



**SCIENCE
CENTER
OF IOWA**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
FISCAL YEAR**

2021

2022

**We would like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU
to all of our Stakeholders, including:
our Board of Directors, Donors, Members,
Community Partners and Visitors for helping us
advance STEM learning as we continue
to build upon our mission.**

ADAPTING AND ADJUSTING TO A TIME OF ADVERSITY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – CURT SIMMONS:



*“In times of adversity and change, we really discover who we are and what we’re made of.”
- Howard Schultz*

The last two years created challenges many leaders and organizations could not have foreseen. Yet, through all the uncertainty, we remained committed to our donors, funders, volunteers and our community. It is really important to us, regardless of the obstacles we were faced with, that we continue to be good stewards of their financial and non-financial support.

As we were navigating the global challenges, our SCI family was again tested when we learned of the sudden passing of Renee Shull-Harmon, SCI’s Vice President of Science Learning. Renee’s passion for early childhood science education and science learning was felt by everyone who worked with her. Sadly though, this wasn’t the only loss we experienced this year. We also endured the passing of our amazing volunteer beekeeper, Susan Kelly, and also Chris Hedinger, who was a founding member of the Iowa LEGO Users Group and architect behind the 75,000-brick model of the Science Center of Iowa. While the past year has been nothing short of a roller coaster, I’m so incredibly proud of the resiliency of our team.

In the coming years, SCI will continue to serve our participants with our engaging exhibits and programs, reach out to our community to develop meaningful partnerships, and create new initiatives that inspire science learners of all ages. Together we can build a well-prepared science literate workforce to not only compete in the global environment but lead the way. We are committed to sparking the sense of discovery in all Iowans and being the place where wonder and curiosity come to life.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR - SHELDON S. OHRINGER

This year provided us much to reflect upon as we prepare to look back at our past and as we celebrate and plan for the future. At no greater time have science and technology been so significant. In fact, the events of the last few years have made it clear that Science is Essential.

Making a difference

Just as science and our community continue to change, the Science Center of Iowa is committed to responding to the needs of its public. During the last few years, SCI brought science to life for hundreds of thousands of visitors through creative and innovative ways. In fact, since 1970, SCI has played a leading role in providing unique experiences through informal learning.

Turning the page to tomorrow

As we focus on engaging more individuals, SCI has renewed its commitment to establishing meaningful partnerships and collaborations with public and private organizations in our community. The Science Center of Iowa Board of Directors look forward to all that lies ahead as SCI continues to engage and inspire the next generation — the ones who will solve the world’s next big challenges.

SCI 101 — DID YOU KNOW?

OUR MISSION: To engage and inspire Iowans along their journey of lifelong science learning.

501(c)(3)

The Science Center of Iowa is a 501(c)(3) entity. We are independent, operating solely from money raised and earned on our behalf.



We are the Science Center of Iowa. In addition to welcoming visitors from all 99 counties and beyond, our outreach and professional development programs take STEM learning on the road, reaching tens of thousands of Iowans each year.



As a private, nonprofit organization, we rely on the donations of private individuals, companies and foundations to achieve our mission and serve more than 128,000 individuals from across the state and country. Thank you for your support!

OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY & ACCESS

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) inform every aspect of our lives. As a community anchor that celebrates diversity, the Science Center of Iowa strives to dismantle barriers that limit access and equity in STEM.

We commit to:

- Inspire lifelong learning through creating welcoming environments and conditions which support ALL in STEM learning.
- Work toward eliminating inequities with those who have historically been marginalized and underserved in STEM learning.
- Improve our communities through building relationships, thought and action on topics related to equity, inclusion and public access to STEM.

To be successful, the Science Center of Iowa embraces the need for continual reflection upon these principles and commits to adapting to the changing needs of our communities, creating greater global awareness and improving upon our actions and experiences.

IN MEMORY OF RENEE SHULL-HARMON



Renee Shull-Harmon joined the SCI team as Vice President of Science Learning in 2013. She had a broad range of responsibility for the oversight of the planning, research, development, implementation and evaluation of all education programs, outreach and participant programs, including the SCI Preschool.

