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Science is Fun cruise returns to wow and educate student groups with hands-on experiments including hoisting buckets, floating balloons and constructing skyscrapers

CHICAGO – Hoisting water buckets; floating inflated balloons; playing with a seesaw; constructing skyscrapers and checking out slimy creatures are all part of the Science is Fun Cruise returning for a second season aboard Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline. The cruise is designed for school groups and summer camps with fun on-board experiments that explore the Chicago River, its buildings and bridges during the 90-minute Chicago River cruise.

Open to groups of 20 or more on Mondays through Wednesdays, Science is Fun will begin its 2014 season, Monday, May 5 at 10 am. Group rate is \$12 per person. All cruises depart from Mercury's Riverside Gardens dock at the southeast corner and lower level of the Michigan Avenue Bridge and Wacker Drive.

Mercury's Science is Fun Cruise is the first Chicago boat cruise to offer this type of program and meets the standards of the Illinois Learning and NextGen Science Standards and Chicago Public School system.

Using buckets, balloons, test tubes, pennies, PVC tubing and a seesaw, "Professor Mercury" leads the groups in a series of experiments using the Scientific Method of: research question, hypothesis, experiment and conclusion presents five research questions to his young audience covering five science subjects as the 90-minute cruise begins:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL - Which body of water is cleaner: Lake Michigan or the Chicago River?
2. PHYSICS - How does a boat float?
3. MECHANICS - How much power is needed to raise/lower Chicago's famous bascule (seesaw) bridges?
4. ENGINEERING - How does a skyscraper stand up to gravity?
5. BIOLOGY - How can we stop the spread of invasive species?

Each question is followed by children offering up their hypotheses and performing an experiment. Scooping up river and lake water into buckets then using small test tubes to test the water; filling flat and inflated balloons with pennies to learn about boat buoyancy; watching the effects of gravity on unreinforced PVC tubing and how it relates to tall buildings; and checking out slimy and suspect marine life that could endanger Chicago's waterways and proposing solutions to remove them, are just a few of the activities to engage the young scientists.

"The Science is Fun cruise is aptly named. Our students were fully engaged in the investigations, and the demonstrations were valuable lessons and well understood. The "crew" made the morning aboard ship a fun experience for all of us." Tad Smith, principal, San Miguel School, Chicago.

To make group reservations Science is Fun Cruise, call 312-332-1368 or email grouptours@mercurycruises.com.

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Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline is a third-generation owned and operated family-friendly cruise line. The *Skyline Queen* and *Chicago's Little Lady* provide narrated daytime and evening lake and river cruises, a 3-D Fireworks Cruise, a educational Science is Fun Cruise and Chicago's only Canine Cruise. Mercury is committed to green practices and recycles used oil, engine batteries, beverage containers, cardboard, and paper; uses B11 biodiesel fuel, low-flush toilets and environmentally safe cleaning solutions; prints brochures on recycled paper; and promotes the use of public transportation by staff and crew. All vessels are operated by a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captain and crew and carry 100% passenger capacity life preservers. Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline departs from Riverside Gardens on Chicago's Riverwalk at the southeast corner of the Michigan Avenue Bridge at Wacker Drive. Follow Mercury Cruises on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

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