Are you aged 7 to 19 or are you a parent or teacher with kids that love space? Well, get them to enter our great competition and they could...

Remember when you were at school? Science lessons weren’t exactly exciting, were they? Double science usually involved staring sleepily at Mr Jenkins as he waved his chalk-encrusted hands while extolling the virtues of cellular osmosis.

Practical lessons, involving dimly glowing gerkins and brightly flaring magnesium ribbon, inspired only marginally more interest.

Very little seems to have changed since those dim and distant days, with surveys regularly finding that more than 40 per cent of students find science lessons boring and at least 60 per cent feel they are irrelevant to their future careers.

Well, MetroCosm wants to help rectify this so we have teamed up with the British National Space Centre, Space Camp Turkey and space tourist Richard Garriott to give young people the chance to win a galaxy of prizes that WILL make science come to life.

The competition is open to all seven to 19-year-olds in Britain.

Among the ‘out of this world’ prizes (sorry), is the chance to spend a week at Space Camp Turkey and see an experiment they design performed by Richard Garriott on board the International Space Station – that’s actually in outer space you know!

**WARNING: ENDORSEMENT BY A POLITICIAN COMING UP!**

I am delighted to see this work to engage young people using Richard Garriott’s mission to the International Space Station,” says MP Ian Pearson, minister for Science and Innovation.

‘Space exploration provides a wonderful context for applying science and learning about international collaboration.’

‘Yes, indeed it does.

**WIN a trip to space!**

Richard Garriott needs your help. He is inviting you to create an experiment for his International Space Station. The ISS is a research centre, out in space. It is 340km above the Earth and travels at 27,800kph (17,210 mph), orbiting the Earth 16 times a day. You can use words, pictures and diagrams to describe your idea. If it wins, your experiment will take place in zero gravity, so you can be really imaginative. Richard is happy to consider experiments that use his body, or items from his astronaut kit bag.

You can find out more info at www.richardsgalaxyspace.com/metro

**YOUR PRIZE**

As well as getting the chance to see your experiment performed in space, 20 winners will be invited to the launch on play day at the National Space Centre, Leicester. You will have the chance to meet Richard Garriott and receive a copy of ‘Beyond Earth’ signed by Richard Garriott, the Universe and the Solander’s Handbook.

**COMPETITION FLASHBACK**

LAST year’s MetroCosm competition sent the next generation of budding rocket scientists to Space Camp in Leicester. The 19 teenagers – aged 13 to 15 – spent the week scuba diving, building rockets and ‘warping’ through space, including two trips to Space School’s annual camp at the University of Leicester.

They were all winners of the MetroCosm competition, which challenged them to come up with an invention to rescue moonbase scientists stuck down with flu.

The winners were fired up by their experience. Cyrus Mwangi, 14, from west London, said: ‘This competition is amazing, but I would love to go back there. It made me determined to fulfil my dream of becoming a scientist.’

Dhuan-Shan Rana, 14, from Leicester, said: ‘I’ve learned more in

**BERRY BONUS:** Sea buckthorn berries are even better for us than previously thought. Their lean could help ward off liver disease, Indian scientists believe. The berries, which are indigenous to the mountainous regions of China and Russia, are already famed for their cholesterol busting properties.

An extract from the fruit helped protect rats’ livers when they were exposed to a designer drug that is used to damage the organ, the researchers discovered.

**FAST FOOD:** Travellers may be able to jet lag after a food-related clock was discovered in the brain. But they will have to fast for 16 hours first to make it kick in and supercharge the light-based master clock that serves as the body’s primary timerkeeper, US researchers said. The food clock developed originally so animals could switch sleeping patterns to maximise their opportunities of finding food when it was scarce, they said.

**FLAKE SCIENCE:** If you want to keep your cornflakes fresh – just add a dash of oregano. Oregano oil works as well as synthetic insecticides to tackle common beetle pests found in stored cereals. Algerian scientists have found the herb, more commonly used on pizzas, inhibits egg laying and larval development and has long been renowned as a natural insecticide. In the complex eco-trend towards natural alternatives it is a potential solution to synthetic insecticides – and has little environmental impact.

If you have a story for MetroCosm please e-mail us at Cosm@ukmetro.co.uk

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**MINICOSM**

**NO SMT SHERLOCK!** Press release from the Department of the Scottish Parliament Quitting smoking will improve your social life (you don’t smell as bad)

New England Journal of Medicine

**HYDROPHONE:** A hydrogen fuel cell that can be used as a back-up power supply for mobile phones has been invented. The miniature cell uses a cartridge filled with hydrogen about the size of a small lighter and can be worn in a belt pouch. It is designed to be part of a hybrid system whereby the phone initially relies on a battery for power before tapping into the hydrogen cell. Swiss-based company STMmicroelectronics says the cell will hit the market in 2010 but did not say how much it will cost.

**WHAT CAN YOU WIN?**

**JET TO SPACE**: Your family could be on a trip to the stars! Richard Garriott is giving away the chance to visit Space Camp Turkey, a true holiday for space enthusiasts. Your family will be treated to an exciting week of training, exploration and activities, including a trip to the Space School’s annual camp, the University of Leicester and the Solander’s space centre.

**THE PRIZES (AND HOW TO WIN THEM)**

**AGES 7-11**

**WINNERS:**

**Two winners will receive:**

**SPACE CAMP TURKEY**

1. Two weeks stay at Space Camp Turkey
2. Return flight to and from the UK
3. Meals and accommodation
4. Return transfer to and from the airport
5. All other things included!

**HOW TO ENTER**

Visit our website spaceemp skyrocket.com

**Ages 12-16**

**WINNERS:**

**Five winners will receive:**

**SPACE CAMP TURKEY**

1. One week stay at Space Camp Turkey
2. Return flight to and from the UK
3. Meals and accommodation
4. Return transfer to and from the airport
5. All other things included!

**HOW TO ENTER**

Visit our website spaceemp skyrocket.com

**Ages 17+**

**WINNER:**

**One winner will receive:**

**SPACE CAMP TURKEY**

1. One week stay at Space Camp Turkey
2. Return flight to and from the UK
3. Meals and accommodation
4. Return transfer to and from the airport
5. All other things included!

**HOW TO ENTER**

Visit our website spaceemp skyrocket.com

**GENERAL:**

Entries must be received no later than midnight on Sunday, 20th April 2008.

All entrants will be contacted via email by 6th May.

**TERMS:**

1. Entrants must be aged 13 or over (Ages 11-12 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian).

2. Entries from non-Virgin Media customers only.

3. Employees of Virgin Media and their family members are not eligible to enter.

4. Entries are not transferable.

5. Virgin Media and its agents accept no responsibility for late, lost, damaged or misdirected entries.

6. The decision of the judges is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

7. The judges reserve the right to disqualify any entry if, in their reasonable opinion, it does not comply with these rules or if it is not submitted in accordance with these rules.

For more info please visit www.spaceemp skyrocket.com

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