

The Louisville Science Center

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Mission The Louisville Science Center has made an impressive journey from its founding as a "cabinet of curiosities" in the Public Library System of Kentucky in 1871 to its current status as the region's leading resource for informal science education. Boasting at one time little more than an Egyptian mummy and a 16,000-piece mineral collection, the Science Center is now the largest hands-on science center in Kentucky, with about 150 interactive exhibits and activity stations, a four-story IMAX Theatre, teaching laboratories, a variety of educational programs, and distance learning capabilities. Designated the "State Science Center of Kentucky" by the 2002 Kentucky General Assembly, we now serve over 550,000 persons annually. We have truly come a long way! Our Pathway to Progress In 1992, our Board of Directors established the Science Center's mission to improve the public's understanding of science, math, and technology through interactive exhibits, IMAX[®] films, and programs that are entertaining as well as educational. With a new strategic plan centered on building permanent exhibits and creating educational programming, we set out to reach our destination. The World We Create opened in 1997. This 12,500 square-foot permanent exhibit lets visitors make use of their creative and problem-solving skills. Over 40 activity stations involving the fields of chemistry, physics, engineering, telecommunications, and manufacturing encourage visitors to discover how math, science, and technology are at work in their everyday lives. Hands-on demonstrations and lively interactive presentations are made daily in the Tech Forum and Chemistry Kitchen. Traveling versions of The World We Create have appeared in museums across the United States, as well as in 19 rural Kentucky counties and the Netherlands. A special hands-on area for children younger than seven was renovated and renamed KidZone in 1998. Six activity areas allow children to explore the world

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to their size. Take Off! features a climbing structure and airplane, Hop On! offers an ambulance and mass-transit bus, and Blast Off! features a lunar model. Let's Build! puts kids at the controls in a construction area. Explore! is a safe crawling area for infants and pre-walkers. And Splash! is a very popular water-play area. We've incorporated age-appropriate science concepts into the exhibits to make KidZone educational and fun for little hands and minds. KidZone annually serves close to 70,000 visitors. The World Within Us opened in 2001. Health and life sciences are the focus of this 10,500 square-foot permanent exhibit that encompasses 75 interactive components. Three galleries provide user-friendly, fact-based information to help visitors learn about good health. The BodyWatch Gallery takes the visitor on a journey inside seven body systems and examines how each works. In the TimeZone Gallery, exhibit activities help visitors make wise decisions about healthy living at every stage of life. The Breakthrough Gallery showcases the accomplishments and careers of regional medical researchers, our own "Science Heroes." The BioLab is a high-tech demonstration wet lab for life sciences programs. Destination Reached!The World Around Us, the final phase of our permanent exhibits plan, opened September 24, 2005. In this 8,000 square-foot natural and earth sciences exhibit, visitors explore their connections to the world, discovering that we all have an impact on the world around us - we all leave our ecological footprints. Center Stage serves as a gateway to three major ecological galleries - Atmosphere: Air That Surrounds Us, Aquasphere: Water That Sustains Us, and Terrasphere: Environments That Support Us. The exhibit consists of 23 interactive components that appeal to visitors of all ages, interests, and abilities. Integral to the project is the Discovery Gallery, which re-introduces the public to historic Science Center favorites such as the mummy and the polar bears. We've come so far that we have used all our available space. Soon, we will expand into a new Science Education Wing, a suite of workshops and labs that will increase our capacity to offer educational programming grounded in scientific inquiry to the more than 150,000 students and teachers whom the Science Center serves annually. We have also made improvements to our Gift Shop and the IMAX Theatre. Extending the JourneyBecause there's always something new to learn, the Louisville Science

Center will not end its journey with the completion of our permanent exhibits. We will continue traveling down the Science Highway with temporary exhibits, IMAX films, expanded distance learning offerings, teacher training, and even more dynamic educational programs for students, teachers, and families. The Road Ahead As the 1992 exhibit plan neared completion, our Board of Directors adopted a new strategic plan in December 2004, affirming a mission to encourage people of all ages to enjoy science, mathematics, and technology in a stimulating and engaging environment that is educational as well as entertaining. Our vision is to be a 21st century leader in informal science education, serving a growing regional audience of families, teachers, and students with innovative programs, exhibits and films.

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