

# Annual Report



**09-10**

**The Discovery Center  
Binghamton, NY**



JAMIE '10

# A Letter from the Director

We celebrated our twenty-fifth year with gusto! Memories of the gymnasium our first location in an inner city school, scores of creative, dedicated, excited personalities representing The Junior League of Binghamton and The Imagination Builders and wide-eyed children lining up at the door to see what it was all about! Well, they saw and they came and they still see and still come. I walk from one end of the museum to the other and I love where we are, what we have become and what we mean to our children. We continue to provide a safe, exciting harbor in which all children and their families can rely on interesting, unique and accurate experiences. Sharing quality time, learning together and taking new thoughts home to discuss. These are subtle strategies that we use to ensure the strength of the family circle.

I am proud of my staff, indebted to the support of our communities, delighted with our Board of Directors and I am caught up in the energy and love that emanates from this space. I can remember when the new paradigm—*please-touch* and *learn-by-doing*—was an intruder on the scene of the traditional learning process. I remember when The Discovery Center was viewed as a “play place”. I remember when play was not considered the prime learning ingredient in a child’s life. I remember when there were only thirty-five children’s museums in existence. We live, move and have our being now in a world where our services are respected.....and needed. Over four hundred children’s museums dot the globe and more are in progress. We were there twenty-five years ago. The right place and definitely the right time!



There are so many changes! All of these changes are comfortable, fun, exciting and one of kind additions. *The Story Garden*, in spite of last year’s unspeakable vandalism, thrives with new life, new zest, exciting structures, healthy blooms and is always filled with gleeful children. A new outdoor addition is the *Let’s Play Nice* playground, a whimsical, safe and active space created for us by a team of Pricewaterhouse Cooper Scholars, 135 students from The BU School of Management. It is an activity designed space for play, fitness and improving motor skill ability. The newly renovated *Giant Market*, a full scale *Open Wide Dental*



office and *Ecokids*, our tree house in the middle of the environment are getting the responses we anticipated. Also in the lobby dwells ZaZou, a loud mouthed parrot who loves children and talks (nicely) incessantly, and LuLu, a peaceful brown rabbit. It is ALL good.

I report with pleasure on the current state of our space. FY 2009-2010 has been full, challenging, important and fun. Our list of accomplishments shimmers with life:

- **53,672 visitors** enjoyed our exhibits and programs
- Two NYS licensed full day pre-schools, one for three year olds and one for four year olds, plus the UPK program see full enrollment.
- Continuing our After School program, now in its sixth year, and serving 25 children
- **GALUMPHA’S** summer residency camp a huge success. Twenty of the students performed at the Forum on First Night ...little Galumphas all!
- With grateful thanks to The Decker Foundation, we are now fully air conditioned. A blessing!
- **LET’S PLAY NICE**, an action packed playground created for us by BU Pricewaterhouse Cooper scholars is a one of a kind site. Lucky we are to be the recipients of such a gift.
- The Discovery Center of the Southern Tier Foundation issues a first endowment check to us!
- Due to the generosity of The Ahearn Foundation, our theatre now has a name, The Ahearn Playhouse.

I can only speculate that the years ahead will bring as much joy, spirit and knowledge to our children and their families as all these past years have been able to do. That is what we are all about!

Pokey Crocker

1, 2, 3, 4!



# Education

We serve under a furling banner labeled EDUCATION! It is a constant task and we are always developing interpretive and educational adventures for schools, for the general public, for off-sites and for our interactive exhibits. Good minds are at work doing this and, to date, people like our themes and presentation. This past year began with a busy June, a Story Garden – Discovery Center celebration and then summer camps. Highlights of the 55 camp sessions included such adventures as Under the Sea; Music to Your ears; Safari; Homemade Science; Penguin Palaza; Dangerous Camp for Boys; Native Americans, and Dramatic Arts. 55 camps filled assured Ed-ventures for everyone. Special and public programming featured free weekly sessions such as Explore and More, Sunday Fun Days, Tales and Tunes and the popular Little Hands Science.



A new twist Tremendous Thursdays and full week programs during school vacation break brought many people through our doors... Off-site, a favorite program is Center Kids, a once-a-month Saturday adventure held, thanks to Nancy Phillips, at The Oakdale Mall. School programs were presented on and off-site. Our school curriculum based classes are standard approved by the NY State Education Department. We welcomed 16,268 school children for those programs some of whom were visited by our mobile off-site museum program: Museum to You. Due to transportation costs, numbers of schools have been forced to eliminate field trips during the year. Our willingness to travel hither and yon has earned us a respected place in many school districts. A new van, thanks to the Mee Charitable Foundation, enables us to travel safely and with a full cargo of supplies and interactive activities!

