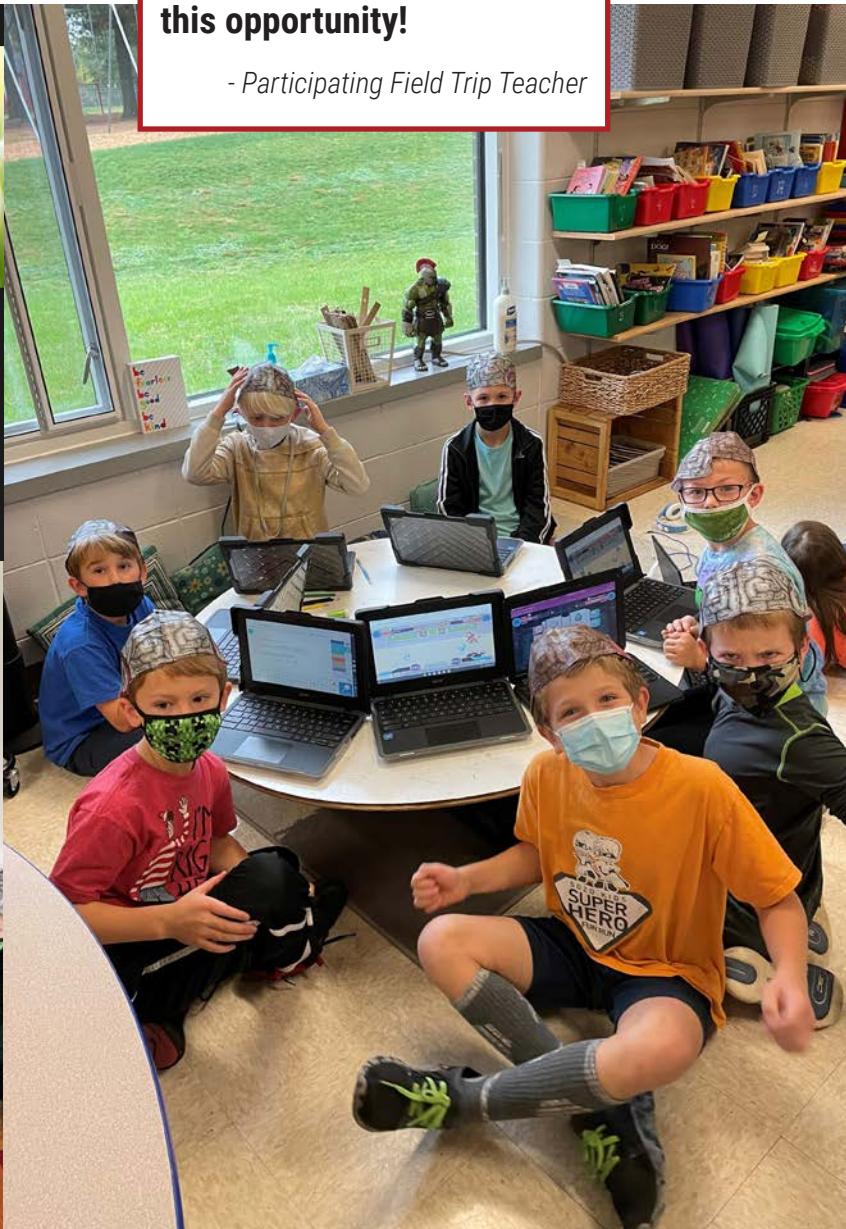
These benefits continued this year as the festival team hosted 11 different virtual field trip sessions over two days, captivating an audience of about 1,500 students and educators from 36 different schools and programs. Roughly 20 STEM professionals, including naturalists, material engineers, neuroscientists, energy industry representatives, geologists, physicists and more, engaged with students via an online webinar and provided an inside look into their labs and lives as scientists.

One field trip student typed in the chat during an early morning session, **“I wanna be a scientist just like you when I grow up,”** a comment that sums up one of the missions of the festival.

