



# Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Serving  
Silicon Valley  
since 1990



## Timeline Of Achievements

### 1983 – 1990

- Two Santa Clara County moms envision a place in San Jose designed especially for children to learn through hands-on experiences and secure non-profit status for the future Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, 1983
- Project Director Sally Osberg retained to oversee strategic planning and fundraising, September 1983; later becomes the Museum's first Executive Director
- Lead gift commitment of \$800,000 made by Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Computer, January, 1984; two years later, in 1986, Steve gifted an additional \$1,000,000 to the Museum
- Establishment of a permanent site with approval by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency of funding to acquire property for Children's Discovery Museum within Zone B of the Guadalupe River Park Redevelopment Area, December 1984
- World-renowned Mexico City-based Ricardo Legoreta Arquitectos was retained by the City of San Jose to design Children's Discovery Museum, later retained to design the Guadalupe River Park and the Tech Museum of Innovation
- Implementation of a comprehensive Museum on the Road (MOTR) program, encompassing Stage Door Stories (1984) and a traveling exhibit on disabilities, One Way or Another (1985), serving upwards of 50,000 children prior to the Museum's opening
- Groundbreaking by Mayor Tom McEnery and Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Frank Taylor for the Museum's 47,000 square foot facility, a building comprised of 42,000 square feet of museum space and a 5,000 square foot rehearsal hall for Opera San Jose, June 1988
- Commencement of exhibit construction, prototyping and testing, 1988
- Completion of \$9,750,000 Capital Campaign (comprising funds for exhibits; planning, development and outreach; the building; endowment; equipment and furnishings), July 1989
- Museum public opening June 2 and 3, 1990, with planned annual attendance of 155,000; served 340,000 in the first full year of operations

### 1990s

- Board of Directors established commitment to an Open Door Policy, published in three languages on the Museum's front doors, so that no child, family or school is ever turned away from the Museum's unique learning experiences due to the lack of ability to pay for admission, 1990
- In-house design, fabrication and installation of several important exhibits designed to complement existing experiences and also focus on science, some funded by major grants from the National Science Foundation:
  - Current Connections, 1992
  - Rhythm, 1994
  - Bubbalogna, 1995
  - Take Another Look, 1997
- Development of sustained educational programming for targeted populations:
  - Early Childhood Center (children to age 5), 1991
  - Bio SITE (Students Investigating Their Environment) river-based programming, 1993
  - Summer of Service (service learning camp for young adolescents), 1998
- City of San Jose gifts the building's "West Wing" to the Museum (the space formerly used by Opera San Jose); renovation of the space created a traveling exhibit gallery and construction of a second floor enabled space to house the new Department of Education and Programs and multimedia studio for youth, 1996-97

# Timeline Of Achievements

## 1990s continued

- Develops comprehensive strategy to reach and service San Jose's Latino community through exhibits, outreach programs, and events, including El Dia de los Tres Reyes Magos that continues to serve 5,000 people every January; launched effort 1996
- Legacy for Children Award instituted in 1999 to honor an individual or organization whose work has significantly benefited the learning and lives of children. Awarded annually, recipients have been:
  - Fred Rogers, 1999
  - The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2000
  - Rob Reiner and I Am Your Child Foundation, 2001
  - Caroll Spinney, Master Puppeteer of Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch, 2003
  - Bil Keane, Family Circus cartoonist, 2004
  - "Dr. Seuss," Theodore Seuss Geisel, 2005
  - John Cassidy of Klutz book fame, 2006
  - Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, 2007
  - Dr. Sally K. Ride, first American female astronaut, 2010
- Olympic Gold Medalist and child advocate Kristi Yamaguchi, 2011
- Heidi Murkoff, author of What to Expect When You're Expecting, 2012
- Alice Waters, founder of the Edible Schoolyard, 2013
- The DeBartolo York Family and 49ers Foundation, 2014
- Sally Osberg and Steve Wozniak, founding leaders of Children's Discovery Museum, 2015
- Ruby Bridges, civil rights activist, 2016
- Sonia Manzano, actress and writer for Children's Television Workshop, 2017
- Steve Smith, astronaut, 2018
- Dr. Milton Chen, education innovator and author, 2019
- Roberta Guaspari, violinist, teacher, co-founder and Artistic Director of Performance, Opus 118 Harlem School of Music, 2021
- Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall, CEO of Dallas Mavericks, 2022
- Sylvia Acevedo, Rocket scientist, STEM entrepreneur, tech leader, 2023

