



# Bay Area Discovery Museum

## Bay Area Discovery Museum Media Kit 2011 – 2012

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## ABOUT THE BAY AREA DISCOVERY MUSEUM

**A Leading Museum Focused on Children’s Creativity.** World-class cities are defined by their iconic civic, cultural and educational institutions—their leading schools and universities, symphonies, theater and dance companies, and museums. Many of these great cities have founded dedicated children’s museums, because of the profound and lasting impact they have on the physical, emotional and cognitive development of children. Among the nation’s top children’s museums, the Bay Area Discovery Museum is an acknowledged pioneer, leader and innovator. It is renowned for its mission of developing childhood creativity through the original and inventive use of child-directed, discovery-based play. Every great cultural institution has its niche—the development of childhood creativity is ours.

**Filling The Void: The Creative Imperative.** Creativity—the capacity for original thought, new connections, adaptive reasoning, and novel solutions--if nurtured and supported during childhood, has positive and far-reaching implications for fulfilling adult potentiality. While all children are born with creative capacities, research indicates that by age 10 many children have lost up to 70% of their creative capacity, and as adults we utilize a mere fraction of our original creative potential. In a global society where change is radical, constant and accelerating, creativity is an imperative for success. Yet, precious few institutions focus successfully on the many facets of creative development—especially childhood creative development.

**A Place Where Children Discover Their Own Way.** From its inception twenty years ago, our mission has been to develop the many facets of childhood creativity and play. Our trademark approach emphasizes open-ended, child-directed, discovery-based activities, in which there are infinite ways to play, discover, and create—not a single, ‘correct’ way as determined by adults. These are the types of early experiences that researchers have linked positively to the cultivation of lifelong creativity, and it is the type of play that happens for thousands of children each week at the Bay Area Discovery Museum.

**An Extraordinary Setting for Extraordinary Childhood Experiences.** With its panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay and one-of-a-kind location at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge—deep in the heart of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the museum’s setting is unique among the world’s children’s museums. To this extraordinary backdrop, we bring a systematic program of best-practices and unrivaled resources:

- 1) A 7.5 acre, indoor-outdoor environment that harmonizes nature and nurture;
- 2) A safe, child-centric campus that promotes self-direction, creativity, and discovery through hands-on exhibitions;
- 3) Expert-guided workshops in the arts and sciences;
- 4) Multi-cultural programs that celebrate the Bay Area’s rich and varied cultures and communities;
- 5) Aggressive outreach to children and families in under-served communities, where the need for open-ended play and creative development is most acute; and
- 6) A platform for advocacy and thought leadership on childhood play and creativity and its lifelong benefits.

**A Foundation for Future Innovators and Creative Thinkers.** The future of the Bay Area resides in its children and youth. The Bay Area Discovery Museum is committed to that future, and to nurturing future generations of creative thinkers and innovators. Play, Discover, Create!

## MUSEUM HISTORY

Over twenty years ago, a group of four parents gathered to create a premier cultural institution focused on the vitally important early years of a child's life. First developed in a small storefront space, the popularity of the pilot Bay Area Discovery Museum soon proved the need for a major children's museum in the Bay Area. Broad community support fueled the 1991 award-winning conversion of a series of abandoned Army buildings in historic Fort Baker into a one-of-a-kind indoor and outdoor facility under the Golden Gate Bridge.

In 2003, the community came together again with a major capital campaign to expand the Museum through renovations of most exhibitions, the creation of the immensely popular 2.5 acre outdoor exhibition *Lookout Cove*, and construction of a new entry building and theater. This increased capacity allows families reflecting the full economic, ethnic, and geographic diversity of our community to participate in a range of arts and science activities, celebrate our community's diverse cultural heritage, and investigate and learn to protect the natural environment.

The Museum has grown dramatically over the past twenty years, with approximately 300,000 visitors annually enjoying its dynamic, child-centered learning environment. National grants, partnerships and media recognize the Museum as one of the best children's museums in the country. With an emphasis on learning through play, we encourage children ages 6 months to 8 years to develop into curious, adventurous lifelong learners.

