

History of the ACS Festival of Chemistry

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The “Festival de Química” or Chemistry Festival, is a community event that unites efforts of hundreds of volunteers whom through simple interactive demos (hands-on activities), emphasize the importance of chemistry in our everyday life. This activity is designed for the public in general, especially children, to educate about chemical concepts, while communicates the value and impact of chemistry in daily lives.

How does the Festival begun?

In **2005** the President of the ACS, Dr. William Carroll, supported a proposal submitted by Dr. Montes to celebrate the first Festival of Chemistry as part of the ACS National Meeting held in San Diego. A delegation of students and teachers from various institutions of the country gathered to practice all the shows that were part of this presidential event and that was the first time it was held in Spanish. In October of that same year Dr. Carroll made his "Extreme Tour" as part of the celebration of the National Chemistry Week (NCW). At this occasion, the first Festival of Chemistry was held in the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras where there were 500 scouts children who working alongside volunteers from various student chapters sought to obtain the "spot in Sciences".

In October **2006**, as part of the NCW celebration the Festival begins to be celebrated at the Paseo de la Princesa in Old Town San Juan, Puerto Rico initiating a tradition for the city. All student chapters highlight their creativity, joy and enthusiasm and exceeding all expectations.

In October **2007**, the Festival, again as part of the NCW celebration, is once more very successful, managing to integrate more groups to the event.

In **2008**, an additional Festival in April was incorporated to the Puerto Rican schedule celebrating Earth Day. The "Chemists Celebrate Earth Day (CCED) consolidated once again a local tradition and from year to year, two festivals are held one in April for the CCED and one in October for the NCW.

In **2009**, our beautiful Puerto Rico Island was the host for the ACS Southern East Regional Meeting (SERMACS). At that time, the Festival took place in the grounds of the Convention Center as part of the program of SERMACS and included the participation of student chapters of PR and USA, the President of ACS, Dr. Thomas Lane and several members of the ACS Board of Directors.

In **2011** as part of the International Year of Chemistry (YIC) celebration, several events were held to support the following topics:

- 1st quarter: Environment
One event held at the “Festival Claridad” and another held at the PRISM/Jr. Technical Meeting at the “Universidad Interamericana en Bayamón”.
- 2nd quarter: Energy
Celebrated in conjunction with CCED, it was held in the “Parque de los Próceres” in Mayagüez.

- 3rd quarter: Materials

At the “Paseo La Princesa” as part of the celebration of the IUPAC World Congress. This activity included the participation of special guests such as Nobel Prize Dr. Roald Hoffmann, ACS-2012 President-elect Dr. Bassam Shakhashiri, Dr. Lynn Hogue, President ACS Committee on Community Activities, Presidents of professional associations of Thailand, Germany, Colombia, Hungary, Dr. Javier García, President from Global Experiment Committee, and others. ACS Senior officials from the ACS Examinations Institute also participated.

- 4th quarter: Health

At the “Paseo de las Artes” in Caguas and it was part of the NCW celebration. In 2011 was the first year that the festivals were celebrated in different villages of the island.

Where else was the Festival held?

In **2010**, the ACS adopted the model of the “Festival de Química” and launched the event at the international level. The first international Festival was held as part of the 29th Latin American Congress of Chemistry (CLAQ 2010) in Cartagena, Colombia where 600 middle and upper school students attended and over fifty volunteers received training by Ingrid Montes, Cecilia Hernández and Patricia Galvan (ACS Education Division). It featured the participation of ACS President Dr. Joseph Francisco, Dr. Luis Echevoyen and Dr. Martin Chalfie, 2008 Nobel Prize. This event included a show “The magic of Chemistry” carried out by Dr. Ingrid Montes. The event was reported on the front page of the local newspaper “El Universal”.

Another great Festival was held in **2012** as part of the 30th Latin American Congress of Chemistry (CLAQ 2012) in Cancun, Mexico. It is estimated that more than 1,600 people attended and more than 75 volunteers participated at this event. Dr. Marinda Wu, ACS 2012 President-elect participated in the activity as well as other representatives of IUPAC, from the Sociedad Química de México, and others.

In **2013**, there were four festivals outside of Puerto Rico:

- Bogotá, Colombia - September 23 2013

Festival hosted by the Universidad de Los Andes, with 52 volunteers and 350 participants, this event was just the first one in the city, serving as a “teaser” for many others to come.

- Santiago, Chile - October 08 2013

Part of the celebrations of the “Semana Nacional de la Ciencia y la Tecnología, sponsored by EXPLORA, an agency of the “Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONICYT) and organized by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the festival was held at the Quinta Normal in Santiago, Chile. Just over 30 volunteers and 3000 students from different local schools and community members made this festival another successful event in 2013.

- Concepción, Chile - October 10 2013

Festival held at the Campus of the “Universidad de Concepción”, Concepción, Chile. About 40 volunteers and approximately 1200 participants were present at this event.

- Bogotá, Colombia - October 28 to November 01 2013

Held at the convention center in conjunction with the Expociencia – Expotecnología in Bogota in Colombia and organized by the Universidad de Los Andes. The same volunteers trained for the Festival in September held a festival each day and around 700 participants showed up every day, which makes a record in participation of approximately 4200 people especially students.

Counting the four international events and the two festivals held in Puerto Rico (CCED in April and NCW in October), it is estimated that **more than 775 volunteers managed to impact 14,750 members of the community during 2013.**

Future plans

During 2014 Puerto Rico will hold the two traditional events one for CCED in the last weekend of April and one for the NCW. At an international level, the Festival will take place at the 31st Congreso Latinoamericano de Química (CLAQ 2014), XXVII Congreso Peruano de Química in Lima, Peru.

The ACS Office of International Activities is working to expand this event to other countries in Latin America and other parts of the world. Chemistry Congresses in different countries were identified and the office in collaboration with different institutions and organizations are training volunteers and encouraging the development of the Festival according to the needs of the local community in each country.

In Puerto Rico, these events have joined the efforts of many volunteers from the ACS student chapters, public and private institutions, "Sociedad de Estudiantes Graduados de la UPR-RP, PR - Young Chemist Committee and the Women Committee, Science on Wheels and also ChemClubs of different schools. The Festival is certainly an event where the Puerto Rican volunteers wear their commitment and passion for demonstrating the value of chemistry in our lives and that is already exported to other Nations.