

# 2013 Annual Report





Dear Friend of The Museums,

While it may seem obvious to you what “business” The Discovery Museums are in, it might surprise you to hear that it’s not “museum,” or “entertainment,” or even “education.” Simply put, the focus of our efforts—our reason for being—is “readiness.” We want kids to be ready: ready for school, ready for life, ready to confront challenges, and ready to seize the opportunities that will surround them as they grow and their worlds expand.

On pages 4-5 you can learn what a group of knowledgeable professionals—a doctor, a teacher, and an early childhood advocate—believes it means for a child to be “ready.” We know this is a question that every parent wants to have answered. Parents want to know that they have done everything in their power to prepare their child for both everyday happenings and transitional life events: the first playdate; kindergarten; overnight camp; peer pressure; the first big moral decision; driving a car; move-in day at college; choosing a job, a mate, a life path. Parents expose their children to different experiences, situations and choices in order to develop the emotional, social, behavioral, and cognitive skills that help create a solid foundation for life and its challenges. And yet, we all worry: will they be ready?

There is good news for parents. The professionals have researched the impact of parents on a child’s readiness, and the list of things parents need to “do” does not seem all that extraordinary: read to your child, spend time with your child, create and enforce routines, take time to talk to your child, encourage your child to think about the world around them, demonstrate respect and courtesy to others. This list feels pretty doable, right?

And yet we know that data indicates our children as a group are becoming less creative problem solvers. They are exhibiting more evidence of social and emotional challenges. The rates of issues with attention and focus have risen. Anecdotally, kindergarten teachers tell us that kids are less ready to learn. What is going on? The solutions to these problems are simple and yet we have not been successful in reversing these trends.

So back to our first point: our role. The Discovery Museums are all about creating and enabling experiences that reinforce those very basic principles about helping children to be ready. We are about family time. We are about shared learning experiences. We are about connecting with others to learn and do together. We are about kids trying new things, but also about seeing them grow and develop by being progressively more successful on each return visit. And we are about building confidence that a child is ready.

We hope you agree that every child needs and deserves the kind of rich, formative experiences they get when they visit The Discovery Museums with their family. As we end 2013 and begin 2014, we are poised to do even more to help kids be ready. To do that we will need your support in ways that will exceed even your already generous levels.

Thank you for your help and support.

Neil H. Gordon, *CEO*

Lees N. Stuntz, *Chair, Board of Directors*

### 2013 Board of Directors

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# Financial Year in Review



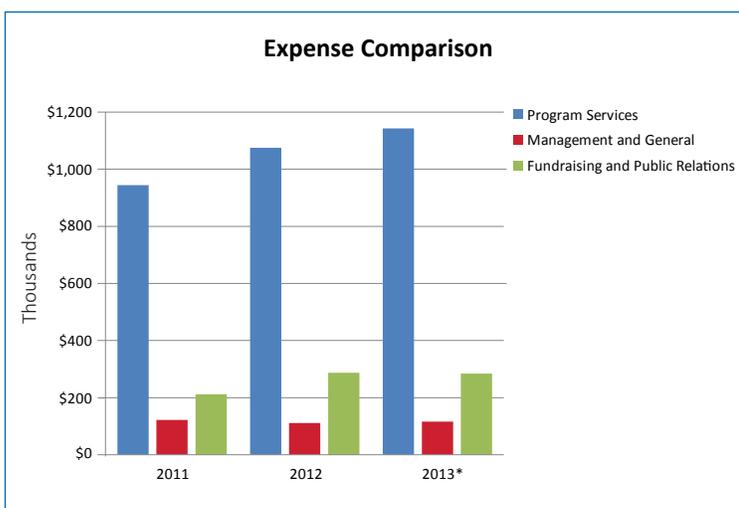
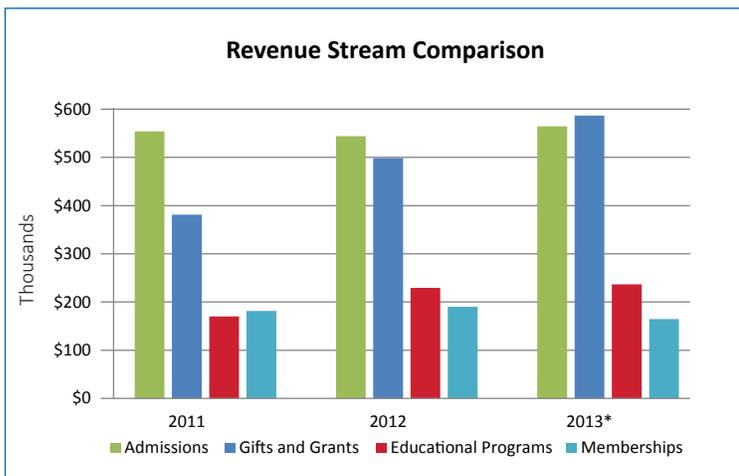
Operating Support and Revenue	2011	2012	2013*
Admissions	\$553,909	\$543,727	\$564,317
Gifts and Grants	\$381,280	\$498,375	\$586,823
Educational Programs	\$170,351	\$229,313	\$236,728
Memberships	\$181,543	\$190,164	\$164,845
Rental Income	\$33,087	\$45,824	\$43,695
Museum Store	\$30,513	\$38,350	\$40,284
Miscellaneous Income	\$15,900	\$4,338	\$2,443
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,366,583</b>	<b>\$1,550,091</b>	<b>\$1,639,135</b>
Operating Expenses Not Including Depreciation	2011	2012	2013*
Program Services	\$943,679	\$1,075,173	\$1,142,674
Management and General	\$122,170	\$111,498	\$116,145
Fundraising and Public Relations	\$211,501	\$287,240	\$283,996
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,277,350</b>	<b>\$1,473,911</b>	<b>\$1,542,815</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets from Operations Prior to Depreciation</b>	<b>\$89,233</b>	<b>\$76,180</b>	<b>\$96,320</b>