## MUSEUM MILESTONES

- October 2011: Museum has first day of Not-A-School Creative Enrichment Program, a drop-off program nurturing creativity in the arts, the sciences and environment for children ages 2.9 – 4.5.
- April 2011: *Imagination Playground* opens
- September 2009: Museum launches Connections, a rigorously designed outreach program designed to shift the composition of Museum visitors to more accurately reflect the diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- January 2007: Museum welcomes its three millionth visitor
- August 2005: *Wave Workshop* opens
- July 2004: *Lookout Cove* opens
- December 2003: New art studios opens
- October 2003: *Discovery Theatre, Media Clubhouse, new Tot Spot and Entry Pavilion* opens
- 2002: Museum celebrates 15th anniversary and over 2.5 million visitors to date—breaks ground on \$19 million *My Place by the Bay* expansion and enhancement project
- 2001: Museum announces \$19 million campaign with \$12 million pledged and a grant of \$1 million from the Marin Community Foundation
- 1998: Museum presents *Remember The Children, Daniel's Story* in partnership with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- 1997: National collaboration with the Library of Congress on *Adventures into Books: Gumby's World* exhibit
- 1996: Museum is invited to join the Youth Museum Exhibit Collaborative
- 1995: Museum opens the *Tot Spot* permanent exhibit
- 1993: Museum becomes a member of Youth Alive, a national job training project for underserved teens
- 1992: President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation selects the Museum for the National Historic Preservation Award
- 1991: Museum moves to its current location at Fort Baker
- 1988: Museum designs its first two permanent exhibits: *The San Francisco Bay, Architecture and Design*
- 1987: Pilot site opens in Corte Madera

## MUSEUM FACT SHEET

<b>MISSION</b>	The Bay Area Discovery Museum strives to engage, delight and educate children through exploration of and connection with the local environment and the diverse communities that live here.
<b>VISITORS</b>	Over 275,000 Bay Area children, families, school groups and teachers annually visit the Museum.
<b>ANNUAL BUDGET</b>	The Museum raises its \$3.7 million budget through memberships, admission fees and gifts from Bay Area families as well as local and national foundations and corporations. The Museum's <i>My Place by the Bay</i> campaign achieved over \$19 million for expansion and enhancements to its 7.5-acre site.
<b>MAJOR FUNDERS</b>	Partial list: Anonymous, Bank of America Foundation, S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Bothin Foundation, Clara L. D. Jeffery Trust, Compton Foundation, Forrest & Frances Lattner Foundation, Gap Foundation, Genentech Foundation for Biomedical Sciences, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, JP Morgan, Langendorf Foundation, LEF Foundation, Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund, Osher Foundation, Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund, May & Stanley Smith Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Karyn Flynn (Interim)
<b>BOARD PRESIDENT</b>	Humberto A. Galleno
<b>LOCATION</b>	Located at the foot of the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge, the Museum is situated on 7.5-acres of National Park land in Fort Baker. The Museum occupies nine restored, historic buildings originally built by the U.S. Army between 1903 and 1905. As a result of the excellent restoration of the site, the Museum received an award in 1992 from the President's Council on Historic Preservation.
<b>EMPLOYEES</b>	43
<b>VOLUNTEERS</b>	100
<b>GENERAL INFO</b>	Fort Baker; 557 McReynolds Road; Sausalito, Calif., 94965. Open Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. General admission is \$11— free for members and infants under 6 months. The Museum offers free admission on the first Wednesday of each month from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
<b>TELEPHONE</b>	(415) 339-3900
<b>WEB SITE</b>	<a href="http://www.BayKidsMuseum.org">www.BayKidsMuseum.org</a> .
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/BayAreaDiscoveryMuseum">www.facebook.com/BayAreaDiscoveryMuseum</a> Flickr: <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/bayareadiscoverymuseum">www.flickr.com/photos/bayareadiscoverymuseum</a> Museum visitor photo group: <a href="https://www.flickr.com/groups/bayareadiscoverymuseum/">www.flickr.com/groups/bayareadiscoverymuseum/</a> YouTube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/DiscoveryMuseum">www.youtube.com/DiscoveryMuseum</a> Twitter: <a href="https://www.twitter.com/baykidsmuseum">www.twitter.com/baykidsmuseum</a>