## 2000s

- First Lady of the United States Laura Bush bestowed the National Medal for Museum Service upon the Museum in September, 2001, an award established by the federal agency, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, to recognize museums for extraordinary community service. At the time, CDM was among only 25 museums in the nation and the only museum in the State of California to have received this award.
- Connie Martinez joins the staff as Executive Director in early 2002. Prior to joining CDM, she was the Director of Strategic Initiatives for the University of California at Santa Cruz. She brought more than 20 years combined experience in the public, private, educational and non-profit sectors. Sally Osberg becomes President & CEO of the Skoll Foundation.
- Commitment to in-house design and fabrication of interactive exhibits that meet the current educational needs of the community's children continues:
  - Alice's Wonderland, 2002
  - WaterWays, 2003 (replacing earlier water exhibit)
  - Secrets of Circles, 2006
- Investment in arts programming increases dramatically with the creation of:
  - Art Loft, 2005, dedicated visual arts program space
  - Cadence Amphitheatre, 2005, a 250+ seat outdoor performing arts and programming space
- Excellence in Exhibition Awards from the American Association of Museums are received for Alice's Wonderland and The Wonder Cabinet
- Developed and implemented major Early Childhood Education strategy to impact children's learning in the first five years of life; renovated largest exhibit gallery as The Wonder Cabinet: A FIRST 5 Learning Laboratory and developed early math, science, and literacy programs for preschoolers, 2005
- Launched comprehensive effort to reach and serve San Jose's burgeoning Vietnamese community, which was unrepresented in the current audience. Advisory Committee recruited and helped develop Children of the Dragon annual cultural celebration, 2005
- Collaborated with 5 urban children's museums across the country to incubate healthy eating and active living exhibits, programs, and events in order to make an impact in the fight against childhood obesity, 2006; ultimately adopted by the Association of Children's Museums as the national program Good to Grow
- Marilee Jennings assumes the position of Executive Director, March, 2008. Prior Museum roles include Director of Development and Marketing, and Associate Director. Connie Martinez assumes the role of Managing Director of First ACT, San Jose.
- Adopts practice of tri-lingual communications and exhibit signage: English, Spanish and Vietnamese; hires staff position of Vietnamese Cultural Liaison, 2005
- Child Magazine names CDM one of the top ten children's museums in the nation in its February 2002 issue.
- Cumulative attendance totals 5,727,034 by the end of 2009

# Timeline Of Achievements

## 2010 – 2015

- The Museum secures loan of Columbian mammoth fossils discovered by local resident Roger Castillo just one mile away in the Guadalupe River; creates Mammoth Discovery! interactive exhibit with a skeletal replica, and installs 2-ton mammoth sculpture outside, June 2010
- Building upon our role in the Good to Grow initiative (2006), the Board of Directors adopts healthy eating education as a content priority in 5 year plan; developed and opened Rainbow Market and nutritional message of Eat a Rainbow Every Day in the gallery adjacent to the doors to the outdoor Kids' Garden area, 2013
- Recruits and convenes Autism Advisory Committee and develops Play Your Way, quarterly after-hours events specifically for families with children on the Autism spectrum, with tailored activities and pricing to meet the special needs of these children and families, 2013
- Creates and launches the national Cultural Competence Learning Institute, in partnership with Association of Science-Technology Centers and Association of Children's Museums. This year-long professional development program helps institutions across the country maximize the benefits of workplace diversity and improve services offered to diverse audiences, 2013
- Working with FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, the Museum's Theatre Manager writes and produces an interactive theatre performance based on the beloved book, *Potter the Otter Loves to Drink Water*; 2013. Specifically for toddler and preschoolers, the play is then adapted to be a puppet show that travels to preschools around the County, 2015
- Board of Directors approves strategic initiative to transition Kids' Café from a snack bar to an educational program space that serves food. Designed by BCV Architects with construction by Toeniskoetter Construction, *FoodShed* opens featuring fresh and locally-sourced produce and Discovery Bento Boxes for kids, June 2015
- Awarded major funding from the Freeman Foundation Asian Cultural Exhibit Series (one of five children's museums in the country) to design a traveling exhibit about Vietnamese culture; designed *Voyage to Vietnam*, 1,500 square feet of interactive cultural experiences, that began a 3-year cross country tour in September 2015
- Constructs The Builder Building, a 3,200 square foot exhibit fabrication and engineering facility at the southern end of the Museum's site. The space is an investment in the Museum's unique approach to designing and building exhibits in-house, utilizing highly skilled craftspeople and artists. Opens August 2015
- Completes conceptual design of a new 27,500 sq. ft. outdoor learning environment designed to connect kids to nature. The City of San Jose agrees to a 25-year rent-free lease on the land. Named *Bill's Backyard: A Bridge to Nature* in honor of Bill Sullivan, a long-standing donor and Board leader whose company Agilent Technologies made the "seed" gift in honor of his 2015 retirement. Phase I opens Summer 2017
- Hosts 25th Birthday Party (community free day sponsored by Google) to thank families for their support over the years. Nearly 6,000 children and adults visited that day and participated in decorating the giant birthday cake, singing Happy Birthday, and leaving special messages on the giant birthday card, June 6, 2015
- Designs and installs interactive exhibits and environmental treatments in the new Educare California at Silicon Valley preschool in East San Jose. This one-of-a-kind Museum satellite will serve families with the fewest resources for educational enrichment for their children; opens August 2015
- Joins "Museums for All," a national initiative that enables families to visit at a heavily reduced rate