Renee came to SCI with more than 20 years of experience in education and special expertise in early childhood learning. Her background was impressive and her accomplishments during her tenure with SCI were many. Sadly, Renee passed away in September and her death was a profound loss.

Renee had many accomplishments during her tenure with SCI, but the legacy she leaves is a commitment to advancing STEM learning for the next generation of leaders and nurturing the importance of curiosity and wonder in our youngest learners.

***IT'S THE PLACE
WHERE WONDER
AND CURIOSITY
COME TO LIFE***

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES AN IMPACT

STAR THEATER PLANETARIUM UPDATE

The Science Center of Iowa's Star Theater Planetarium provides a new experience for many visitors. The 50-foot, 360-degree domed screen – the largest and most advanced planetarium in the state of Iowa – affords visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in the night sky, without worrying about streetlights and mosquito bites.

This past year, SCI updated the technology, specifically the software and graphics processing computers, in the Star Theater Planetarium. New technology in this digital planetarium allows visitors to experience breathtaking depictions of the universe. The cutting-edge system also provides staff instant access to vast amounts of astronomical content allowing for real-time updates with new discoveries and images.



STAR PARTIES – SEE THE MOON AND OTHER CELESTIAL OBJECTS!



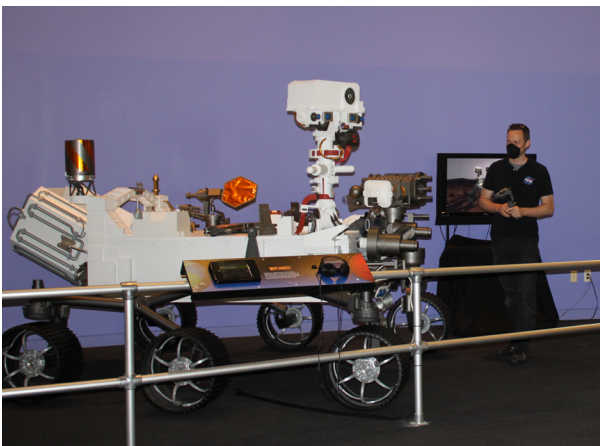
Have you ever found yourself staring up at the night sky and wondering about the stars and planets you see? How about the ones you can't see? Well, we wonder about them too, which is why Star Parties remain an SCI favorite.

SCI's Star Parties last year primarily took place later in the evenings. This timing was optimal, allowing stargazers to observe celestial objects such as: colorful double stars and star clusters, meteor showers and more through our high-powered telescopes. SCI even hosted a Solar Party this summer during a Downtown Farmer's Market Saturday. Visitors were able to witness the Sun's stunning features in incredible detail using solar telescopes.

SCI worked with Des Moines Parks & Recreation to secure multiple locations for the Star Parties, creating unique experiences. SCI also tapped into its incredible pool of volunteers – our stargazing guides – to assist us as we investigated the wonders of outer space.

TRAVELING EXHIBIT – NASA'S "ROVING WITH PERSEVERANCE" ROADSHOW

SCI opened its summer traveling exhibition in May. A full-scale model of both NASA's Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars helicopter were on display through August. As big as a car, with its camera "head" rising high, Perseverance's six-wheeled lookalike towers over most visitors, while Ingenuity's double highlights just how small the history-making rotorcraft is.



Opening weekend, team members from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory were on-site to answer questions and interact with visitors. During this time, Atlantic Middle School students visited the science center and participated in a workshop where they wrote code to program Root Robots and also met with Tyler from NASA's Perseverance Mars Rover team. He shared his experiences as a STEM professional working on the Mars rover project.

Traveling exhibits provide SCI an incredibly opportunity to share an up-close look at the spacecraft with our visitors. Advancing our mission is critical as we engage and inspire lifelong learners. We are grateful for the partnerships and support of organizations like the Iowa Space Grant Consortium, who help enhance our commitment to space, science and exploration.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS - SCI PRESCHOOL

LITTLE LEARNERS MAKE BIG DISCOVERIES AT THE SCIENCE CENTER OF IOWA PRESCHOOL!