\*Preliminary unaudited results

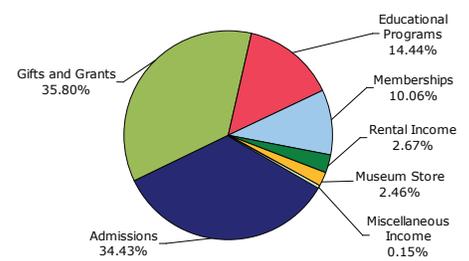
## 2013 Notable Achievements

- Served almost 172,000 people, our second most ever after our 30th anniversary year in 2012. Our number served has increased more than 35% since 2009.
- Increased membership by 70% since 2009, to more than 1,960 member families.
- Served more than 40,400 people—24% of the total—for free or deeply reduced cost through our Open Door Connections program, which provides opportunities for those who face financial, developmental, or cultural barriers to experiencing the Museums.
- Brought hands-on STEM programs to more than 27,000 pre-K through 8th graders in classrooms throughout New England through our Traveling Science Workshops program, now in its 21st year.
- Launched the Discovery Museums Speaker Series, bringing together expert voices for engaging community dialogs. In 2013, two MIT professors, a Yale Professor emeritus, and a leading pediatrician from Harvard Medical School spoke on topics that matter most to families.
- Opened our newest exhibit, *AirPlay*, developed in collaboration with three other museums as part of our IMLS-funded Exhibit Lab project (see back cover).
- Scientists from MathWorks, Tufts University, Brandeis University, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard University, Fitchburg State University, and Boston College participated in the inaugural session of our Portal to the Public program, becoming our first group of Science Communication Fellows.
- "Best of the Best," Family Favorites Award, *Boston Parents Paper*.
- Best Museum, Wicked Local Readers Choice Awards.
- Museums for America grant, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

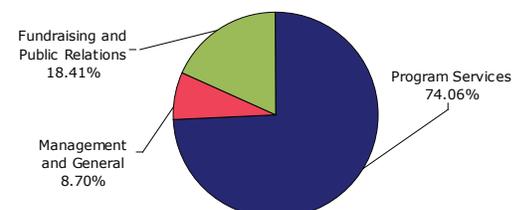
2013 at a glance



### 2013 Operating Support and Revenue



### 2013 Operating Expenses not including Depreciation



## What Do Children Need To Be Ready?

*The Discovery Museums have assembled a team of experts from the fields of neuroscience, informal learning, early education, and accessibility to advise us on a multi-year project to create a playful yet purposeful early learning space focused on healthy brain development. We asked three of the experts from our Early Brain Development Advisory Group to discuss the topic of readiness in young children.*



Sunindiya Bhalla



Cheryl Beaudoin



J. Kevin Nugent, Ph.D.

### What does the term readiness mean to you?

**Sunindiya:** When we talk about readiness, we want to ensure that every child starts out on a strong foundation for learning, school success, and citizenship.