“

We just loved the virtual field trip of both BioBlitz and the human brain. The brain hats were a huge hit!! Students were very engaged. Thanks again for this opportunity!

- Participating Field Trip Teacher



STATEWIDE BY THE NUMBERS

2021



331
EVENTS

87
Local organizers held events in
91
communities



Events in...

44

Counties

53

Libraries

6

UW System
Campuses



In the world of virtual events, we have continued to offer Wisconsin Science Festival programming past the four traditional days. In estimating our attendance, we assumed youth views include a parent/guardian attendee and adult audiences to be on average 1 1/2 people.

Science on the Square

At the ever-popular Science on the Square event, held this year in partnership with the Madison Night Market, outdoor STEM-themed activities mixed with vendor tents along State Street. An estimated 12,500 people explored the fusion event that brought science to an unexpected place.

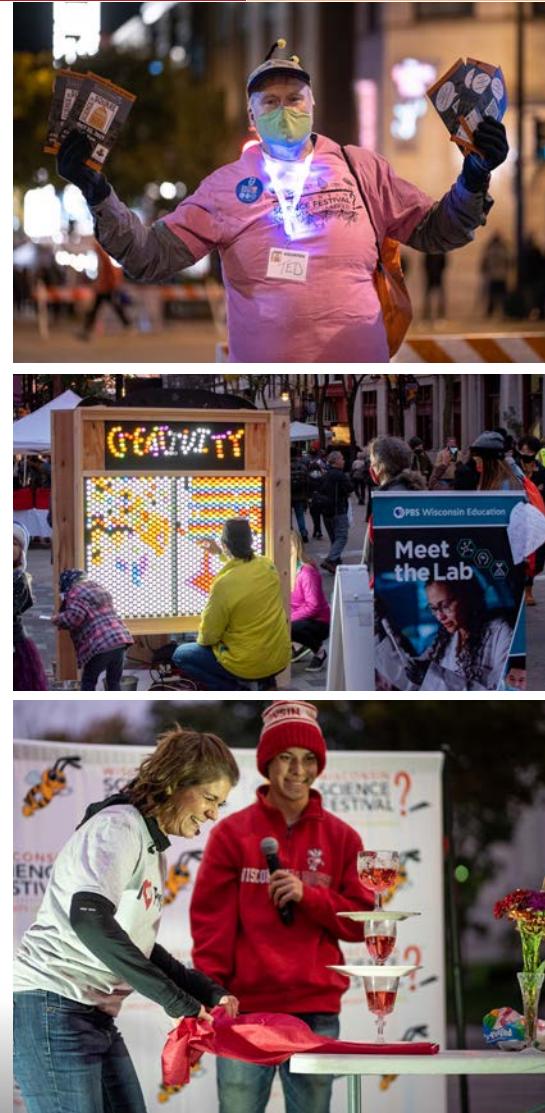
"Science is everywhere, and the Night Market was the perfect place to showcase it," said Sam Mulrooney, operations manager. "Meeting people where they are and highlighting the science and art that happens all around us is what made this event so unique and accessible."

Visitors to downtown Madison could take advantage of hands-on activities from groups like the Wisconsin Robotics Club, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District and the Madison Children's Museum, as well as opportunities for impromptu conversations with campus researchers like Anne Pringle, a professor of botany who studies the ecology and evolution of fungi. The event's center stage, with a backdrop of the beautiful Wisconsin State Capitol, highlighted live physics demonstrations from UW-Madison's Wonders of Physics program.

A storefront scavenger hunt, discounts and giveaways supporting downtown Madison businesses and vendors were added perks throughout the evening's activities. The night concluded with a rooftop stargazing experience at Parthenon Gyros where attendees enjoyed views of Saturn, Jupiter and even four of Jupiter's largest Galilean moons!

Participants of all ages enjoyed this truly unique and impactful blend of science and the local community and are already hopeful for an even bigger event next year.

This event was produced in collaboration with the Madison Central Business Improvement District.





