

CASE SUMMARY FOR CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

In an increasingly complex world, children's museums provide a place where all children can learn through play with the caring adults in their lives. There are approximately 350 children's museums around the world. Here are short messages that highlight how children's museums positively impact children, families and communities.

- **Children's museums help children develop essential foundational skills.**

In the past ten years, neuroscience has confirmed what the social sciences have long contended, that the first years of life are essential to future learning. Grounded in well-established pedagogy, children's museums are leading a movement that combines specific learning objectives with play in informal learning environments that are developmentally appropriate for infants, toddlers and children.

- **Children's museums respect childhood.**

Helping to balance widespread cultural influences that compress childhood, children's museums produce programs and exhibits that transcend age, IQ and experience, and empower children to set their own pace.

- **Children's museums light a creative spark for discovery and lifelong learning.**

Research from the University of Illinois finds that children feel bored as much as 50 percent of the time while at school or doing their homework. At children's museums, kids become excited about what they are learning while they are playing. As multidisciplinary institutions, children's museums are defining how to teach the arts, humanities, sciences, mathematics and culture across generations.

- **Children's museums are environments where families play and connect in meaningful ways.**

With today's workplace demands, adults have less time to spend with children. Children's museums are places away from work and household distractions, where parents and caregivers can spend quality time with children, learn something new themselves and experience the luxury of becoming lost in the present moment as they play.

- **Children's museums serve as town squares and build social capital.**

A landmark examination of civic engagement, *Working Together: Community Involvement in America*, indicates that children are one of the most likely subjects to motivate community involvement. Children's museums engage families and individual citizens to share their talents and points of view.

- **Children's museums are uniquely positioned to help reverse stigma and discrimination.**

Children's museums are popular, yet neutral, sources of information, attract a diverse cross-section of people and provide shared experiences through interpretive and interactive exhibits. By exposing adults and children to unfamiliar concepts in a non-threatening, hands-on approach, and ensuring that the museum experience is accessible to those of differing abilities and backgrounds, children's museums create bridges of understanding.

- **Children's museums strengthen community resources that educate and care for children.**

Children's museum art, science, math, music, literacy and other exhibits and programs for children are valuable resources, especially in communities where such programs have been reduced or completely eliminated from schools and libraries due to budget constraints. Additionally, children's museums hold workshops about informal learning for parents, teachers and childcare professionals.

- **Children's museums contribute to local economies and reduce economic barriers.**

More than 30% of children's museums are part of a downtown revitalization project. According to ACM data, the total economic activity of its children's museum members is \$449 million. Children's museums are sought-after local and travel destinations. More than 30 million individuals annually visit children's museums around the world. One in two children's museums offer discounted/free admission for low-income individuals.