

■ Compiled by Julia Bostock

Approximately 160 technicians attended the Conference on both days. The programme included workshops and lectures and was repeated on the Friday, so that technicians who stayed for both days were able to take part in a variety of activities that reflected all areas of science, health & safety and CPD. Sessions included:

- Lab spaces on the cheap
- Dark physics
- Using sensors to extend practical work
- Dissections
- Microscale chemistry
- Practical work with low-level radioactive materials
- Senior technicians – leadership & management
- Going outdoors
- Gadgets and gizmos
- Plant science
- Enzymes
- Keep up-to-date with CLEAPSS
- The Earth and plate tectonics
- Technicians supporting practical work in the classroom
- Registered Science Technician applications

Thursday's lively keynote lecture was given by Kathy Sykes, Professor of Sciences and Society at Bristol University. She explained why scientists and the public should communicate more with each other and build better relationships. She also presented the Gratnells School Science Technician awards to three worthy prizewinners (see opposite). Kathy's specialism is physics, but she has appeared on such television programmes as *Rough Science*, *Alternative Therapies & Medicine* and *Brave New World*, as well as Open University programmes.

The concluding lecture was given by David Jenkins, an academic in nuclear physics at the University of York, who lectures in astronomy and astrophysics



'Survival in Space' at the National Technicians' Conference 2012.

and is also active in public engagement, going into schools to talk about physics and astronomy. Using plenty of hands-on demonstrations, and equipment such as vacuum pumps, marshmallows, balloons and liquid nitrogen, David and a PhD student, Andy, together with volunteers from the audience, delivered an entertaining lecture about survival in space. It neatly linked the history of space travel with forces topics, illustrating the effects of extreme conditions on the human body.

On Thursday evening, after a film showing, Timstar kindly provided a buffet with wine for the delegates. We would like to thank Timstar for their continued support of this event.

Friday began with torrential rain and difficult travel conditions. The Technicians' Committee was very appreciative of the fact that so many delegates ventured out to attend the Conference that day. We seriously thought about running an ark-building workshop!

Liz Lawrence, Chair-elect of ASE, gave the keynote lecture and encouraged technicians to apply for the Registered Science Technician awards. Wilson Agnew, with other members of the Committee who had already gone through the pilot scheme and application process, held a session for those interested in obtaining registered status, with tips on filling in the application form. We feel that, in Liz, we have an ASE Chair who will understand our needs and be supportive in our efforts to raise the profile of technicians.

The day concluded with Chris Peel (recently retired from CLEAPSS) giving a talk on his life as a technician and the changes that he had dealt with throughout his long career. Many thanks to Chris for staying in touch with us all.

We must mention the four technician members of NVON who travelled over from the Netherlands to join us for the Conference. Ton van der Vaart, the Chairman, was accompanied by Inneke Koldenhof, Petra Ketelaar and Dafne de