

## JANUARY 2016 DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER



Dear **TechStars** Families,

Technology is everywhere in our lives. Today's young children are the "digital natives" having always been surrounded by this wonder. We are the "digital immigrants" who play a constant game of catch up as new devices and software applications enter and forever change our existence. As parents we want to be certain technology is used to its best advantage to improve the lives of our families. Surely the National Educational Technology Plan 2016, <http://tech.ed.gov/netp/>, will be important for our children and their education. Wayne Harschuh of Delaware's DOE explains, "Updated every 5 years, the National Education Technology Plan (NETP) is the flagship educational technology policy document for the United States. The 2016 Plan, **Future Ready Learning: Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education**, articulates a vision of equity, active use and collaborative leadership to make everywhere, all-the-time learning possible. While acknowledging the continuing need to provide greater equity of access to technology itself, the plan goes further to call upon all involved in American education to ensure equity access to transformational learning experiences enabled by technology. The principles and examples provided in this document align to the Innovative Technology Expands Children's Horizons (ITECH) program as authorized by Congress in December 2015 through the Every Child Achieves Act." Christine Weiser's comments in "National Educational Technology Plan 2016: What's Changed?" on Dec 11, 2015 for Tech & Learning at <http://www.techlearning.com/blogentry/10087> note the bipartisan synergy of our country's political leaders who are united in identifying technology equity as a core goal and extending the reach of this plan from K-12 to include preschool, higher education and adult education. Technology is set to play an important role in 2016 and beyond. While it may be difficult to pinpoint precisely what technology transformations and advancements lie ahead, we can be sure the future will be exciting for all.

January in Delaware is usually filled with chilly temperatures, harsh winter weather and the inevitable cabin fever that makes us want to get out of the house and try new experiences. Consider the following "un-plugged" activities your family can enjoy indoors at local venues:

- **Hagley Museum's Invention Convention 2016, Jan 16-18.** The theme of **Robotics** will appeal to young children who enjoyed programming **BeeBot**, the **TechStars** robot, and have fond memories of creating their own virtual robots using **Tiny Robot Maker** and **Toca Robot Lab** apps. Science shows and live demonstrations will captivate audiences. Visitors will also enjoy the Tinkering Tables, Create-an-Invention, and a Hands-on Science Fair. Learn more at <http://www.hagley.org/event/invention-convention-2016>.
- **Winter Weekend STEM Challenge – Egg Drop, Jan 16.** Meet at the DuPont Environmental Education Center at 1 pm to put your engineering skills to work. Return on Feb 20 for the Animal Catapult and again on Mar 12 for the Boat Builder activity. Learn more information at <http://www.riverfrontwilm.com/calendar/89/3923-Winter-Weekend-STEM-Challenge--Egg-Drop/>

- **Build It Better – Free Family Sundays at DCCA, Jan 17.** Let Willie Birch’s interactive Spirit House exhibition be the inspiration for your family’s original architectural structures built from unusual and/or recycled materials. No registration required. Find details at <http://thedcca.org/content/free-family-programs>.
- **Stratosphere Trampoline Park** on the Wilmington Riverfront, open year round. In addition to the Main Trampoline Arenas try the Arcade, Hurricane Simulator, Aeroball, Mechanical Bull, Velcro Wall, Speed Wall and Eye Play attractions. Toddler Time is every Thursday and Friday from 10 am to 4 pm during the regular year; for \$10 children under 6 receive 2 hours of jump time and one parent jumps free. Safety waivers are required for all jumpers. Learn more at <http://www.wilmingtontrampolinepark.com/>.

When your family truly feels the need to venture outside, consider these “un-plugged” outdoor suggestions:

- **First State, First Day, First Hike** features a New Year’s Day Hike in each of Delaware’s State Parks. Sites that list their hikes as “easy” and appropriate for active children without age restrictions include Bellevue Park, Brandywine Zoo, First State Heritage Park, Killen’s Pond State Park/Pondside Trail and White Clay Creek State Park/Creek Road Trail. Remember to bring water, wear sturdy walking shoes and dress in layers for the weather. Along the way, take photos of your family enjoying Delaware’s great outdoors. Find a complete listing of Delaware State Park Hikes with meeting locations, start times and more details at [http://destateparks.com/firstday/?utm\\_source=Delaware+State+Parks+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=07aa1f0456-November\\_201510\\_19\\_2015&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8f83ed3c94-07aa1f0456-108797601](http://destateparks.com/firstday/?utm_source=Delaware+State+Parks+Newsletter&utm_campaign=07aa1f0456-November_201510_19_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8f83ed3c94-07aa1f0456-108797601).
- **Horizon Riverfront Rink** returns for its second season. This 72’ by 120’ temporary open-air ice skating rink is scheduled to remain open for skaters through Feb 28, 2016. Special Winter Break Session times are set through Jan 3. Learn to Skate classes/Series 2 are scheduled for Jan 4, 11, 18 and 25. Find more information about this unique Wilmington attraction at <http://www.riverfrontwilm.com/destinations/riverfront-rink/>.

January brings a New Year full of hope, anticipation and challenges. Best wishes from our **TechStars** family to your family for a safe, happy and successful 2016!

Sincerely,

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Owner/Director

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TechStars by Computer Explorers of New Castle County



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