**QUICK FACTS** The Museum holds the following distinctions:

- Since its founding in 1987, the Museum has become one of the nation's premier children's museums
- Visitor breakdown is as follows: 25% from San Francisco, 25% from Marin, 25% from the East Bay, 25% from Peninsula, South Bay and Sonoma County
- Over 8,200 member families
- 45,000 people received free admissions to the Museum through monthly free days, cultural festival, Open Door Access, and fully subsidized community/school programs including:
  - 19,842 visitors to our Free First Wednesdays
  - 1,700 subsidized or free school visits.
  - 8,875 visits through Connections
  - 9,691 visitors to our cultural festivals: Kwanzaa, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Chinese New Year, Day of the Young Child, and Asian Pacific Heritage Festival.
  - 700 complimentary tickets to Goblin Jamboree to families in under-served communities.

**FUN FACTS** Annual Museum consumption:

- 56,875 feet of butcher paper
- 110 gallons of glue
- 220 gallons of tempera paint
- 485 gallons of water in aquariums
- 250 squid dissected in summer camps

**ACCOLADES** The Museum has been recognized in the following ways:

Historical Preservation

- California Preservation Foundation, Preservation Design Award, 2005
- San Francisco Architectural Foundation, Architecture and Youth Award, 2000
- National Historic Preservation Award from the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1992

Media Recognition

- San Francisco Bay Guardian, Best Nearby Discovery 2009
- North Bay Bohemian, Best Family Destination & Best Imagination Center, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005  
Best Birthday Party 2011, 2010
- Pacific Sun, Best Place for a Kid's Party, Hall of Fame, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007,
- Lilapick Best Kids Outing 2008
- Bay Area Parent magazine, Best Children's Museum, Silver Medal
- Nickelodeon's Parents' Picks Best Enviro-Friendly Place, 2008
- Grand Magazine, Top 20 Children's Museum, 2007
- J. the Jewish newsweekly, Favorite Museum, 2007, 2008, 2009
- North Bay Bohemian, Best Summer Day Camp, 2005
- Bay Area Parent, Family Favorite, 2004
- Pacific Sun, Best Children's Attraction, 2003
- North Bay Bohemian, Best Children's Attraction, 2003
- Pacific Sun, Hero of the Week, Museum's Community Learning Initiative (CLI), 2002
- SF Gate, 10 Great Bay Area Places to Keep the Kids Amused, 2002
- Parents Magazine, Must-See Museum, 2000
- FamilyWonder.com, Highest Review Rating for Museum, 2000
- San Francisco Chronicle, Best Family Outing, 1999

- San Francisco / Peninsula Parent Magazine, Best Place For Kids, 1998
- Pacific Sun, Best Place to Bring Kids, 1997
- Valley Parent Magazine, Best Family Outing, 1996

#### Museum

- MetLife Foundation and Association of Children's Museums (ACM), Promising Practice Award, 2002

#### Graphic Design

- American Graphic Design Awards, excellence in communication and graphic design, 2006
- AIGA Design Competition, wayfinding award, 2005
- Parenting Clubs
- Ross Valley Mother's Club, Best Day Outing (Hands Down Winner), 2006
- Lamorinda Moms Club, Best Indoor Activity, 2005

## EXHIBITIONS OVERVIEW

**Imagination Playground** – The outdoor play space that allows children to constantly reconfigure their environment and to design their own course of play. Giant foam blocks, fabric, slides, noodles and balls overflow with creative potential for children to play, dream, build and explore endless possibilities.

**Tot Spot**—The indoor and outdoor Tot Spot offers crawlers, early walkers, toddlers and preschoolers a multi-sensory experience as they explore exhibitions themed around animal homes and habitats.

**Art Studios**— Studio 5 (for younger children) and Studio 10 (for older children) offer opportunities to experience the process of using a wide variety of visual arts media. Children love to paint on our special windows, dabble in sculpture and add their own artwork to our studio walls. Drop-in programs and themes change throughout the year.