**Cheryl:** As a Kindergarten teacher, readiness to me means more about the social than the academic. Our year both begins and ends working on social issues and preparing students in that arena. Some things parents could think about when considering if their child is ready for kindergarten would be whether the child has self-help skills: can he put a coat on by himself? keep track of her own materials? pack up at end of day? Is she “socially” ready? Can he follow teacher directions and live within classroom rules? Most 4-5 year olds are very egocentric, but in order to function within a classroom setting, they must be able to think outside of themselves.

**Kevin:** To me readiness means that children feel “at home” with themselves—safe, valued, listened to, respected. Readiness is built through relationships: if the child’s relationship with his parents is strong, then he will be comfortable exploring the world of places, people, and ideas without fear of making mistakes. By valuing both their child’s mistakes and accomplishments, a parent provides the scaffolding for a child to feel secure enough to learn and grow.

### Do you think that the expectation of readiness has changed over the last few years? If so, what do you see as differences?

**Cheryl:** From my perspective as a teacher, I don’t think readiness has changed—to me it’s all about social development, and the academics will come after. But parents now seem to think that readiness has changed, and that there is an academic expectation for their children. Many parents want to know “what should my child *know* before coming to kindergarten?” My response is always that there are no academic requirements!

**Kevin:** I think expectations may have changed. Today there is a huge focus on the importance of the early years of a young child’s life, which has brought both benefits and burdens to children and parents alike. While very young children are now given more opportunities for learning and exploration, parents may—unwittingly—overstimulate and overwhelm the child with developmentally inappropriate information and stimulation. Parents should be able to take delight in their child’s discoveries and enjoy the changes a child goes through naturally, and still allow the child to learn from mistakes. Our expectations need to match a child’s style and aptitude at any given time.

**Sunindiya:** We’ve always known that the interactive influences between children’s genes and environment shape the way that their brains develop. We also know that young children naturally reach out for back-and-forth interactions (also known as “serve and return” relationships) that actually “wire” the brain by creating neural connections. Recent research highlights the importance of these interactions as well as access to engaging environments in children’s social, emotional, and language development and their overall readiness for school and life.

### When we talk about kindergarten readiness, we usually talk about what is needed by the child. But what does kindergarten readiness mean for a caregiver and when does it begin?

**Kevin:** Caregivers need to keep the perspective that a child’s age matters less than their true social and emotional developmental readiness. We need to keep expectations appropriate for each child. If the caregivers have been in tune with a child’s need to feel valued, listened to, and respected from the beginning, the child will feel free to explore and learn. It all begins at home, and early relationships are key.

**Cheryl:** For parents/guardians, it is important to provide your child with self-help skills and work towards independence. You need to be as comfortable with your child going to kindergarten as they are! For example, part of coming to school is taking the bus. Parents need to be able to “let go” and allow their kids to grow up in a typical way. If you are uncomfortable with the bus, try not to transfer that fear to your child. How you feel and view the school experience is noticed by your child. If you are anxious, they will be as well.

**Sunindiya:** Caregivers are the ultimate brain builders. A caregiver’s back and forth interactions—cooing, speaking, touching, and making eye contact—begin building brain architecture from the moment a baby is born. As a young child grows, these interactions

and experiences create connections that wire the brain for future success. They also lay the foundation for the next phase of learning, such as reading and math, and a lifetime of school success. Whenever children are nurtured and engaged in an interactive, enriching environment at home or in the community, that's brain building in progress!

**The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology recently expressed concern that "Despite our historical record of achievement, the United States now lags behind other nations in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education at the elementary and secondary levels." How can caregivers create an environment for young children that promotes STEM thinking?**

**Sunindiya:** Despite leading the nation in innovation and education, Massachusetts along with the rest of the United States is behind in giving young children a strong start in STEM education. Caregivers and early education programs can and should create an environment for young children that promotes STEM thinking and learning. Children are naturally inquisitive, and activities such as building, matching, and blowing bubbles are easy ways to foster these important skills and abilities.

**Kevin:** The issue is knowing the child and what he actually needs. Parents and caregivers need to know the child's aptitudes, and respect them. We can ask lead questions but the child should be in the driver's seat and be the leader, the architect of their own development. We cannot usurp the child's sense of discovery or pleasure, but allow them to engage without fear of failure, without fear of being corrected, and so enjoy the satisfaction and delight that comes from making new discoveries.