The Science Center of Iowa Preschool has been transforming the lives of early learners for more than 50 years. In fact, SCI was one of the first museums in the country to have a preschool on-site. Since opening in 1972, the preschool is now educating its third generation of families and during the 2020-2021 school year, SCI educated 112 three- and four-year-old preschoolers.



This past year, the SCI Preschool was awarded a generous grant by the Iowa Department of Human Services to expand the preschool allowing SCI to increase enrollment by 35 percent. However, in order to expand the number of students SCI serves, the teaching staff also needed to increase. Like many educational institutions, SCI also faced challenges trying to fill these new positions. By the start of the 2022-2023 school year, the SCI Preschool had secured additional staff and was able to expand their student enrollment by 17 percent.



SENSORY FRIENDLY HOURS - FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: NICOLE CLIFTON AND ENES BAJREKTAREVIC



Nicole Clifton and Enes Bajrektarevic started bringing their family to SCI's Sensory Friendly Hours this past year. Sensory-Friendly Hours provide a quieter, less crowded SCI experience for families with children on the autism spectrum.

After their first visit, they said they've been back every month since. According to Nicole, their first experience was awesome for them and their youngest son, Malik, who is five years old and has autism. He was able to explore freely, without being overstimulated by crowds and activities.

"This was the first time we were all able to play and enjoy each other as a family in a large public space without all the pressure of the unknown and needing a "just in case" escape plan," explains Nicole. "After that initial experience and speaking with staff, we purchased a family membership."

"Going to places like this can be extremely overwhelming without these special hours," said Enes. "The Sensory Friendly Hours have allowed Malik to be himself and we don't have to worry about de-escalating a situation. SCI's Sensory Friendly Hours provide a safe environment where we can interact as a family."

In addition to five-year-old Malik, Nicole and Enes also have a 12-year-old and a 15-year-old at home, who they say also enjoy visiting the science center. "We are so grateful for this special time and the Science Center of Iowa," Nicole said.

SCI's Sensory Friendly Hours are held on the second Tuesday of every month from 4:00-7:00 pm.

***HELPING INSPIRE
A-HA! MOMENTS***

PUBLIC SUPPORT

SCI engages a wide community audience to develop meaningful partnerships and new initiatives that inspire curious minds of all ages. Partnerships and sponsorships from the following organizations help SCI engage and inspire lifelong learning in all of us.



BRAVO Greater Des Moines Fund:

The following local governments committed a portion of their hotel/motel tax in FY 21–22:

- Altoona
- Ankeny
- Bondurant
- Carlisle
- Clive
- Des Moines
- Grimes
- Indianola
- Johnston
- Norwalk
- Pleasant Hill
- Polk City
- Polk County
- Urbandale
- Waukee
- West Des Moines
- Windsor Heights

SCI PARTNERSHIPS - CHILDREN & FAMILY URBAN MOVEMENT



The Science Center of Iowa's reach extends beyond the four walls of the building in downtown Des Moines. In fact, SCI staff have been building and fostering relationships with community organizations and educators across the state.

This past spring, twice a week, SCI began coordinating STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) activities with the older fourth and fifth graders who participate in the Children & Family Urban Movement (CFUM) after school program. The relationship evolved to include an SCI led 8-week

program that includes robotics, dinosaurs and more. SCI has also assisted in educating CFUM staff on how to operate and lead STEAM activities with supplies from their new STEAM cart.



“Through our relationship with the Science Center of Iowa, our students have been able to take part in a variety of experiences that are engaging, educational and fun,” said Jacob Nastruz, CFUM’s Coordinator for Volunteer Services & Community Engagement. “SCI provides enhanced programming as well as new and creative ways for our kids to learn that will benefit them well beyond their time with CFUM.”

Jacob says he hopes the CFUM and SCI relationship “will continue to open the world of our students to the many things that SCI has to offer.”