## In 25 Years

- Cumulative attendance as of August 31, 2015 totals 7,812,577
- More than 1,800 people have been employed by the Museum
- Five San Jose Mayors, 16 Board Chairs and 150+ Board Members have supported the Museum's success
- Survived multiple economic downturns without ever laying off an employee

# Timeline Of Achievements

## 2016 – 2019

- Raises \$3 million dollars and breaks ground on *Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature* outdoor learning environment
- Launches *Breaking Ground*, a multi-year initiative funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to work with immigrant populations. Project co-creates *World Theatre and World Market* with immigrant groups to share cultural expressions with museum visitors
- With funding from the City of San Jose, opens lactation room for nursing mothers
- Selects six museums from a highly competitive field of applicants to participate in the 4th and largest class of the *Cultural Competence Learning Institute* in Denver, CO
- Launches LGBTQ Advisory Committee to better understand and serve families and children in the LGBTQ community
- Expands programming to underserved communities by supporting Spanish and Vietnamese language staff
- Cultural Competence Learning Institute, the leadership development program that helps museums catalyze diversity and inclusion efforts, is awarded a prestigious National Leadership grant of \$500,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to further develop and expand its impact
- Opens *Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature* in 2017, doubling the museum's exhibit space and introducing children and families to nature exploration and science and environmental education
- Two large scale murals are created with partners in support of Mayor Sam Liccardo's goal of beautifying and activating San Jose neighborhoods. *Giant Steps* transformed the museum's outside entryway and *Mural of Hope*, a portrait of young activist Sophie Cruz, sits at the edge of Discovery Meadow greeting all passerby's
- Launches *Common Ground*, a multi-year initiative that builds upon the *Breaking Ground* project. Both were funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to continue work with immigrant populations. Creates *A Seat at the Table*, a pop-up arts space that travels locally to explore the shared hopes and dreams for all children through cultural identity, food, and immigrant experiences using sculpture, poetry, and live performances
- Convenes Disability Advisory Committee to better understand and serve children and families with disabilities. Launches new program, *Afternoons for All Abilities*, on the second Tuesday of each month
- *Voyage to Vietnam* exhibit returns home with rave reviews after a two-year, nine-city national tour

## 2020 - 2023

- Museum closes for a total of 393 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Continues to serve families through daily virtual programs while providing art kits to more than 630 underserved families
- Launches *Cambio*, in partnership with CCLI and the Exploratorium, in 2020. With a \$2.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation, this professional development project helps organizations shift their practices to create STEM experiences that are culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining to Latinx communities
- Receives prestigious *Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion Award* from American Alliance of Museums in 2020, which represents over 5,000 museums of all disciplines
- Develops Restoration and Revitalization plan in 2021 with substantial capital investments that improved indoor air quality and reduced shared touching of common surfaces and equipment with the goal of resuming interactive experiences, programming, and opening public places, and re-establishing audience capacity to 2019 levels
- Museum reopens in 2021 and begins to rebuild its capacity and attendance after being closed for a total of 393 days due to the pandemic
- Launches three-year planning process in 2021 to develop a celebration and create and build an exhibition about Nowruz, the Persian New Year
- Presents Cultural Celebration Series entirely in-person in 2022 after two years of virtual and hybrid programs due to the pandemic
- Completes renovation of Cadence Amphitheatre and expands seating capacity by 20%, responding to demand for outdoor performances for families
- Completes the **Potter the Otter: A Healthy Adventure** exhibit based on popular children's book series produced by FIRST 5 Santa Clara County. Designed specifically as a traveling exhibit exclusively for California children's museums.
- Successfully moves the annual Legacy for Children Award annual fundraising event to the Museum and honors trailblazing, changemaker, and champion for children Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall
- Finalizes the architectural, landscaping and exhibit design for the Exploration Portal adjacent to Bill's Backyard to be completed in summer of 2024
- Creates Nowruz pilot festival and completes Phase I of exhibition and festival planning with a conceptual design by Maryam Eskandari of MIIM Design
- Launches the inaugural Kristi Yamaguchi Family Literacy Festival with Always Dream Foundation and the San Jose Public Library Foundation
- In July 2023, the Museum served its 10 millionth visitor.