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TOP STORY

STEMzone tailgate adds science learning to game day

Olivia Adams | Staff Writer Nov 5, 2017 Updated Nov 6, 2017



The STEMzone tailgate displayed 12 different science exhibits to Georgia fans before the game against South Carolina on Nov. 4.

Olivia Adams | Staff Writer



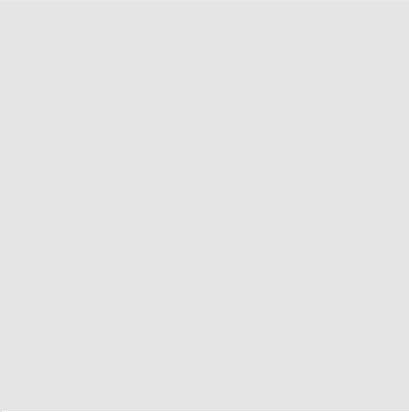
OPINION: UGA students should participate in scientific experiments

While Georgia fans across Athens set up tailgating tents with traditional food, music and games, one tent had something a little out of the ordinary.

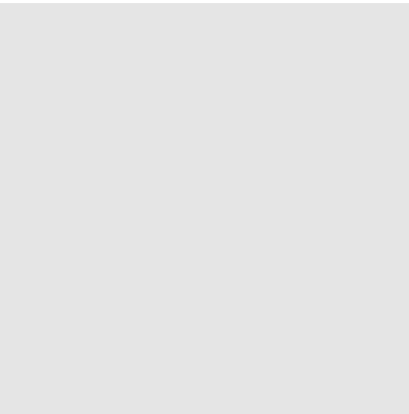
In front of the Zell B. Miller Learning Center, a group of UGA graduate students and a team of volunteers put together STEMzone, a collection of science-themed exhibits, before the kickoff of the South Carolina



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football game on Nov. 4.



The STEMzone tailgate had science exhibits teaching football fans about everything from ocean exploration to DNA extraction before the Nov. 4 game.

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“The goal of STEMzone is to highlight the research that is done at UGA to the broader UGA community and Athens in a way that is accessible to anybody,” said Reni Kaul, STEMzone founder and a Ph.D student in the Odum School of Ecology. “This was just an idea that I had, and it has somehow grown into this amazing thing.”

There were 12 different exhibits, ranging in theme from ocean exploration using an underwater robot to a genetics booth showing how to extract DNA from strawberries. All exhibits were interactive with games and activities for participants.

In one booth, the UGA Herpetological Society had reptiles on display. For many attendees like Justin Reeves, it was their first time handling reptiles.



STEMzone UGA

on Saturday

Pet a snake today 🐍!

Miller Learning Center lawn

Right now 😎

#STEMzoneUGA #Godawgs #uga #science



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“I had never personally held a snake so I thought that I might as well,” Reeves said. “I thought I was going to die for a second, but it didn’t choke me, so it was fun.”

One participant, Lauri Halleck, said the genetics exhibit has inspired her to try the DNA extraction activity with her own students.

“I’m a seventh grade science teacher, and I was able to extract DNA from a strawberry,” Halleck said. “It was really neat. I’m going to take it back to my seventh graders because I think the kids would really enjoy doing that. I have also enjoyed seeing all the [reptiles.]”

Kristen Lear, appropriately dressed up as a bat, ran a booth educating people about bats and their importance to the ecosystem. She said participants were all engaged in the educational activities.

“I think a lot of people fear bats or do not know about bats, so when they see something like this, they really want to explore.” Lear said. “We have had kids, college students and adults [come by.]”



STEMzone UGA
on Saturday



Want to see night vision binoculars and infrared cameras in action? Come learn about [#bat](#) research at the BATS! [#STEMZone](#) booth! Join us TODAY anytime before 3 pm on the MLC lawns!!

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Jessie Stayley, who helped run the booth on marine exploration, also said reception of the tailgate has been very positive.

“It is easy to trap people in it because they are all going to the game,” Stayley said. “I have been quizzing people on coral and giving them stamps. They are all big fans of it.”

Barbara Gurr, an attendee who brought her grandson, said she appreciated the hands on educational activities being provided on game day.

“[STEMzone] is a very exciting opportunity, especially to bring the entire family out,” Gurr said. “My grandson is seven years old, and I am happy just to expose him to things he hasn’t been exposed to. I think all the hands on crafts are wonderful, and he’s intrigued by it.”

Kaul said she hopes to hold future events, but nothing is officially in the works.

“STEMzone is the idea of the combination of football and science, so as long as there is football, ideally, there will be STEMzone,” Kaul said.

“Ideally, this will become an annual event, possible multiple Saturdays or multiple games out of the season.”