WISCONSIN SCIENCE FESTIVAL? CURIOSITY UNLEASHED.

Top Ten Reasons to Host a **Wisconsin Science Festival** Event

1. Connect with new audiences virtually or in-person
2. Build bridges between STEM role models and the community
3. Create unique experiences for school visits
4. Work with scientists honing their communication skills
5. Show off your work!
6. Experiment and try something new
7. Learn how other organizations are connecting with their communities
8. Raise the profile of STEM throughout Wisconsin by participating in this statewide movement
9. Showcase the intersection of science and the arts
10. Inspire curiosity in our fellow citizens!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2021

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Wisconsin Science Festival

Laura Heisler

Festival Director

Sam Mulrooney

Operations Manager

Coordinators

Becky Balistreri

Shauna Baranczyk

Val Blair

Jerrod Buckner

Dan Murphy

Morgan Olson

Travis Tangen

Jo Withers

Communications

Brian Mattmiller

Jim Mayfield

Chris Najdowski

Jeanan Yasiri Moe

Sally Younger

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Tim Jenquin, Operations Director (*Madison Central BID*)

Michelle Morrison, Programming Coordinator (*Madison Central BID*)

Ben Rush, *Deeper than Data Podcast*

Badger Talks Live

WiSciFest.org

608.316.4382

info@wiscifest.org

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STATEWIDE SITES

2021

STATEWIDE PARTICIPATING SITES

Allen Centennial Garden
Allen F. Blocher Planetarium
Alliant Energy
Antigo Public Library
Aram Public Library
Augusta Memorial Public Library
Aviation Heritage Center of Wisconsin
Badger Precollege
Beloit College
Beloit Public Library
Biocore Outreach Ambassadors
BioPharmaceutical Technology Center Institute
Boddle Learning
Building for Kids Children's Museum
Cable Natural History Museum
Cave of the Mounds National Natural Landmark
Children's Museum of Fond du Lac
The Children's Museum of Green Bay
Crossroads at Big Creek
Dane County 4-H
Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables
DeForest Middle School
DeForest Public Library
Delta Beer Lab
Devil's Lake State Park
E.D. Locke Public Library
Ellsworth Public Library
Elroy Public Library
Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve

Galaudet Gallery
Gearbox Labs
Gundersen Health
Henry Vilas Zoo
Historic Indian Agency House
Horwitz-DeRemer Planetarium
Ingersoll Physics Museum
Kemp Natural Resources Station
Lakeshore State Park
Little Explorers
Logic Puzzle Museum
Madison Ballet
Madison Children's Museum
Matheson Memorial Library
Mead Public Library
MilliporeSigma
Milwaukee Public Museum
Minocqua Public Library
Monona Public Library
Mukwonago Community Library
The New Berlin Public Library-Imaginarium
Overture Center for the Arts
Pauline Haass Public Library Children's Department
PBS Wisconsin Education
Pewaukee Public Library
Riveredge Nature Center
SpinningTop & Yo-Yo Museum
T.B. Scott Free Library
Town Hall Library

Treinen Farm Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch
Universe in the Park
University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center
USDA Forest Service
UW Connects Badger Talks
UW Space Place
UW-Eau Claire - Barron County
UW-Madison
UW-Madison Arboretum
UW-Milwaukee Planetarium
UW-Stevens Point Allen F. Blocher Planetarium
UW-Stevens Point Museum of Natural History
UW-Whitewater - Rock County
W.J. Niederkorn Public Library
Welty Environmental Center
Wisconsin Book Festival
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Energy Institute
Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
Wisconsin Institute for Discovery
Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program
Wisconsin Mycological Society
Wisconsin Science Museum
Wonders of Physics
WUD Film Committee



