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## **Smithsonian Spark!Lab Pop-Up at the Washington Auto Show**

*Sponsored by the Ford Motor Company Fund*

The Smithsonian's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation and Ford are sponsoring a "pop-up" Spark!Lab at the Washington Auto Show on the first three days of the public opening—Friday, Feb. 1 through Sunday, Feb. 3—so families attending the show can experience the invention process. The workshop will offer three different exercises:

### **Invent A Vehicle**

Visitors work together to build a vehicle of the future. What will it look like? What will it be made of? How will it run? Visitors think about these and other design and engineering questions while they work together to construct a prototype or model of their futuristic car. Vehicles are constructed from reusable materials and components on a scale that encourages collaboration, imaginative play, and even real functional testing. The larger the variety of materials available, the more creative innovation is possible!

### **The Pasta Concept Car Challenge**

Visitors experience the ups-and-downs of the invention process first-hand as they design, build, test and then tweak their own prototype vehicle—made entirely of dry pasta (and a little tape or glue). Once complete, visitors take their vehicle for a test drive on a small ramp. Regardless of how their vehicles perform on the ramp, all visitors are encouraged to improve their design to keep making it better. Visitors are invited to take their pasta cars home with them as a reminder of their Spark!Lab visit.

### **Soundscapes**

Visitors use the parts and pieces in this activity to create music and sound pathways for marbles. They can explore different configurations and try marbles of different sizes and materials to figure out which make the sounds they're looking for.

### **About Spark!Lab**

Spark!Lab reveals the real story behind inventors' work through hands-on activities that help kids and families learn about the history and process of invention. Infused with historical content, Spark!Lab's interdisciplinary activities appeal to varied learning styles, ages, and abilities. Spark!Lab is organized around the process of invention. The activities in the room are centered on key steps in the invention process. The steps are illustrated by "it" phrases:

- Identify a problem or need (Think it)
- Conduct research (Explore it)

- Make sketches (Sketch it)
- Build prototypes (Create it)
- Test the invention (Try it)
- Refine it (Tweak it)
- Market the invention (Sell it)

Spark!Lab offers a range of different activities to illustrate the invention process, targeted at families with children ages six through 12. The original Spark!Lab is located at the National Museum of American History and is currently closed for renovations. Spark!Lab will reopen on the National Mall in 2015.

The success of the Spark!Lab philosophy has led to the Smithsonian's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation taking bold steps towards bringing the Spark!Lab experience to other institutions through a National Network. In 2011, the Lemelson Center established its first satellite Spark!Lab at the Nevada Discovery Museum in Reno, Nevada, and, with the U.S. State Department, implemented a temporary Spark!Lab installation in Kyiv, Ukraine, in September 2012. In January 2013, the Lemelson Center received a \$500,000 gift from the Ford Motor Company Fund enable the creation of three additional satellite Spark!Lab workshops, of which Ford will be the sole sponsor, in soon-to-be-announced museum locations.

### **About the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation**

The Smithsonian Lemelson Center's activities advance scholarship on the history of invention, share stories about inventors and their work and nurture creativity in young people. The center embodies a philosophy akin to that of the inventions we study, of valuing creativity and embracing the potential rewards of intellectual risk-taking. The center is supported by The Lemelson Foundation, a private philanthropy established by one of the country's most prolific inventors, Jerome Lemelson, and his family. The Lemelson Center is located in the National Museum of American History. For more information, visit <http://invention.smithsonian.org>.

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