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

Museum Addresses Children's Alienation from Nature, Environmental Stewardship, and Cultural Diversity in the Outdoors

San Jose, CA – October 30, 2017 – [Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](http://www.childrensdiscoverymuseum.org) is connecting kids to nature with a new outdoor learning environment focused on environmental and science education in the heart of densely populated Silicon Valley. Childhood has moved indoors and kids are spending more time in front of screens and in organized activities vs. unstructured outdoor play. The museum aims to reverse the impact of these trends by providing opportunities for safe risk-taking, developing tomorrow's environmental stewards, and helping diversify the nature movement in one of the most diverse regions in the country.

Bestselling author of "Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" and chairman emeritus of [Children & Nature Network](http://www.childrenandnature.org) [Richard Louv](http://www.richardlouv.com) gave the keynote address at the October 19 dedication and welcomed the museum into the nature movement.

"Bill's Backyard is a beautiful and thoughtfully designed space that will provide families of all backgrounds the opportunity to enjoy the natural world in a region surrounded by technology companies. The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need," said Richard Louv. "And, the neuroscience is clear. Daily exposure to nature is linked to children's and adult's emotional and cognitive well-being. Children who enjoy unstructured outdoor play build essential skills like creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, risk-taking, and cooperation. They also tend to be fitter and are healthier overall."

Marilee Jennings, [executive director of Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose](http://www.childrensdiscoverymuseum.org), said, **"Bill's Backyard** will support the healthy development of all children and help parents realize the importance of children connecting with nature, while addressing barriers that prevent diverse families from experiencing the natural world."

The innovative design is one way the museum is tackling this. The exhibit space includes familiar features from both a playground and a nature park, so parents feel comfortable and gain confidence in their children's ability to navigate the natural world. The outdoor space, like the indoor exhibits, features tri-lingual signage, and will grow vegetables and herbs familiar to different cultures in the garden area.

"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."

In ***Bill's Backyard***, 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 bring joy to children ages one to ten and families, while also demonstrating sustainable solutions that can be used at home like rain water harvesting, solar energy, and drought-tolerant, native gardening.

For more details about Bill's Backyard, [click here](#). For more news about the museum, [click here](#).

[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.