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Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose Kicks Off Nationally-Recognized Summer of Service Program

Silicon Valley Tech Leaders See First-Hand Results of Award-Winning Program

San Jose, CA – June 13, 2016 – **Laura Fennell**, senior vice president, general counsel and secretary at [Intuit](#) and **Renu Bhatia**, vice president of business development at [NVIDIA](#), are busy Silicon Valley tech leaders who were looking for summer activities for their young teens too old for traditional summer camp but too young for a job. That's when they found [Summer of Service](#) at [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](#) and are now the program's biggest fans. This nationally recognized program that connects teens in grades 7 – 10 with volunteer opportunities kicks off today with four, two-week long sessions through August 5. (see schedule below)

With an emphasis on responsibility and purpose, participants in [Summer of Service](#) have the option of volunteering in one of five focus areas for each session including community outreach activities, early childhood education, the environment, activities for museum visitors, and leadership development.

After participating for three summers and fully engaged in making a difference in the community through volunteerism, **Bhatia's** son, **Nirban**, is launching his own literacy program, **Write 2 Succeed**, on June 23, for kids age 9 – 13 at West Valley Branch Library. He also successfully lobbied the **Spirit Halloween** corporation with repeated contacts and a petition on [Change.org](#) to remove an Osama Bin Laden terrorist costume that Nirban felt resembled a Sikh man and offended his community. According to his mother, "In [Summer of Service](#), he learned how a person his age can truly help others and feels responsible to make a difference by using his talents and energy."

Fennell's son and daughter both participated in the program for several summers and became interns. "My children were motivated and empowered at the camp – they woke up with energy and commitment. They wouldn't have missed a day because they felt responsibility," said **Laura Fennell**. "Those are characteristics I try to cultivate in the workplace – employees who are self-motivated, positive and empowered – not entitled. I think that is the definition of success."

There are 18 service sites located in the South Bay that provide rewarding opportunities for teens to earn up to 32 community service hours per session doing such things as mentoring preschoolers at [Estrella Family Services](#), harvesting fruits and vegetables for low income families at [Veggielution](#), clearing invasive species at [Ulistac Natural Area](#), and putting on a luau for seniors at the [Alma Community Center](#).

While service hours are an important edge on college applications, [Summer of Service](#) participants gain valuable life skills including "Emotional Quotient" (EQ) and leadership skills, a greater awareness of and responsibility for those less fortunate, and the belief that they can make a difference as a valued teenager.

"I think one of the most important skills teens develop in our program is what is now referred to as 'perspective taking,'" said **Marilee Jennings**, executive director of [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](#). "Recent brain research shows that one of the most important EQ skills for tomorrow's workforce and a thriving community goes far beyond empathy. It's actually the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and see through their eyes. Our program provides many opportunities for teens to experience different perspectives - from the diversity of the youth interacting with each other in camp – to learning about different sectors of the community and the issues each face, and lastly, inward perspective."

The first session launches June 13 and the last session starts July 25 and ends August 5. For more information, visit [cdm.org](#). To register, email sos@cdm.org or call 408-673-2833.

Summer of Service Sessions

Session 1: June 13 – June 24

Session 2: June 27 – July 8

Session 3: July 11 – July 22

Session 4: July 25 – August 5

About Children's Discovery Museum With over 150 interactive exhibits and programs, [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose \(CDM\)](#) is one of the largest museums of its kind in the nation. Since opening its doors in 1990, CDM has welcomed over 7 million visitors and has offered new exhibits each year that respond to children's diverse educational needs. The striking 52,000 square foot purple building was designed by Mexico City-based architect Ricardo Legorreta and is a beacon of discovery. Encompassing the broad themes of community, connections and creativity, hands-on exhibits invite self-directed, open-ended explorations. For more information about the Museum, visit www.cdm.org.