**Lookout Cove**—This popular 2.5-acre outdoor, interactive exploration area features natural, cultural and built icons of the Bay Area including a rocky shore and sea cave, a shipwreck with clues to dig up and discover, the Golden Gate Bridge under construction, real water tidal pools, native animal homes to build, and more. The space also features five site-specific artistic works commissioned for the Cove.

**Wave Workshop**—The Museum’s science lab re-creates the dynamic environment under the Golden Gate Bridge and teaches visitors how organisms adapt to live within such an environment through hands-on experiments and dramatic play.

**San Francisco Bay Hall**—A playful simulation of the Bay Area with an “underwater” tunnel, 300-gallon sea star tank, fishing boat, Fisherman’s Wharf and shipping port.

**Discovery Theatre**—This 180-seat performing arts theatre offers music programs on weekdays and music and cultural performances on select weekends throughout the year.

## YEAR AT A GLANCE 2011 - 2012

### Special Exhibitions

#### **Out on a Limb: Adventures with Nature and Art**

Climb up to the amazing tree house, build your own fort, play with light in the trees in the forest. Have you ever thrown leaves into the wind, discovered a gnome home or created a nature soundtrack? For visitors of all ages, there are places for building, climbing, listening and exploring—all designed to inspire a love of nature.  
(October 29, 2011 – January 8, 2012)

#### **Science + You**

Enter a child-sized laboratory to explore how scientists impact your health and wellness. Explore machines, processes, and technology that demonstrates the role science plays to keep your body healthy. (January – April 2012)

#### **Adventures with Clifford The Big Red Dog**

Board the Birdwell Island ferry and journey to the world of Clifford, America's beloved big red dog with a heart to match. See Emily Elizabeth and many of the residents of Birdwell Island. The exhibit offers numerous immersive "paws-on" adventures that reinforce "Clifford's Big Ideas"—ten simple tangible life lessons designed to help young children navigate their world.  
(May 21, 2012 – September 3, 2012)

### Museum Events 2011 - 2012

#### **Goblin Jamboree Fundraiser**

The entire Museum is transformed into a haunted wonderland with ghostly decorations and a full brew of games, activities and live entertainment. (October 15 – 16, 2011)

#### **Noon Year's Eve**

Count down to noon and watch the ball drop in Festival Plaza. Children get to dance along to kid-friendly tunes, and create their own party hat and noise maker to celebrate the Noon Year.  
(December 31, 2011)

#### **Creativity Forum**

Luncheon featuring renowned speaker on the subject of creativity. 2012 speaker is Tina Seelig, executive director for the Stanford Technology Ventures Program (STVP), the entrepreneurship center at Stanford University's School of Engineering.  
(March 7, 2012)

#### **Hip Kids Music Series**

Rock out to some kids music with adult appeal during this annual series of interactive performances by the hippest bands around.  
(October - December)

#### **World On Stage**

Enjoy an exciting repertoire of performances celebrating the rich artistic diversity of our local and global communities.  
(January – February)

#### **Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**

Gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the culture and folklore of Mexico through music, dance and traditional crafts. (May 5, 2012)

#### **Gingerbread Architecture Extravaganza**

Children and families create delightful gingerbread houses festooned with candy canes, marshmallows, gumdrops, frosting and treats. (Weekends in December)

#### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration**

Honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. with special performances, art projects and a reading room.  
(January 16, 2012)

#### **Playdate**

Gala dinner and auction in support of the Museum's systematic program of best-practices and unrivaled resources.  
(May 12, 2012)

#### **Kwanzaa Celebration**

A community event celebrating the African-American festival that honors family and community. Free admission. (December 26, 2011)

#### **Chinese New Year Festival**

Special performances by the spectacular lion dancers of the Marin Chinese Cultural Group, help ring in the Chinese New Year.  
(February 20, 2012 )

#### **Discovery Camps**

Children ages 4 to 9 celebrate the joy of guided exploration and open-ended play through weekly camps including visual and performing arts, building, natural history, science, crafts and more. (February Break, Spring Break & Summer)

## CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

A primary mission of the Bay Area Discovery Museum is to ensure that children from the diverse and varied communities of the Bay Area have access to the Museum and can participate fully in our many educational programs. We want all families to feel welcome and to have a sense of inclusion, safety and respect while visiting the Museum. This mission is achieved through three programs: Connections, Festivals and Special Events, and Family Access programs.