**Cheryl:** It's all about inquiry. Provide them opportunities to explore nature, experiment in the kitchen (there is lots of science and math in the kitchen!), let them problem-solve on their own (with guidance). All of these opportunities help to create a world where children learn to think.

**How do different family circumstances affect readiness?**

**Cheryl:** Certainly families who have the opportunity to spend time with their children, expose them to rich experiences such as visiting The Discovery Museums or living in an area where nature is right out the back door, and hold meaningful conversations provide them with the tools they need for readiness. Young children need guidance to become independent—this is something that comes from home.

**Sunindiya:** We know that chronic stressful conditions such as extreme poverty, neglect, or severe maternal depression—what scientists now call "toxic stress,"—disrupt the architecture of the developing brain. This can lead to lifelong difficulties in learning, memory, and self-regulation. That's why connecting families with resources and engaging, enriching, and interactive environments is so important. By promoting increased interactions between children and caregivers, we can give a strong start to all children.

**Kevin:** Coming from very different cultural backgrounds, every child needs to have his or her cultural values and unique mode of thinking and feeling respected. The world of the family and the world of the school can sometimes be too different—even discrepant—for children; they need coherence between the values found at home and in educational settings. Children need to know and respect their own cultural backgrounds, and caregivers must appreciate the richness of that background. We must embrace the cultural differences in people and be open to being enriched by those differences.

**If you could say one thing to parents about readiness, what would it be?**

**Kevin:** Know your child—it is the key issue. Talk to your child. Know your child's threshold for being overwhelmed or overstimulated. Listen to your child, with no preconceptions about how he or she should develop. Let their curiosity and interests shape how you respond to them. Every child is different and unique, but it can be hard for parents to appreciate this. We have models, based on ourselves and our own childhood experiences, which shape our expectations. But we cannot pigeonhole children into a mold; we must allow them to experience new opportunities that are unique and challenging—for them.

**Sunindiya:** We are not really asking parents to do anything new. There are many opportunities in their everyday lives to make any moment a brain-building moment: by asking questions, engaging children in play, and accessing engaging environments in the community such as museums and libraries. Brain building can happen anywhere and at any time, such as counting the stars, finding letters on a street sign, or making a homemade card.

**Cheryl:** Don't rush your child—let them grow at their own pace. There is no "one way" in which children develop, they are all individuals. Enjoy their growth and celebrate their accomplishments with them. Value play in their daily lives. Let them be kids!!!

*Sunindiya Bhalla is Community Impact Director for Healthy Child Development at United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley; she also manages the Brain Building in Progress campaign, a public/private partnership of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and United Way of Massachusetts Bay.*

*Cheryl Beaudoin is a Kindergarten teacher in the Acton Public Schools.*

*J. Kevin Nugent, Ph.D., is Director of the Brazelton Institute at Boston Children's Hospital; Emeritus Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Lecturer, Harvard Medical School.*

# Our Supporters

We gratefully acknowledge the individuals, corporations, foundations, organizations, and government agencies whose generosity and goodwill provided critical support for The Discovery Museums in 2013. It is a special honor this year to recognize those who have shown their loyalty to the Museums by giving for many years consecutively (see key).

## Individuals

### \$7,500+

Mary Dockray-Miller and Michael Miller ++

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Ming Chia Huang  
Kai Johnson  
Robin and Tripp Jones

*These lists reflect gifts made between January 1 and December 31, 2013, and are complete and accurate to the best of our ability. To notify us of an error, please contact Marie Beam, Chief Development Officer, at [mbeam@discoverymuseums.org](mailto:mbeam@discoverymuseums.org).*

## Falling for Science 2013

On October 26 we brought together nearly 150 friends and supporters for a celebration of women in science to benefit The Discovery Museums. The gala was hosted by Dr. Erika Ebbel Angle, founder and chairman of Science from Scientists, CEO of Counterpoint Health Solutions, and an influential advocate for STEM education. Dr. Ebbel Angle talked about science milestones in her early education, and her current work to inspire young people to be curious and active scientists in their daily lives.



As always, our Falling for Science guests were tremendously generous to the Museums, and the event netted more than \$31,000 in support of our SMART Gals programming.

This special evening would not have been possible—nor as successful—without the creativity and tireless efforts of event co-chairs Carla Bacharach and Cheryl Beaudoin. We are deeply grateful for their support of this important event, and for the generosity of our guests.