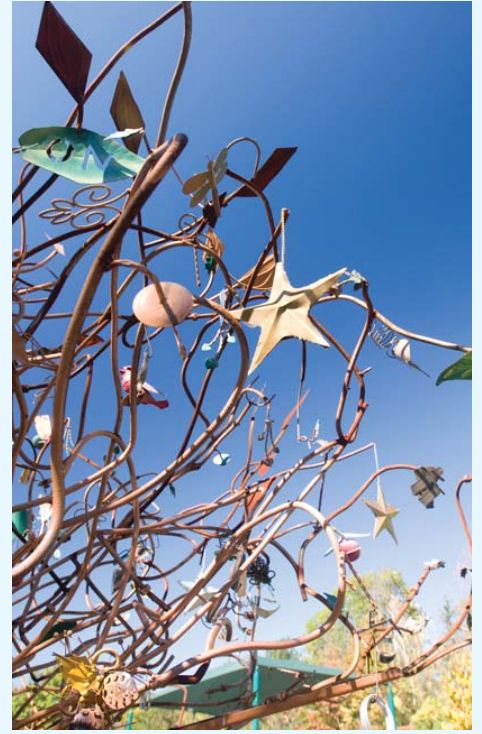
Our education staff continues to pull exciting classroom and public programs out of their magic hats to augment our interactive exhibits. There is, you know, something in each exhibit for everyone.



Arts Partners has proven to be an exceptional program. Bequeathed to The Discovery Center by The New York State Council on the Arts, the projects that have been created and the partnerships that have been formed get better every year. At a time when arts dollars are hard to allocate in many school systems, this unique regrant opportunity has been a well received outlet. Also funded by NYSCA, and the generosity of The Roger L. Kresge Foundation and the Gannett Foundation it was possible for Arts Partners to grant over \$20,000 to schools in Broome and Tioga Counties for these integrated Arts-in-Education residencies this past year. Included in the final project acceptance: The Confluence Project; The Best Part of Me; The Shakespeare Project; Speaking the Self; Hot Science and Hot Glass.







# Exhibits

In 2008 It was time for a fresh new exhibit and we said goodbye to Jan Brett. Its whimsical mode entreated children and families into her pages, and made a fast argument for the joys and importance of choice literature....accompanied by delightful illustration. A select potion of the Brett exhibit has been made portable for travel to classrooms. That year bicycles then took the stage! Pedal Power continues to charm parents and excite children...bikes rule for sure. 2009-2010 was a banner exhibit year...*Open Wide Dental* was the gift of Dr. Al Perna, Dr. Scott Farrell, Dr. Robert Giannuzzi, Dr. Mark Hatala, Dr. Vivian Rejebian, the Broome County Dental Foundation, the Broome County Dental Association and The Patterson Dental Corp. It is the most advanced office in the Southern Tier! *Ecokids* is an action packed environmental focus on trees and woodland inhabitants that takes place in a magical tree house.

*Gingerbread*, our annual holiday exhibit offered creative “fun and the aroma of ginger permeates the museum. Our theme, HOLLYWOOD,” produced amazing results. Star Wars; Dora the Explorer; Nightmare before Christmas to name a few. A variety of ages and stages participated in this special holiday fare as well as did Girl Scout and Brownie Troops. The display was a visual delight and the smell of gingerbread permeated the entire museum.

We are always tweaking former exhibits, adding new components, installing in odd corners and planning for the bigger and better! We installed a lakeside campsite in the Cody gallery. Complete with Adirondack chairs, boat, fishing gear, picnic area and Eureka tent....those who do not have a summer get-away can relax and have a vicarious experience!



# New and Exciting Trends

We now house full day New York State licensed pre-schools, with a UPK program for the afternoons. We registered fourteen 3 year olds, fourteen 4 year olds and ten UPK children fall 2009, and the word is out on the measure of its success! Nothing is impossible and great credit is due to an ingenious team of Early Childhood (Pre-K) educators who make this program shimmer with life. Discovery Kid's Club, our licensed after school program, is always on the move! Twenty-four students are involved in field trips, animal care, recorder lessons, Karate, dance lessons, guest readers and outside activities. This makes our after-school a perfect atmosphere for post classroom time.

The Discovery Center of the Southern Tier Foundation, Inc. is established, our Federal ID in place and a 12 member board of directors moves forward. You will continue to hear about this endowment foundation. Our purpose is to ensure that everything we do today continues on with freedom from the varying vagaries of the economy. We have a long list of priorities for this community and we want to be able to meet our goals. This is a separate endowment with measures incorporated to be sure that foundation monies are safe, promote growth and will be selected and allocated annually by the foundation. This is a healthy addition to our financial plan and when it grows, it will be a life line for the future of this very special place. As we approach our twenty-sixth year, we continue to want to grow and to enrich the lives of and enhance all senses of wonder in our children. We hope that many people will help with this.



