

ASM @ Science Alive! 2016

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In Adelaide and as a partnership with National Science Week, there is a major event, the science fair – *Science Alive!*. This was held in 2016 at the Adelaide Showgrounds across three days, Friday 5 August, Saturday 6 August and Sunday 7 August. This exhibits various aspects of science and technology to the community (Friday being a careers day for high school students and Saturday and Sunday is opened to the public). The Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM – SA/NT branch) had a booth with various activities and displays for School students. We had volunteers from across the SA microbiology community and this included microbiology undergraduate and postgraduate students. In the planning, the setting up and across the extremely busy three days, a wonderful and enthusiastic time was had displaying and describing the importance and joys of microbiology.

Science Alive! has now been going for 11 years. This year the *Science Alive!* program included over 60 organisations exhibiting science, engineering and technology. There were guest presenters – Reuben Merman (*The Surfing Scientist* – from the ABC) and Professor Rob Morrison and Dr Deane Hutton (of *The Curiosity Show*, 1972–1990). Tickets were free for children under 18 years of age. A busy and incredible atmosphere filled the two main pavilions of the Adelaide Showgrounds. In 2016 there was again an impressive and wonderful attendance (record numbers came in 2016, creeping up to close to 30 000 people who attended over the three days).

In 2015, the ASM SA/NT branch was involved in *Science Alive!* for the first time. In 2015 exhibitors' booths and the booth spaces were arranged around requirements and a cost. For community and not-for-profit organisations there is a 3 m × 3 m booth. For a 6 m × 3 m booth the cost is \$950 (+GST). For commercial/government exhibitors the booths are 6 m × 3 m (\$1950 + GST) or 9 m × 3 m (\$2700 + GST). We originally arranged for a (free) 3 m × 3 m booth and were fortunate enough to finally have a 6 m × 3 m booth. Other costs are incurred for additions to the booth. For instance, in 2016

we had a dark room built into the corner of the booth for viewing glow-in-the-dark bacteria. Amazingly, in 2016 we were fortunate enough to have a 9 m × 3 m booth! Incredibly, we filled this space with displays, people and visitors with little room or time to breathe (but certainly hoping again to have this size booth in 2017).

In 2016 we established an active and enthusiastic sub-committee tasked with organising and running the ASM booth at *Science Alive!* – Stephen Kidd, Paul Sideris, Heather Rickard, Steph Lamont-Friedrich, Jennifer Singh, Helena Ward, Alistair Standish and Brian Ho. We had displays that included *glow-in-the-dark* bacteria, a microscope with 'healthy' poo (and other things), agar plates with dirty hands (these were big agar plates with a child's dirty hand print and then after they had washed it and then after further cleaning – there is a story there), agar plates with samples from the soil, animals (chicken and dog) putting their paws onto an agar plate, reading glasses, and then clinical plates (sealed) showing haemolysis, antibiotic resistance/sensitivity (disk diffusion), and plates with fungi. We also had 'give-aways', chiefly little key-rings with a spray bottle of antimicrobial wash that we had made and printed with: STOP THE SPREAD. Then there was huge excitement at an area we had with large model pictures of the different shapes of bacteria (rods, cocci...), and some play-dough so children could make their play-dough models of bacteria and put them into a petri dish; we sealed and labelled it and they could take it home (e.g. they could use some gold play-dough to make some Golden Staph and we labelled it '*Staphylococcus aureus*').

It was a huge effort to have the booth brightly and professionally displayed and resourced and with the number of volunteers required throughout the three days. This year there were additional responsibilities and costs for the booth holders – for instance, we were required to provide our own public liability insurance. It was a big, big effort for the team, but richly worthwhile to engage students and the public and bring a real awareness of microbiology!

