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For Immediate Release

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Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature Groundbreaking Event Wednesday, November 16 at 11:00 a.m.

Donald Rocha, San Jose City Council Member; Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County Supervisor; Dorsey Moore, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority Board Member; Students from Pioneer High School and Horace Mann Elementary School

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose Expands with 27,500 sq. ft. Outdoor Learning Environment *Museum Doubles Entire Exhibit Space and Connects Kids to Nature*

San Jose, CA – November 14, 2016 – Childhood has moved indoors in less than one generation. Increased screen time and parents' concerns about the potential dangers of exploring natural places are contributing to children's disconnect with nature. [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](#) is aiming to reverse this trend with "[Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature.](#)" a 27,500 sq. ft. outdoor expansion that doubles the museum's current exhibit space and connects kids to the natural world. Slated to open June 2017, it will feature ten exhibit areas that bring science and environmental education to life for the more than 400,000 children, families and teachers that visit the venerable 26-year-old museum each year. "[Bill's Backyard](#)" will demonstrate solutions that can be used at home: rain water harvesting, solar energy, and drought-tolerant gardens.

Research shows a direct connection between daily exposure to nature and children's emotional and cognitive well-being.¹ Children who are allowed to play outside freely build essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, risk-taking, and cooperation.²

^{1,2,3} Selected excerpts from Children and Nature Network (www.childrenandnature.org/research), Annotated Bibliographies of Research and Studies, Volume 1 7 2 (2007) and Richard Louv, [Last Child in the Woods](#), (Alonquin Books, 2005,2008)

They also tend to be fitter and are healthier overall and more likely to support the environment as adults. ³

“**Bill’s Backyard**” is not a playground or a nature park. The innovative design is a hybrid with familiar features from both, so parents feel comfortable allowing their children to explore while gaining confidence in their children’s ability to navigate the natural world.

“This project is about supporting the healthy development of all children in our community and building parental awareness of the importance of children engaging with nature. But, we also know that children from low-income neighborhoods in the museum’s urban setting have fewer opportunities to explore natural places,” said [Marilee Jennings, executive director](#) of [Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose](#), and that ethnically diverse families are underrepresented in national parks and other outdoor recreational activities. Our goal as a trusted educational partner is to bridge these gaps.”

According to a recent report commissioned by [Santa Clara County Open Space Authority](#), 75% of families within a 5-mile radius of the museum represent some of the most underserved families in Santa Clara County, with significant barriers to accessing nature. While the Bay Area is home to many nature preserves, trails and protected lands, the lack of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity amongst visitors indicates that a “bridge to nature” is needed.

“Children’s participation in organized sports has increased over the past 20 years, and while that’s valuable, research shows it doesn’t provide the same benefits as outdoor creative play,” said Jennings. “As leaders in early childhood education and STEAM learning, the museum’s intention is to support the development of critical skills needed for children to be successful, help the next generation acquire environmental and sustainability behaviors, and role model for adults planet-friendly systems that help us adapt to a changing environment,” said Jennings. “When we accomplish these three goals, I will feel that we have succeeded.”

Imagine watching kids at play in “**Bill’s Backyard: Bridge to Nature**,” and realizing that:

- today’s plant waterer is tomorrow’s drought management expert
- today’s insect lover is tomorrow’s environmental steward
- today’s composter is tomorrow’s environmental engineer
- today’s dirt digger is tomorrow’s healthy soils leader
- today’s tomato harvester is tomorrow’s innovative farmer
- today’s rock sculptor is tomorrow’s artist-in-residence

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[About Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose](#)

With over 150 interactive exhibits and programs, **Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose** 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.