

Kevin Folta takes on South Florida Science Centers' promotion of anti-science GMO 'nonsense'

Over the past few weeks, the South Florida Science Center and Aquarium of West Palm Beach has been eagerly promoting a Thursday, November 13, 2014, talk titled ***Science on Tap-GMOs Exposed!***

The featured speaker? Michelle Parenti Lewis. As Kevin Folta noted in a [Friday post](#) on his Illumination blog, she is a local dietician who has no background in genetics, but is notorious in the region for spreading unscientific fear-based claims about genetically modified food and crops.

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So what can a trained RD “expose”? A quick google search shows that the South Florida Science Center and Aquarium has been duped. They have scheduled what will likely not be a scientific talk, but an activist parasite posing as science. This is the most disgusting of all scams. And they fell for it. A little poking around shows that Ms. Lewis is an anti-GMO advocate. In a local promotion for the same event on [SouthFlorida.com](#) they show the event's true colors:

BLINDED BY SCIENCE

The next installment of **Science on Tap**, the science-café gathering sponsored by the **South Florida Science Center** each month at **O'Shea's Irish Pub** in West Palm Beach, will be 7 p.m. Thursday (Nov. 13), with the theme “**GMOs Exposed.**” Led by licensed dietician **Michelle Parenti Lewis** (she's got degrees from FIU and the University of Alabama), the between-sips talk explore the genetically modified organisms in our food and their potentially harmful effects. One of the more interesting revelations will be that one of O'Shea's **Irish Car Bombs** (just \$3 during Science on Tap) will kill any GMO in a radius of 17 feet from the food on your plate. Science is awesome. Admission is free. Info: **SFScienceCenter.org**.

The promotion claims that Lewis will describe “their potentially harmful effects”, which is code for “these have no documented health effects over 17 years, but that's not scary so we'll talk about potential effects”. This sure looks like an activist rant posing as a scientific presentation.

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Wow, same old junk. So congratulations South Florida Science Center and Aquarium, you've been bamboozled by activists posing as scientists. You've been tricked by someone with a lot of letters after her name that chooses to ignore the scientific literature, and that should be frightening.

Folta's expose had an impact. Within 24 hours, the organizer's had changed the name of the event, neutering it to **GMO's on Tap: Science and You**. "I received word from their CEO that they'd be "pushing back the start date of the event until we have secured an appropriate speaker who can represent the other side of the issue," Folta wrote in an updated blog post.

"The other side? (head hits desk) They still don't get it, but we're moving in the right direction. Creationists everywhere got excited that the science center is now accepting talks for scientifically defunct ideas in an effort to hear all sides."

I advised to simply uncouple the South Florida Science Center and Aquarium from the event. That's the best move. They'd never bring in a psychic, a UFO expert, or a moon-landing hoaxer, or a Holocaust Denier, and then bring in a real expert to show "both sides". It falls directly into the creationist scheme of ***teach the controversy***, when science clearly shows **there's no controversy to teach**.

We'll see what happens next.

It is hard to believe that a Science Center needs to be reminded about how science works. It is not about presenting opinions of anyone that has one. It is about hypothesis-driven data, good experiments, solid statistics and hard data. It is not what a dietitian thinks and how she'll advance an activist agenda.

That's the stuff for the Whole Foods Community Room. Go there and spew nonsense. However, the endorsement of a Science Center must only be used to endorse science backed by the scholarly literature and the scientific consensus.

As it is said, you are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts. Period.