Brian and Jeanne Lanigan  
 Susan Mahan and Steven Kirincich  
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 Jack and Susan LeTourneau  
 Jen Mara  
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 Patricia and Joseph Motzi  
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 Claudia and Andy Veitch +  
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**Up to \$99**

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Key:  
 + 5-plus year consecutive donor  
 ++ 10-plus year consecutive donor



**Donor Profile: Ben Rosenman, age 3**



*Dear Discovery Museums,*

*I love to play in the museum with all of the toys.  
 I decided to give my holiday charity to support this great  
 resource in our community.*

*Thank you!*

*Ben Rosenman, age 3*

Acton residents since 2010, the Rosenman family—parents Lindsay and Erik and sons Seth, 7, and Ben, 3—have been members of The Discovery Museums since their older son was 1. Lindsay calls the Museums “a very special place for my family” and feels fortunate to be able to watch Seth as he grows into the Science Discovery Museum while Ben enjoys his favorite Children’s Discovery Museum exhibits: the Train Room and Chain Reaction Room. Ben enjoys visiting the Museums so much that he and his friends will celebrate his fourth birthday with a party here this spring.

Lindsay and Erik introduced the boys to the concept of philanthropy at a young age. Each year the family celebrates one night of Hanukkah by talking about making gifts, rather than receiving them: each person picks a place that is personally meaningful and together they discuss how they might be able to support it. For Ben, making it possible for other kids to play at The Discovery Museums was at the top of his list. So, with a little help from his mom, he proudly mailed a check for \$18 to the Museums.

Chief Development Officer Marie Beam said, “While many families struggle with communicating to children the idea of giving back, the Rosenmans have successfully made charitable giving a family tradition. Ben’s gift has already inspired all of us who work here, and we know it will inspire others who love this museum to invest in it.”



# Our Supporters

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### \$25,000 and above

Hologic  
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The English Family Fund of the  
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### In Memory of Maria Conley

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Denise and Denis LeBlanc  
Claudia and Andrew Veitch  
Jean and Marsby Wartens  
Steven Schaeffer

### In Honor of Davida Fox-Melanson

Elyce D'Andrea

### In Memory of Eric Hilfer

Carole Marcacci

### In Honor of Denise LeBlanc

Pauline Dumas

### In Honor of Barbara and David Linnard

Owen Smith

### In Honor of The Schafer Family

Kristen Erslund

Key:

+ 5-plus year consecutive donor

++ 10-plus year consecutive donor

## 2013 Bid for Kids Online Auction

A hearty thank you to all those who helped make our 2013 *Bid for Kids* Online Auction a success! With your help, the Auction met its goal and raised \$20,000 to support the Museums' *Especially For Me* accessibility programming for children with an autism spectrum disorder, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. Special thanks to Auction Chair Carla Bacharach, who was instrumental in securing wonderful items for our catalog and invested a great deal of time and effort in our success.



## Gifts In-Kind

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Elliot Isen  
J. Fountain Photography  
The Jackson Laboratory  
Jillian's Boston  
John Hancock  
Kavita Katti  
Kimball Farm  
Kitchen Outfitters  
Learning Express  
Michael and Rebecca Leonard  
Leonard's Music  
Leslie Saul & Associates  
Lexus Restaurant  
Liberty Hill Farm  
Longfellow's Wayside Inn  
Margarita's Mexican Restaurant  
Liz Mason  
Mass Audubon Society  
The Master Singers of Worcester  
David Mayall  
Linda Mayer  
Madeline McNeely  
Middlesex Savings Bank  
The Minor Chord  
Moodz Day Spa & Salon  
Gregory Moore  
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney  
Nashoba Brook Bakery  
New Hampshire Fisher Cats  
Norman Rockwell Museum  
Jackie Normand  
Not Your Average Joe's  
Nuance Communications, Inc.  
NY Skyride  
The Orchestra at Indian Hill  
Pakachoag Music School of Greater  
Worcester  
Party Favors  
Paul Revere Memorial Association  
Phantom Gourmet  
Planet Gymnastics  
Larry and Valerie Post  
Ralph Jordan's Gifts  
Reasons To Be Cheerful  
Red Lion Inn  
Redbox  
Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel  
The Reynolds Center for Teaching, Learning and Creativity (TLC)  
Rock Spot Climbing  
Roger Williams Park Zoo  
Roller Kingdom  
Sceptre Marketing Group  
Scheier, Katin & Epstein, P. C.  
Mark and Rebecca Scheier  
Sechrest & Bloom, LLC  
Sharper Edge Skating School  
Jeffrey Shaw  
Thomas Sommerfield  
Southwick's Zoo  
Andree Stanford  
Sterling Golf Management, Inc.  
Jim Stewart  
Stone Meadow Golf  
Stoneham Theatre  
Stow Acres Country Club  
Lees and Stephen Stuntz  
Ann Sussman  
Swan Boats  
Tavolino Italian Gourmet  
Patricia P. Taylor  
The Thoreau Club  
Tower Hill Botanic Garden  
Town of Acton Recreation Department  
Trader Joe's  
Trombeta's Farm  
Diana and Fred Uehlein  
The Umbrella Community Arts Center  
Unleashed by Petco  
Andrea Valentini  
Via Lago Restaurant and Catering  
Vincenzo's Restaurant  
Wachusett Mountain Ski Area  
Langdon and Madge Wait  
Wayside Racquet and Swim Club  
Westford Regency  
WGBH Boston  
White Lotus Massage  
Eric Whitney  
Joe Whitney  
Whole Foods Market Bedford  
Whole Foods Market Wayland  
William Huss and Cheri Geckler  
Beverly Wing  
Workers' Credit Union  
Zipcar  
Zoo New England