### **Connections**

Connections is the centerpiece of our Celebrating Community outreach program. Through Connections, the Museum partners with 35 local preschools through their parent organizations: Marin Head Start, Marin Community Child Development Program, San Francisco Unified School District Child Development Program, Wu Yee Children's Services, and Contra Costa Head Start. Connections facilitates 8,000+ visits annually by low income, Latino, Asian, and African-American children and their families. Each participating school has committed to work with the Museum for three years to create long-term connections of diverse families to the Museum.

For more information about Connections, please contact Heather Miller, Connections Manager, at (415) 339-3916 or [hmiller@badm.org](mailto:hmiller@badm.org)

### **Festivals & Special Events**

Thanks to long-term partnerships with community organizations, the Museum hosts annual events reflecting the Bay Area's rich cultural diversity.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration

Chinese New Year Festival

Cinco de Mayo Fiesta

Kwanzaa Celebration

### **Family Access Programs**

The Museum offers free admission on the First Wednesday of each month, all day long. In addition, several of the Museum's cultural festivals are free to visitors. Free coupons are available to community groups upon request by calling Community Programs at (415) 339-3922.

**Open Door Policy:** It is the Museum's policy that no one be turned away due to lack of funds. Families are welcome to visit the Museum on a pay-what-you-can basis.

The Bay Area Discovery Museum offers classes throughout the year for children and adults. Scholarships are available for summer camps, performances and other Museum programs for families that qualify. Please call (415) 339-3922 for scholarship information.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Karyn Flynn**, Interim Executive Director, Bay Area Discovery Museum

Karyn Flynn comes to the Museum with a background in investment management, having worked for Goldman Sachs in the Private Wealth Management group. Karyn serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Bay Area Discovery Museum. She also currently serves as a Trustee for Heyday Books in Berkeley. In addition, she holds an M.B.A. from London Business School. She currently lives in Kentfield with her husband, Geoff, and their three boys, Hunter, Harrison and Grayson.

### **Humberto A. Galleno**, President, Board of Trustees, Bay Area Discovery Museum

Bert Galleno joined the board in 2006 and brings over 14 years of advising companies and institutions on strategic and capital market matters. Most recently, he founded Gravity Capital Group, a corporate finance consulting and strategic planning services firm. Previously, he spent over 12 years in the investment banking industry, nearly 10 of those years with Goldman Sachs. Bert moved to the Bay Area in 2004 after living abroad in Hong Kong, where he advised corporations and governments across the Asia Region. Bert and his wife, Lareina Yee (a native San Franciscan), live in the city and have two sons, Nicolas and Sebastian.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2011 - 2012**

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Sanjay Jain, Treasurer  
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Bill Patterson  
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## **THE GROWING DANGER OF A U.S. CREATIVITY-GAP**

By Richard Winefield, Executive Director, 2006-2011  
Bay Area Discovery Museum

The U.S. currently faces a challenge comparable to anything we face financially or environmentally--namely, a creativity-gap. And unlike the so-called missile-gap of the 1950's, the creativity-gap is real, threatening our standing as the world leader in technology and innovation. We are creating a generation woefully under-prepared to be creative thinkers and problem solvers, at a time when creativity is more important than ever.

Our children face a future that is almost unknowable. Rapid and dramatic changes in technology, demographics and the world economy will create entirely new industries, while making others obsolete. Success in the future will hinge on one's ability to anticipate trends, to recognize patterns in seemingly random events, and to come up with original ways to add value to organizations and to society. This need for creativity is not limited to artists and writers; leaders in the professions, in academia, in government, and in business will require it. Indeed, the creativity-gap contributed to the crisis in the American auto industry, where left-brained industry-leaders, totally focused on short-term numbers and "past practice," led their industry to near-oblivion. These business leaders lacked the vision and creativity of their counterparts in other countries, and millions of Americans are paying the price.

