

Milton Foundation for Education

P.O. Box 223, Milton, MA 02186



For Immediate Release
March 6, 2008

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Grand Opening of Milton High School's Biotech Lab Scheduled for March 6th

On March 6, 2008, Milton High School will unveil its new, state of the art biotechnology laboratory and has invited donors, residents and the curious to tour the new lab and try their hand at a series of CSI-style experiments. The biotech lab is an initiative of the Milton Foundation for Education (MFE), a non-profit organization that raises money for the Milton public schools. Each year, the MFE sponsors a fall fundraiser, the Celebration for Education, which targets specific departments within the school system. In 2006, the focus of this fundraiser was science and technology, and the new biotech lab is one of several projects funded as a result.

According to Ben Leveillee, Biotechnology Educator for the CityLab program at Boston University, Milton High School's biotechnology program is an outstanding model for several reasons. The classroom that has been dedicated as the biotechnology lab allows all teachers to have a space where they can bring their classes to conduct labs. Having a dedicated science lab in the school allows more classes to access the science equipment more often and highlights the importance Milton High places on hands-on science education.

The equipment that Milton has purchased also allows the science classes to conduct biotechnology experiments as they are done in a professional setting. The breadth of equipment that the science department has allows them to conduct the complete spectrum of fundamental biotechnology labs, including bacterial transformation, DNA amplification, DNA restriction digest, and protein and DNA analysis using gel electrophoresis.

Finally, Leveillee cites the talented and enthusiastic science department as the most important factor in Milton's equation for a successful program. "The entire science faculty seems to share a common vision for what this program will be and the valuable role it will play in the education of their students," said Leveillee.

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Helene Haddad, the president of the Milton Foundation for Education, concurs. She credits Barbara Plonski, the science department chair of Milton High School, for being the driving force behind the creation of the biotech lab. “The MFE is privileged to have worked with Barbara and the other talented and committed science teachers and staff to create this extraordinary opportunity for all the students in the high school.”

During the Open House, Milton High School faculty and students will be conducting three experiments to highlight the broad spectrum of scientific and practical applications of biotechnology. The first is the Case of the Missing iPod : Using DNA fingerprinting to match the DNA from the crime scene to that of one of the suspects. The second experiment will be the Mystery of the Crooked Cell: Learning about the use of protein electrophoresis as a diagnostic tool for sickle cell anemia. The final experiment is Day-Glo Bacteria: Giving bacteria a green glow using DNA isolated from a jellyfish.

Five Milton High School faculty members who will be using the lab have received special training through a grant from the MassBioEd Foundation. Milton High School is one of 43 schools to be awarded a BioTeach grant for the 2007-08 school year. The BioTeach program, which equips labs and trains teachers in the most effective methods to teach biotechnology in their classrooms, is a critical part of ensuring that students are equipped to compete in the growing biotechnology field. Serving as a link between education, industry, and government, MassBioEd works to ensure Massachusetts’ largest sector of the economy, biotechnology, has an appropriately trained work force to meet the growing employment needs. The grant, which extends over the next six years, will provide the MHS staff with ongoing training, ensuring that the Biotech Lab will continue to grow.

At the Open House, the Milton Foundation for Education will also unveil a plaque honoring the donors who contributed to the biotechnology lab. In particular, New England Carpenters Labor Management, Milton-Fuller Housing Corporation, Keyspan, Meetinghouse Bank, National Grid and NStar will be recognized for their leadership gifts.

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