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SIUE invites public to vote in 2018 NSF's STEM for All Video Showcase

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Jessica DeSpain, PhD, associate professor and co-director of the IRIS Center, and Matt Johnson, STEM Center Instructional Designer will be featured in the 2018 STEM for All Video Showcase funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Now in its fourth year, the annual showcase will feature more than 200 innovative projects aimed at improving STEM learning and teaching, which have been funded by the NSF. DeSpain and Johnson will highlight the University's transformative Digital East St. Louis project.

The online event will be held May 14-21 at stemforall2018.videohall.com with the theme "Transforming the Educational Landscape." During the weeklong event, researchers, practitioners, policy makers and members of the public are invited to view the short feature videos, discuss them with the presenters online and vote for their favorites.

The SIUE presentation on Digital East St. Louis will share outcomes of the three-year project that engaged 6th-9th grade students in the creation of a content-rich, digital humanities website about the history and culture of their city. It was a collaborative project between the SIUE STEM Center and IRIS Center for the Digital Humanities.

"We are excited to share the work of our middle school participants from the past three years," said DeSpain, the project's curriculum director. "Throughout the project, in addition to increasing interest in STEM fields and learning about web development, students have developed pride in their city. The STEM for All Video Showcase is the perfect way to share their work with the national public."

Each year, Digital East St. Louis participants engaged in five weeks of summer programming and 16 Saturdays during the school year. The project encouraged newfound interest in technology among African American students via a place-based approach to the digital humanities. Students learned about their city while gaining valuable technological skills, including videography, web development, podcasting and computer programming."

"We wanted to give kids a chance to explore their city's history and culture on their own terms, and share what they've learned with their community," said Johnson. "Digital East St. Louis promoted lifelong STEM learning by making STEM skills relevant to the students' lives and using them to communicate their interests and learning to broader audiences in new and innovative ways."

Digital East St. Louis was supported by an $846,000 NSF Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) grant.

The STEM for All Video Showcase will feature presentations covering a wide range of topics, including science, mathematics, computer science, engineering, cyberlearning,

citizen science, maker spaces, mentoring, informal learning, professional development, research and evaluation, Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core. The videos will highlight initiatives for students of all ages, as well as for adult learners.

Last year's Showcase is still being accessed and has had more than 51,000 unique visitors from over 189 countries. The Showcase is created and hosted by TERC, a non-profit, research and development organization, located in Cambridge, Mass. TERC partners with six NSF-funded resource centers: MSPnet, CADRE, CAISE, CIRCL, STELAR, CS for All Teachers. The STEM for All Video Showcase is funded by NSF grant #1642187.

Founded in 2010, with a mission to support faculty and student research in the digital humanities, the Interdisciplinary Research and Informatics Scholarship (IRIS) Center is invested in connecting to, working with, and helping to document, the people, places, practices and histories of the region as well as a broader international community. Since the Center's founding, students and faculty have: travelled to Nepal to aid in the recording of endangered languages in order to build a digital atlas alongside native speakers; worked with the colorfully designed physical copies of nineteenth-century books as they built a comparative edition of one of the century's most popular novels; recorded the language practices and attitudes of lifelong residents of St. Louis's Metro East to better understand regional dialect variation; built an encyclopedia of Madison County history in partnership with local cultural institutions; and designed an educational outreach program for middle school students in East St. Louis to build a website about the history and culture of their city. The Center generally serves 50 students and faculty a semester through research opportunities, internships and the Digital Humanities and Social Sciences minor.

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach comprises an independent group of researchers and educators, innovating ways to engage students and the public in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Within the SIUE Graduate School, the Center brings together research faculty, graduate students and practitioners to conduct education research. The Center contributes educational expertise to SIUE undergraduate classes and provides professional development for K-12 teachers. The Center boasts a significant library of equipment and resources, which are available for loan at no cost to campus and regional instructors. For more information, visit https://www.siue.edu/stem/about.shtml or contact STEM Center Director Sharon Locke at (618) 650-3065 or stemcenter@siue.edu.