Most elementary schools regard creativity as a frill, and science education (a great platform for creativity development) as a messy, end-of-week activity. And with standardized tests so important (and irrelevant) children are given few opportunities for child-directed, creative play. Yet research indicates that it is precisely through this type of play that youngsters develop their creative-sides. Young children are "wired" to be creative, and do it naturally. When their play is child-centered they are experimenting, trying to do new things, often failing but trying again and again to figure things out, all the while employing their imaginations and learning the power of experimentation. Adult-centered play can be useful and fun, but lacks the value of purely child-driven activity. Little league and dance class do not provide the opportunities for imagination and experimentation that kids require.

It's not just our children who are at risk; our nation's future as the world leader in innovation and technology is at stake. The U.S. has always valued and nurtured creativity, and it has paid us vast dividends. From the days of the railroad through the communications and computing revolutions, right up to today's focus on bioengineering and green technologies, the U.S. has been the leader in innovation. But today's children in San Francisco and San Jose will someday be competing with today's children in Sao Paulo, Shanghai and Seoul. If we do not quickly close our creativity-gap, other countries will replace us on the cutting edge of innovation, job creation, and economic leadership.

At the Bay Area Discovery Museum we are aware of the challenge, and address it everyday with our visitors, children one to eight years of age. We are committed to developing childhood creativity, and to nurturing future generations of creative thinkers and innovators. But our efforts are small compared with the need. We urge educators and parents to wake up to the critical need to nurture the creative potential within all children, by providing them with the opportunity to simply play, not in competition with other kids, not to develop technique, not with computers or pre-packaged games, but with their own ideas and imaginations. Let's avoid the failures of creativity we see in our auto industry, and within our state government, to cite just two examples. For their own good, and for the future of our nation, our children need a heightened curiosity, the ability to take risks and try new things, and the joy of discovery and creativity. It is certain that, as author Daniel Pink has suggested, "Right-brainers will rule the future." Let's make sure our children, and our country, are a big part of that future.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CREATIVITY

**Q: Creativity is great, but not every kid can be an artist or musician, right?**

A: Creativity is important for all of us. Not every kid grows up to be Frank Gehry or Pablo Picasso, but every kid profits by being creative. We want creative teachers, lawyers, plumbers, and entrepreneurs; creative doctors, mechanics and government officials.

**Q: Isn't creativity an innate talent? You either have it or you don't.**

A: Not true—virtually all children are born with creative capabilities. If those capabilities are not nurtured they shrivel up. This is happening with too many children, as schools abandon open-ended, child-centered play in favor of (too) early literacy development and higher test scores.

**Q: What is open-ended play?**

A: This is play in which there is not an outcome or set of rules. Hopscotch, soccer and video games may be fun, but there are “right” and “wrong” ways to play them. In open-ended play, children create their own rules and their own storylines; it's not about winning or losing. Kids do this naturally, which explains why they'll often spend less time with a new toy than they do with the box it came in. The box can be a thousand things, the toy only one.

**Q: What is child-centered play?**

A: When play is child-centered, as opposed to adult-centered, it is the children who are in charge. Little league baseball and soccer, girl and boy scouts, drama club, ballet dancing—all are great fun for kids and teach them much, but in each case adults are in charge, making the rules and providing structure for the play. But creativity-development for young children requires that they explore and experiment, discover things for themselves, immerse themselves in their play, imagine and fantasize, and connect different ideas and recognize patterns. That happens best when they are driving the play, not parents, teachers and coaches.

**Q: Sounds abstract; what does creative play actually look like? What should I see my kids doing?**

A: Here at the Museum there are five specific actions that encompass our approach to creativity. If creative play is happening, you should see your kids

- 1) Being challenged and taking risks;
- 2) Staying with an experience and repeating behaviors;
- 3) Acting independently;
- 4) Being delighted with their play-experience;
- 5) Collaborating with others.

