

# Science on Wheels celebrates its 15th anniversary <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Calificación:



By Margarita Santori López [msantori@uprm.edu](mailto:msantori@uprm.edu) <sup>[2]</sup> [Prensa RUM](#) <sup>[3]</sup> It was 15 years ago that doctor Juan Lopez Garriga arrived at the office of the then dean of Academic Affairs of the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez (RUM), doctor Juan González Lagoa, with the idea of taking science demonstrations to the schools. The chemistry professor had seen an old ambulance in the RUM and thought that it could be the perfect means of transportation for his intention. “I need money, he said to me. He explained the project and immediately I saw the idea of taking science to schools in a vehicle. By all means I said yes”, remembered González Lagosmiling, professor of Marine Sciences and director of the Sciences and Engineering Resources Center of the RUM. Same thing happened with professor Sylvia Márquez de Pirazzi who directed the department of Chemistry of the RUM for more than one decade. “Juan had just started as a professor and when he came with that idea I accepted it immediately because it was the way to organize an initiative that had been tried several times in the department”, the professor related. She mentioned that at the beginning of the 80’s there were few chemistry students and this was a way to motivate young people to study sciences. “It is a satisfaction that it has reached so many students and so many schools. It is most successful community program the University of Puerto Rico has seen”, affirmed the retired university professor. It was to these two veteran educators to whom the fifteenth anniversary of Sciences on Wheels was dedicated, a celebration of a successful educative program of the RUM’s department of Chemistry that has impacted more than 80 thousand students of state and private schools in Puerto Rico. The activity was celebrated in the

Rafael Maguail coliseum and reunited around 1,300 students and teachers from the Island. "It is a pioneering program in Puerto Rico that has motivated thousands of students of state and private schools to study science", honored the director of the RUM, doctor Jorge Iván Vélez Arocho during the celebration. Also, founder Lopez Garriga explained that what began as an illusion to serve as connection between the schools and the university, today is a reality in which 75 university students have trained more than one thousand teachers and 18 thousand students of elementary, intermediate and secondary level in activities of sciences and mathematics. "In these 15 years we have seen a significant number of young people who come to the RUM to study sciences. That means that the effort has been worth the trouble", assured the chemical engineer whose desire to improve K-12 education was one of the main reasons to undertake the project. According to Lopez Garriga, professor Márquez de Pirazzi and doctor González Lagoa supported the program from the beginnings by means allocating facilities and resources for its development. He also recognized professors Vivian Torres and Idelfonso Muñoz and students William Nazario, Yolanda Echevarría, Cacimar Ramos, Walleska de Jesus, Eric Morales and Ricardo Camacho. Today, the Science on Wheels Educational Center (SONW) is a non-profit organization that aims to promote the study of sciences and the development of communication and reasoning skills in the participants. In addition, it stimulates the educators of K-12 degrees to improve the quality of the resources used in their curricula to obtain an enriching educative experience. Its associate director is Ricardo Camacho Zapata. At the moment the Center counts on four main programs: Sciences on wheels, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE), Graduate and Undergraduate Students Enhancing Science and Technology in K-12 Schools (GUEST K-12) and Teachers Enhancement in Science and Tecnology (TEST). During the fifteenth birthday, scientific demonstrations were offered, exhibitions, workshops for teachers and research posters were presented. In addition, the secretary of the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA), Javier Vélez Arocho, donated around one thousand trees to the Program. On the other hand, doctor Aníbal Quintana, ex-alumn of the RUM and who works in the Cordis company of San German, emphasized the importance of attracting and of motivating students to developed in sciences. Also, the dean of Arts and Sciences, doctor Moisés Orenge, was present, the director of the department of Chemistry, doctor Francis Patrón and other civil employees. Some exhibitions were in charge of Zoologist Juan A. Rivero and the Museum of Geology of the RUM, among other organizations. Science on Wheels promotes the study of sciences by means of demonstrations in the areas of chemistry, physics and Biology. The experiments are related to aspects of the daily life like polymers (elasticity), combustion, blast effect and emptiness; acids and bases; and oxidation and reduction reactions. Other demonstrations were about dry ice and liquid nitrogen.

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