



August 13, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cook Museum of Natural Science honors Governor for recent STEM Center designation

The Cook Museum of Natural Science hosted a special Gratitude Luncheon on Wednesday, August 13 to honor Governor Kay Ivey and express deep appreciation for her recent designation of the Museum as the North Alabama STEM Center.

Gov. Ivey was the featured speaker. Museum President and Board Chairman Brian Cook offered insight into how the designation and the State's accompanying \$9.5 million investment will help the Museum serve the growing student population of North Alabama through STEM education.

"Our STEM hands-on classrooms are at capacity and we have had to turn away students," Cook said. "But thanks to Gov. Ivey's vision and leadership, along with the state legislature, they provided the necessary catalyst to double our STEM classrooms, programming, and experiences. Now, we are collectively aligned and energized to serve our region as the North Alabama STEM Center – a regional launch pad for inspiring and equipping our students to be curious and develop a lifelong love of learning and doing."

Gov. Ivey said she had been impressed with the Museum since she visited several years ago.

"I visited the Cook Museum of Natural Science in 2020, and I left deeply impressed not by just the exhibits, but by the vision behind it all," Gov. Ivey said. "Even then it was clear that this Museum was doing something more than showcasing wonders of nature. It was cultivating a passion for learning in our young people. And today, I'm proud to stand with you once again as we walk a new chapter."

The Cook Museum currently provides over 20 classes and camps with hands-on learning experiences aligned with the Alabama Course of Study. The Museum serves public, private, and homeschool students from 21 Alabama counties, totaling over 18,700 students annually on field trips.

This event followed the Decatur City Council's recent approval of the Museum's expansion proposal, which will grow the footprint and economic impact of the city's downtown region.

Gov. Ivey expounded on the decision to name Cook Museum the North Alabama STEM Center and invest state funds.

“I was proud to make this official designation and award \$9.5 million in state funding to expand the Museum’s reach and impact,” Gov. Ivey said. “And the why? Let me put it simply. If we do not prepare our students today, we will fall behind, and that’s all the reason that I need. This Museum makes those opportunities real. It takes STEM out of the textbook and puts it right into a child’s hand, and that makes all the difference. That’s why it’s important we make this investment. It was for the future of Alabama students.”