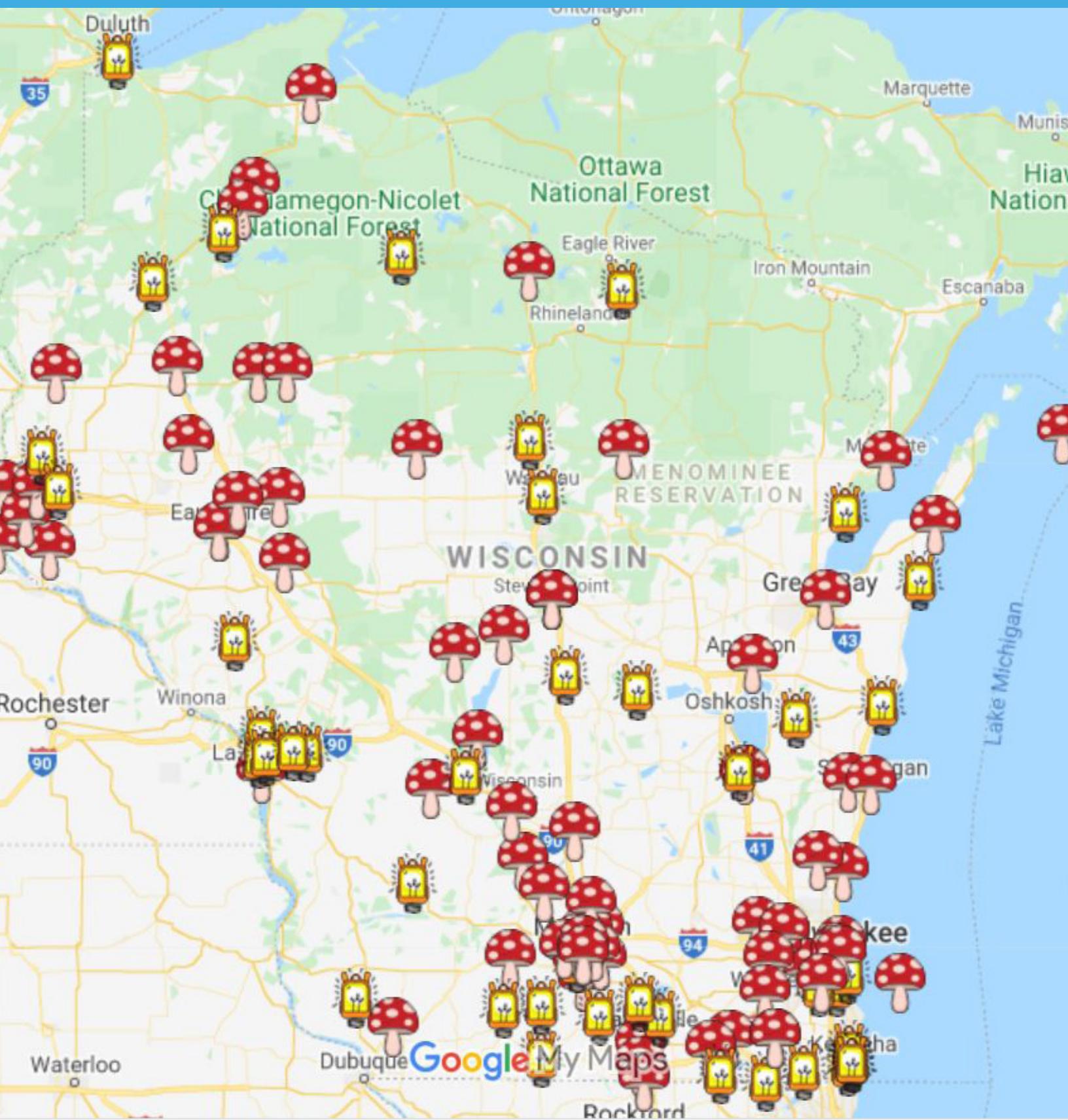
4 likes

cheminartbeloit Woohoo! Goodies for the #WiSciFest have arrived!



STATEWIDE SITES

2021



WISCONSIN SCIENCE FESTIVAL

*Save
the
Date*



October 10-16, 2022

Now a **WEEKLONG** event!