# Our Volunteers

*We offer our deepest thanks to those who generously volunteered their time and talent in support of The Discovery Museums in 2013.*

Kate Ambash  
Nillani Anandakugan  
Carla Bacharach  
Lauren Bacharach  
Cheryl Beaudoin  
Shilpa Bhat  
Jack Bierwagen  
Ayla Blaney  
Issy Bohling  
Elaine Campbell  
Josh Cantrell  
Jillian Carr  
Amartya Chakraborty  
Anirban Chakraborty  
Stephanie Chan  
Merrie Chen  
Jessica Chu  
Kendra Czernicki  
Ryan Donofrio-Ralls  
Peter Doyle  
Charlotte Durham  
Anna Farra  
Breno Fiamma  
Eddie Gardiner  
Emily Goodwin  
Katrina Green  
Daniel Grichevsky  
Shreya Hedge  
Kevin Hu  
Annika Jain  
Tara Jawahar  
Abishek Jeyaseelan  
Catherine Ji  
Susannah Johnson  
Akshay Karthik  
Bharat Kesari  
Avani Khatri  
Christina Kim

Kristine Kirby  
Erica Ko  
Kristen Kuo  
Sonia Lansac  
Colin Lee  
Joe Lester  
Kaitlyn Li  
Edward Li  
Daric Lim  
Elizabeth MacLachlan  
Elise Mashimo  
Keelin McCarthy  
Nicole McKelvie  
Akhil Meka  
Nikhil Meka  
Shivam Midha  
Larissa Naidoo  
Ruypayan Neogy  
Emma Nizzari  
Christian Oddsund  
Katie O'Hara  
Teja Pallikonda  
Nav Pandian

Nikhil Patel  
Luke Pershing  
Akash Purohit  
Alecia Reed  
Benji Roth  
Susan B. Seger  
Tiffany Shao  
Heysung Sin  
Akhila Sonti  
Nikhil Srinivasan  
Akanksha Srivastava  
Samantha Stephen  
Tejas Subramanian  
Alex (Eklavya) Takhtan  
Spencer Thrope  
Julia Veitch  
Hannah Whitney  
Isabelle Williams  
Dewi Win  
Hannah Wohlfahrt  
Willy Wu  
Hannah Yin  
James Yu



# Looking Forward

## The Discovery Museums Announce New Board Chair



Bill Ryan, Board Chair

Board member Bill Ryan stepped into the position of Chair of the Museums' Board of Directors effective January 1, 2014. Ryan has served on the Board since January 2010.

"We are thrilled to have Bill assume the role of Board Chair," said CEO Neil Gordon. "As we enter an exciting growth phase in the history of the Museums, Bill's experience, knowledge, and well-recognized educational leadership is just what we need to guide us. Through his leadership roles and volunteer work, Bill has greatly impacted the strength of our community and will continue to do so in this role."