At the Bay Area Discovery Museum we stand for children's creativity. For us, it's never about doing it “right” or winning the game. It must be open-ended and child-centered. And, it must always be fun; we want our children to be delighted, and their parents as well.

Check out the Museum's video on childhood creativity and the Museum:

[HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?FEATURE=PLAYER\\_EMBEDDED&V=CFI-2WCDJWV](HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?FEATURE=PLAYER_EMBEDDED&V=CFI-2WCDJWV)

## CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS AND THE ROLE OF PLAY

By Fred Rogers

Some people talk about play as if it were a relief from serious learning or even worse: a waste of time. But for children, play is exceedingly serious...and important! In fact, play is a way for children to learn who they are, how the world works, solve problems, and to express feelings. Yes, play is the real work of childhood, and for young people today, many children's museums offer play experiences that other settings are not able to give them.

In a children's museum art studio, young children can draw or create from a wide variety of materials. They don't need to try to make something that looks exactly like something they see in the world. Drawing gives them a way to express their own feelings and thoughts. It's not important that they "get it right." It's important that they do it their own way. Children can try on costumes...and different "roles," which give them safe ways of exploring and acting out their concerns and deeper inner needs.

When children build and make things, they can feel more in control not only of the outside world but their inner selves as well. When they play with blocks, they are making decisions about the form that the blocks will take, and what, if anything, their "building" represents. They're creating from their own ideas! Besides that, when children have some things they're in charge of, they're more likely to feel comfortable about letting adults be in charge of other things in their lives.

Children's museums are often filled with climbers and other things that challenge children's physical abilities. Even by watching a toddler "toddling," you can see how much energy – and fascination – goes into being able to walk. Preschoolers work on learning how to move through their world, get around, hop or skip or run fast. They need to develop confidence in their growing bodies and what they can do.

Many children's museums include a place for water-play. Children love the feel of water. It is an activity that does not ask for right answers, just to be enjoyed. Peek-a-boo boxes, rice tables, colorful shapes and shadows also encourage children to appreciate and understand their world.

What nourishes our imagination? Probably more than anything else, loving adults who encourage children's own choices of imaginative play. Parents in children's museums are often found playing alongside their children. Sometimes we adults forget that childhood isn't just something we "get through." It's a big journey, and one that we all take. Hopefully, we adults will never forget how much we have "learned" from early childhood and about ourselves and others.

## QUOTE SHEET

“I am a scientist and was at the museum today with my two kids. We've been there maybe 15 times in the past two years. I am writing to say that the museum RULES. Let me repeat: IT RULES. The exhibits are brilliant and totally in touch with the need to get kids outdoors and connected with nature.”

—Anna Weinstein

“The perfect combination of indoor and outdoor experiences is a highly appealing aspect of the Museum. The exhibits and performances offered indoors are educational and really enjoyed by both of us, but we also love playing outdoors, particularly on the boat.”

—Mike Broneau, father of Alexandra

“The location is awe-inspiring. It is so specific to San Francisco. My husband and I grew up in the City and the Museum captures the magical essence of the Bay. There are no other places that combine site and content so well for kids.”

—Natasha Boas, mother of Jacques

“The kids get so excited here!”

—Sue Baum, teacher, Jefferson Pre-K

“Alvarado Elementary has long recognized what a special learning environment the Bay Area Discovery Museum provides. Our students, teachers and parents enjoy your exhibits and school programs.”

—Phyllis Matsuno, principal, Alvarado Elementary School

“Teachers describe the Bay Area Discovery Museum as an authentic experience that honors all members of the community,”

– Jane Mancina, Junipero Serra Annex Child Development Center Site Director

“Fantastic. It was wonderful. Staff had a great time. Parents thought it was wonderful. [The children] visit their pictures every day. They are covered in fingerprints.”

– Doris Smith, Marin Community Child Development Programs, Novato Children’s Center Site Manager / Lead Teacher

“The children were so excited they couldn’t stop talking about how they went fishing, the brooms, and the tree they could crawl through. Staff was really great at holding their attention. We had too many adults who wanted to go.”

– Shirley Lee, Commodore Stockton Child Development Center