## Scout Programs

Girl Scouts rule! Our Daisy, Brownie and Junior scout programs have become regular occurrences. Badge workshops are popular and this past year theater and jewelry workshops were offered to many troops using our Sunday Showcase performances as live study. Scouts participated in our annual Book Fest, Gingerbread classes, scout socials, overnights, bridging ceremonies and the Folk Art series. It is heartening to see a rise in scouting interest and our selected programs are helping that commitment to “be prepared!”

## Parties and Festivals

It is a Happy Birthday haven here at The Discovery Center! Those parties are us and our services are appreciated by families from near and far. A day of play, a party room for an hour, party help and cleanup and returning home to a house free of cake crumbs, wrapping paper and disarray! That is all fun too, but we make it easy. Inside or outside we offer a special day and a natural space in which to celebrate. We honored 233 birthdays during FY2009-2010 – a total of 5,825 children and families. parties.

Adding to the party agenda were several corporate events held here for employees and their families. Holiday parties, Easter celebrations, agency festivities dotted the calendar and many will return next year. We are always willing to lend our support to benefits, bazaars and numerous local fundraisers. Our charitable contributions have included passes, family memberships, T-shirts and gift certificates ...too many to count. As well we have been visible at many popular community events and fests. July Fest, SPEIDI FEST, career days, ice cream socials and other enjoyable days. Everyone seems to enjoy our staff and our hands-on array of activities!

## Membership

At the end of this fiscal year we welcome 1819 members—a total of new and renewed children and their families who we hope come often, stay long and relish every minute. Members are our life-line. They support us, trust us, challenge us, applaud us and offer suggestions to render us even better in what we do. A priority of every children’s museum in the world is to create a safe and happy space for family sharing. Play and learning strategies are member prerequisites. Our membership means discounts on program fees, museum store purchases and receiving our quarterly newsletter, DISCOVERINGS. Members with a \$125 (ACM membership) level hold a key to free admission to any children’s museum in the country. Regular memberships allow for reciprocity to four upstate children’s museums, as well as the Bridge Connection, a discount on admission for the Roberson Museum, Kopernik Observatory and the Zoo.

## Fundraising

Fundraising, necessary as it is to sustain what we do, can and should be fun! We have the chance to always be unique and arrange events that are lively and pleasing to a contributing crowd. Our late summer Pastabilities event, in conjunction with the annual Challenger Tennis Tournament, was a resounding success raising \$7893. Tennis fans streamed from the bleachers into the aroma of succulent sauces and al dente pasta – served with a smile by community favorites. Our annual campaign raised \$16,249 for our operating expenses, and how grateful we are for this generous support. Our spring March Madness brought us old friends and many new faces to enjoy four television sets of sensational basketball, great bar food, a boisterous casino, a fare of very nice silent auction items and good music! The event raised \$7155. In July we again supplied the volunteers for the Dicks Sporting Goods Open. Our annual task is to staff Skyboxes and three corporate tents for the three day event. What fun it is and we are appreciated for our ability to organize and deliver sans incident! Broome County Community Charities awarded us \$7500. The Annual Discovery Golf Tournament boasted 20 teams, much fun, great weather and raised \$10,000. If there had been knickers and caps, it would have overshadowed St. Andrews! Small fundraisers for our pre-school and after-school programs happen deliciously with Applebee’s and Gertrude Hawk and are generous ties to generous businesses. And our best friend, Stroehman Bakeries, through the Giant Markets donated a percentage of their “Summer Bun” sales to support our Education programs.





## Thank You... Thank You!

An institution is as good as those who guide it. We have a competent, visionary, helpful and dedicated team to do just that. Our Board of Directors is a blend of minds, energies, careers and priorities. They have expertise in many areas that apply to sound operation, and they have personalities and talents that make this Board unique. We are a business, albeit a business of children, and those who agree to serve need to know the rudiments of how we succeed and how we survive. Youth, experience, skills and commitment are the balance of ingredients that are needed for this particular kind of institution. We could not be in better hands today.

## And What of the Future?

It is incumbent on The Discovery Center to design a secure and successful future. At this twenty-sixth year, we have created a financial source: The Discovery Center of the Southern Tier Foundation, Inc. Many non-profits are involved in this effort, competition for dollars is a given, but if we are to continue our mission, happily, successfully and professionally, this dependable funding source needs to be in place. The future bodes well as our mission is strong, yet we will face many challenges due to economic and other unsettling changes in our community and global worlds. But we are here, and here to stay!





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