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## Food Safety Takeover at Chester's Annual Science Expo

Did you ever wonder how long washing your hands is *really* enough time or how long you could drop food on the floor and it still be 'ok' to eat? Students in kindergarten through eighth grade throughout Chester's school district explored these questions and many more. They developed hypotheses, conducted experiments and reached conclusions that they proudly displayed at the 38th Annual Chester Science Fair, held on Saturday, March 3, 2018. At 9:00 am, when the fair began, parking lots at Black River Middle School - the fair venue – were almost full.

In addition to approximately 400 students presenting their projects, there were multiple professional presenters and special exhibits within the STEM field for students to attend in between poster presentations, including “Keep ‘Em Separated – Avoid Cross-Contamination” and “Is the 5-second rule real?” by the Rutgers Food Science Graduate Student Association. Additional exhibits were presented by organizations such as the Chester Twp. Police Forensic Science and Chandler Engineering Design.

With so many exhibits, students were able to experience a wide range of careers with the hope of inspiring their future research as they journey through school. “Keep ‘Em Separate - Avoid Cross-Contamination” allowed the students to come in to a mock kitchen with a refrigerator full of foods to better understand why some foods should or shouldn't be placed on top of one another. Several students even began brainstorming on how they would engineer a refrigerator to prevent these cross-contamination issues to begin with! “The sky's the limit for these kids. They can do anything they're enthusiastic about,” said Matthew Igo, a M.S. student in Food

Microbiology at Rutgers University. “It's all about whatever gets them motivated. If they love food, animals, whatever it is.”



“Is the 5-second rule real?” was another popular exhibit with many students coming and going. With this exhibit students were able to drop different foods onto objects commonly found in the kitchen that were ‘contaminated’ with glo-germ to simulate what the foods they drop may pick up. Though many students were grossed out, so many were intrigued and excited to see what surfaces seemed to pick up the most and what foods they should leave on the floor.

The fair provides students an opportunity to create and present projects to a panel of judges in STEM fields and educators from the community. It continues to be one of the largest science fairs in the State of New Jersey.