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## **Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature Opening Dedication Thursday, October 19 at 11:00 a.m.**

**BEST VISUAL:** Seventy-five charming third graders will act as our first “test pilots” bursting through the commemorative ribbon and into Bill's Backyard to discover, play, and explore.

### **Speakers at Celebration:**

Bestselling Author of “Last Child in the Woods” and Chairman Emeritus of Children & Nature Network **Richard Louv**

San Jose Mayor **Sam Liccardo**

## **Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose Opens *Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature* San Jose's Newest Outdoor Learning Environment**

### ***Museum Tackles Nature Deficit Disorder, Risk-Taking and Environmental Stewardship***

San Jose, CA – October 16, 2017 – [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](http://www.childrensdiscoverymuseum.org) is connecting kids to nature with a new outdoor learning environment, the largest capital project since opening in 1990. [\*Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature\*](#) will double the museum's current exhibit space and provide endless opportunities for fun and learning with a focus on environmental and science education. Bestselling author and chairman emeritus of [Children & Nature Network Richard Louv](#) (*bio below*) will give the keynote address at the dedication on **Thursday, October 19 at 11 a.m.** [San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo](#) will speak about the museum's leading role in making San Jose a nature-rich city for all children. Named after retired Agilent Technologies CEO and Museum Board Member Bill Sullivan, ***Bill's Backyard*** opens to the public **Sunday, October 29.**

**“Bill’s Backyard** will support the healthy development of all children and help parents realize the importance of children connecting with nature, while also demonstrating sustainable solutions that can be used at home like rain water harvesting, solar energy, and drought-tolerant, native gardening,” said Marilee Jennings, [executive director of Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose.](#)

Children will make their own creative discoveries scaling the Tree Climber, scurrying through the tunnel to the Lookout Tower, and scooping gravel, sand and dirt in the Dig Pit. Ten exhibit features will delight children ages one to ten and families.

The museum aims to reverse the trends of nature deficit disorder, provide opportunities for appropriate risk-taking, and develop tomorrow’s environmental stewards. The museum also hopes to address barriers that prevent diverse families from experiencing the natural world by helping parents gain confidence and comfort and providing communities of color access to nature in the half-acre expansion.

“Silicon Valley is one of the most diverse regions in the country and we know that ethnically diverse families are underrepresented in national parks and other outdoor recreational activities,” said Jennings. We also know that children from low-income neighborhoods in the museum’s urban setting have fewer opportunities to explore natural places. Our goal as a trusted educational partner is to bridge these gaps.”

“Diversifying the nature movement with opportunities for all families to create a relationship with the outdoors will strengthen the health of our children, our communities, and the planet,” said Jennings. “Children who spend time in nature are more likely to support the environment as adults. And today’s youth are tomorrow’s policy makers, so we need to provide opportunities for young people to fall in love with the natural world, so they’ll protect it when they’re in a position to do so.”

**Bill’s Backyard** is a hybrid with familiar features of a playground and nature park. It’s bordered by a beautiful, meandering sculptural fence designed by Silicon Valley Iron Works exclusively for this project. Native and drought-tolerant plants provided and planted by Our City Forest will line the outside of the fence that is inscribed with donor names and inspirations.

### **Why Go Outdoors?**

Childhood has moved indoors in less than one generation with increased screen time, parents’ comfort and concerns about safety in the outdoors, and more organized activities vs unstructured play. Yet research shows a direct connection between daily exposure to nature and children’s emotional and cognitive well-being.<sup>1</sup> Children who are allowed to freely play outside build essential skills like creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, risk-taking, and cooperation.<sup>2</sup> They also tend to be fitter and are healthier overall.<sup>3</sup>

1,2,3, Selected excerpts from Children and Nature Network ([www.childrenandnature.org/research](http://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)

**Major Donors:** Agilent Technologies, California Coastal Conservancy, City of San Jose, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Sunlight Giving Foundation, SuperBowl 2016 Legacy Fund

### [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, the museum has welcomed over 8.6 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](http://www.cdm.org).

### [About Richard Louv](#)

[Richard Louv](#) is a journalist and author of nine books, including "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder"; "The Nature Principle"; and "Vitamin N." Translated and published in 24 countries, his books have helped launch an international movement to connect children, their families and communities to nature. He is co-founder and chairman emeritus of the nonprofit [Children & Nature Network](#), which supports a new nature movement.

In 2008, he was awarded the Audubon Medal, presented by the National Audubon Society. Prior recipients have included Rachel Carson, E. O. Wilson and President Jimmy Carter. Among other awards, Louv is also the recipient of the Cox Award for 2007, Clemson University's highest honor, for "sustained achievement in public service."

He speaks frequently around the world, including keynote addresses presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference, the first White House Summit on Environmental Education, the Congress of the New Urbanism, International Healthy Parks Conference in Melbourne, Australia, and the national Friends of Nature Conference in Beijing, China.

Louv has written for the New York Times, the Times of London, Parents Magazine and many other publications, and has appeared on CBS This Morning, NBC's Today Show, ABC's Good Morning America, NPR's Talk of the Nation, and other programs. He is currently working on his tenth book, exploring the evolving relationship between humans and other animals. Married to Kathy Frederick Louv, he is the father of two young men, Jason and Matthew. He would rather hike than write.