

Obama, inventors check out electric giraffe (Update)

June 18 2014, by Stacy A. Anderson



President Barack Obama meets Lindsay Lawlor of San Diego, Calif., and his creation, a 17-foot-tall, 2,200-lb robotic giraffe that "walks" on wheels and is powered by a 12-horsepower hybrid fuel-engine motor, during his tour on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, June 18, 2014, to meet with students, entrepreneurs and inventors, during the first ever White House "Maker Faire". Obama is highlighting new tools and techniques that promote fledgling businesses create and market their products in an effort to focus attention on US manufacturing need for science and math education. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

If President Barack Obama is mingling with inventors, sooner or later there has to be a robot. On Wednesday, it was Russell, the 17-foot (5-meter) electric giraffe towering in the South Lawn of the White House, a symbol of the quirky and clever creations Obama wanted to showcase on a day devoted to innovation.

"New tools and technologies are making the building of things easier than ever," Obama told entrepreneurs and students who gathered at the White House at its first Maker Faire. "There is a democratization of manufacturing that is potentially available because of technology."

As part of a weekslong emphasis on the economy, Obama was promoting the use of new tools and techniques to start up new businesses, to boost manufacturing and to strengthen science and math education.

"We've got to make sure that more Americans have the skills and opportunities to land a job in a growing industry or to create entire new industries," he said. "That's why I'm declaring today a national day of making."

Obama spoke after ditching his jacket, rolling up his sleeves and wandering outside from exhibit to exhibit on a sweltering day at the White House.

Besides the giant giraffe, a huge red community-mapping balloon hovered over the Rose Garden and a menacing dinosaur head rested in a hallway.



President Barack Obama reaches out to pet a 17-foot-tall, 2,200-lb robotic giraffe that "walks" on wheels and is powered by a 12-horsepower hybrid fuel-engine motor, that was created Lindsay Lawlor of San Diego, Calif., during his tour on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, June 18, 2014, to meet with students, entrepreneurs and inventors, during the first ever White House "Maker Faire". Obama is highlighting new tools and techniques that promote fledgling businesses create and market their products in an effort to focus attention on US manufacturing need for science and math education. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

Teens from The Workshop School, a Philadelphia public school, explained how they built a biodiesel sports car. Another showed off a "soofa," a solar-powered bench that lets people charge their phones.

"What on earth have you done to my house?" Obama joked.

Obama always seems engrossed by technological innovations, though he

joked about the name "Maker Faire" as a gathering for new and creative products.



President Barack Obama meets with Lindsay Lawlor, of San Diego, Calif., and his creation, a 17-foot-tall, 2,200-lb robotic giraffe that "walks" on wheels and is powered by a 12-horsepower hybrid fuel-engine motor, during his tour on the South Lawn of the White House to meet with students, entrepreneurs and inventors, during the first ever White House "Maker Faire", Wednesday, June 18, 2014. Obama is highlighting new tools and techniques that promote fledgling businesses create and market their products in an effort to focus attention on US manufacturing need for science and math education. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

"Why is there an 'E' at the end of 'faire'?" he said. "Is there jousting? Do

we all have to get dressed up, or what?....This is America. We don't have 'E's' at the end of 'fair.'"

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