Ryan retired as superintendent of Acton-Boxborough Regional School District in 2010, and before that served as assistant superintendent, overseeing finance and operations for the region. An active member of the community, he has volunteered for the Acton-Boxborough United Way, Acton Memorial Library, Acton Community Supper, Acton-Boxborough

Arts Council, and Acton Youth Commission. Ryan currently serves as corporator at Emerson Hospital, corporator at Middlesex Savings Bank, board member of Cooperative Elder Services of Lexington, and board member of the Doli Atamian Campership Fund. He received a BA in political science from Notre Dame and an M.Ed. from Boston University. Ryan and his wife Christine are residents of Maynard.

Ryan replaces outgoing Chair Lees Stuntz, who served on the board for nine years and as Chair since 2006. Stuntz will remain on the board and serve as Chair of the Building Committee.



### Planning for Our Future

*We thank the following donors for making an early investment in the Campaign for The Discovery Museums:*

Anonymous  
Joan and Samuel Appleton  
Wendy and John Baker  
Thomas and Cheryl Beaudoin  
Jarod and Mindy Bloom  
JD and Lori Chesloff  
Patricia and Don Chisholm  
Katharine and Charles Denault  
Pauline Dumas  
Harvey Eisenberg  
Robert and Deena Ferrara  
Foundation for MetroWest  
Stephen and Susan Giulietti  
Jeffrey and Janet Glidden  
Institute for Museum and Library Services  
Michael and Eileen Katin  
Russell and Lee Ann Layton

David and Barbara Linnard  
Don and Pat MacKenzie  
The Manton Foundation  
Massachusetts Cultural Council  
Cultural Facilities Fund  
Middlesex Savings Bank  
Lynne Osborn  
Carolyn and Andy Platt  
Polaroid Corporation/The Land Fund  
William and Christine Ryan  
Lees and Stephen Stuntz



Campaign for  
The Discovery  
Museums

# 2014 Staff

Neil Gordon, *Chief Executive Officer*  
Kate Ambash, *Interim Development Associate*  
Marie Beam, *Chief Development Officer*  
Jill Foster, *Director of School & Group Programs*  
Sarah Hetherington, *Campaign Assistant/Grants Manager*  
Elliot Isen, *Development Associate*  
Jill Jacques, *Store Manager/Marketing Specialist*  
Shilpa Kulkarni, *Program Assistant*  
Liz Leahey, *Public Program Assistant*  
Denise LeBlanc, *Director of Learning Experiences*  
Cara Lonardo-Roy, *Director of Visitor Experiences*  
Cheryl Lombardo, *Director of Finance & Business Administration*

Nick Malo, *Facilities Assistant*  
Erin Manning, *Membership Manager*  
Andy Pearson, *Assistant Director of Visitor Experiences*  
Judy Pecevich, *Marketing Assistant*  
Peggy Plant, *School Relations Manager*  
Alecia Primrose, *Program Assistant*  
Steve Roake, *Exhibits & Facilities Director*  
Ann Sgarzi, *Director of Marketing*  
Lucas Skorczeski, *Early Childhood Education & Parent Resources Director*  
Steve Subrizi, *Admissions Assistant*  
Sowmya Suneel, *Operations Assistant*  
Kathie Watt, *Scheduling Manager*

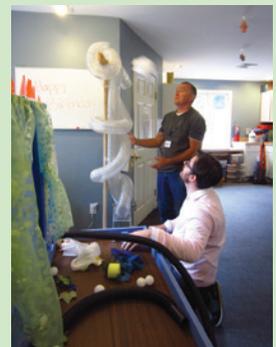
## Museum Collaborations Bring Better Process, Better Results



What does it take to design and build a terrific, engaging museum exhibit? Current best practices center on designing for family learning, prototyping with visitors, and building for open-ended investigation. But perhaps the most impactful thing is bringing a broad range of perspective and expertise to bear. Through a grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), The Discovery Museums received three-year funding to collaborate with colleagues from EcoTarium, ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center, and the Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine to work together on exhibit development. The Exhibit Lab project gave museum

staff the benefit of a wide range of perspectives, resources, and expertise to leverage when developing our new *AirPlay* exhibit.

"The fun, but challenging part about building exhibits at The Discovery Museums is that we build low-cost exhibits that look and feel familiar, but must survive intense use," said Exhibit & Facilities Director Steve Roake. "Finding the right combinations of materials and construction methods on your own can take lots of trial and error. By having a new set of colleagues at similarly situated museums, I now have access to decades worth of exhibit building experiences—as do they—which helps me get to neat, creative solutions much more efficiently. I have a whole new team on my side."



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