CFUM’s mission is to create a community that supports the potential of children, youth, and families through educational success, healthy living, and community engagement. CFUM serves the River Bend neighborhood, one of the most diverse, economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Des Moines. With an estimated population

of 12,244, 32 percent of residents in this diverse neighborhood are under the age of 18, and 100 percent of the students attending Moulton Elementary receive free or reduced-price lunch. The stresses of poverty impact many aspects of the lives of children in the neighborhood, placing them at risk for poor educational outcomes, adverse health conditions, and diminished capacity for their futures. The neighborhood CFUM serves is rich in ethnic and racial diversity, and at the same time faces significant economic challenges.

In 2021, 36 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 33 percent scored at or above that level for reading. CFUM’s consistent, reliable, trustworthy presence and quality programming is vital to the success of the children they serve.



SPONSORSHIPS & GRANTS

The following contributions were made through generous support of specific projects and programs at the Science Center of Iowa between October 1, 2021, and September 30, 2022.

\$50,000 and above

Judith A. Lindquist
Scholarship Fund



\$25,000 – \$49,999



\$10,000 – \$24,999



MONSANTO



\$1,000 – \$9,999



ANNUAL & OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

With sincere appreciation, the Science Center of Iowa acknowledges the extraordinary support from all donors. Your gifts enable us to engage and inspire through programming, exhibits, events and so much more. Thank you for making this possible and investing in the SCI mission.

\$50,000 and above

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SPOTLIGHT: NOCTURNAL SCIENCE NIGHTS - CARVER ELEMENTARY

For more than 10 years, Carver Elementary Principal, Jill Burnett Requist, has been participating in SCI's Nocturnal Science Nights. These nights offer large groups a uniquely exclusive and affordable way to experience SCI after hours. Once a year, Carver Elementary rents the science center for their students and families.



“As a school, it’s important to involve parents in their student’s education,” explains Requist. “The Nocturnal Science Nights give parents the opportunity to interact with their children in an informal setting, but it also gives families an opportunity to see what’s available in their own community.”

Following their Nocturnal Science Night, Carver Elementary sends out a follow up survey to the families asking for feedback on the event. They continue to receive positive comments, such as “we’d like to do these more often” and “this was a great opportunity to interact with my child”.

Carver Elementary currently serves 440 students and is located in Des Moines, north of the Iowa State Capitol.

GO BEYOND WITH SCI — SCI ANNUAL GALA



After two years of celebrating virtually, we experienced the SCI Annual Fundraising Gala live and in person. This year, attendees were asked to experience the science center through the eyes of their inner child and help support science education. Proceeds from the event support SCI's early childhood science education and programming for thousands of individuals, families, students and educators who engage SCI each year by participating in interactive exhibits, special programming, preschool, camps and more. The SCI Gala wouldn't be possible if it weren't for our committee and their passion for our mission. A special thanks to Megan Salois and Doug Reyes, who served as our 2022 SCI Gala Masters of Ceremonies.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: DAVID & SUSAN GRANT



As retired scientists, David, a molecular geneticist and Susan, an agricultural researcher in plant pathology, still have a passion for science which is why they began volunteering at the Science Center of Iowa. Having been members of SCI since the late 1980's, they had some idea of what to expect, but said what keeps bringing them back is being a part of something that's important. "We actually get to see the kids who are inventing their world right now," said David.

Susan loves the variety of opportunities and often finds herself helping behind the scenes, sewing and repairing the bat wings in What On Earth, helping assemble preschool furniture or even assisting during special event workshops. In addition to being a part of something that's important, she said what brings her the most joy from her volunteering role is seeing how the staff interacts with visitors.

David has taken on a volunteering role that finds him interacting with SCI visitors. As a daily discovery assistant, he can be found helping in the exhibit platforms, assisting with special events such as the Star Parties, and even helping with SCI's Homeschool Science Series.

"I have really enjoyed the opportunity to watch kids learn and see them solve their problems," explains David. "My job as a volunteer is to make a place for the kids to learn in."

Between the two of them, they volunteered more than 1,200 hours of their time this year. David said it's exciting to watch people have fun and he sees it as his job as a volunteer to help you do that.

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OUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

- We have a positive attitude.
- We treat others with respect.
- We will exceed participants' expectations.
- We embody a shared purpose and mission.
- We will be accountable.

OUR CORE VALUES

SAFETY
COMPASSION
INTEGRITY
INNOVATION



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