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Contact:

Jason Ackerman
Marketing & Communications Manager
303-604-2424 x704
jason@wowchildrensmuseum.org

WOW! Children's Museum Receives National Recognition for Play for All Initiative

Lafayette museum honored by Association of Children's Museums at annual conference

Lafayette, Colo. — WOW! Children's Museum has received the 2026 ACM Outstanding Practice in Children's Museums award from the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), the world's foremost professional society supporting and advocating on behalf of children's museums. WOW! was recognized in the Medium Museum category for its Play for All initiative. The award, which was presented April 23, 2026, at ACM's annual InterActivity Conference in San Diego is presented to recognize exceptional accomplishments by children's museums in work across all departments that also goes above and beyond the standard practice. WOW! was one of three museums nationally to receive the honor.

Play for All is a donor-supported program that reduces financial, accessibility, and cultural barriers to museum experiences through scholarship memberships, subsidized field trips for Title 1 and Head Start classrooms, Sensory Friendly Playtimes for neurodiverse families, and a diverse calendar of community celebrations and special events. The program serves more than 6,000 visitors each year.

"Play for All is our commitment made visible," said Joanna Cagan, WOW!'s Executive Director. "Every piece of it — the memberships, the field trips, the Sensory Friendly Playtimes — exists because we believe play is the right of every child, and that WOW! should reflect the full community we serve." WOW! is celebrating its 30th birthday this year and honoring 10 years of Play for All programs. "Play for All has become our guiding framework," said Cagan. "It informs our daily operations and our strategic planning, and we are a better museum because of it."

ACM President & CEO Arthur G. Affleck, III noted that this year's honorees shared a common thread: "All three projects are deeply rooted in community-centered collaboration. Children's museums are actively embedded in communities which, in turn, shape programming and exhibits with authenticity and relevance." WOW! was joined by North Country Children's Museum (Potsdam, N.Y.), honored for a Swartzentruber Amish Home exhibit developed with community members and scholars, and La Nube STEAM Discovery Center, recognized for Desert Bloom, an exhibit embedding speech and language development strategies for infants and toddlers.

For more information about Play for All, visit wowchildrensmuseum.org.

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About WOW! Children's Museum

WOW! Children's Museum in Lafayette, Colorado is a community-supported 501(c)3 organization dedicated to sparking curiosity, creativity, and a love of learning in children and families. Through hands-on exhibits and programs like Play for All, WOW! works to ensure every child has access to meaningful museum experiences.