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## **Denver Museum of Nature & Science Receives Largest Private Donation in Its History**

### *Morgridge Family Foundation Gives \$8 Million Gift Toward New Science Engagement Center*

DENVER—February 1, 2010—The Denver Museum of Nature & Science has received the largest private donation in its 109-year history, an \$8 million gift from the Morgridge Family Foundation for the construction of a new Science Engagement Center on the south side of the Museum building.

The 40,000-square-foot, three-story Science Engagement Center will feature two floors of innovative, high-tech science activity facilities designed for preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school children, as well as their teachers, parents, and other caregivers. The Center will provide a dynamic, hands-on learning environment and deliver programs that will have a profound impact on children’s understanding of science. It will use emerging technology to teach skills and concepts, and to create a highly personalized, inquiry-driven experience for visitors.

One specific area in the new Science Engagement Center will be a science-based early childhood learning center. It will offer activities that teach young children the foundational skills needed for science learning. This area will replace the Discovery Zone, the Museum’s current activity area for early learners.

In addition to the various science activity spaces, the Science Engagement Center will contain a large, new exhibition gallery on the third floor. The new gallery will provide the Museum with more space for hosting large-scale temporary exhibitions, and it will give the Museum the flexibility to host more temporary exhibitions each year.

“We want to change the way people think about science education here at the Museum,” said George Sparks, the Museum’s president and CEO. “Our goal is to complement what children learn at school by offering the types of memorable experiences they can only have at our great Museum. We want to give these kids the spark they need to become lifelong fans of science and learning, and we are grateful to the Morgridge Family Foundation for making a significant contribution to the fulfillment of this vision.”

The Science Engagement Center is one part of a larger facility, which will also include the Rocky Mountain Science Collections Center, a 60,000-square-foot underground storage area for the 1.4 million objects in the

Museum's collections. Concept development for the entire facility is currently underway. Groundbreaking is scheduled for late next year.

The facility will be funded through a combination of private fundraising and City of Denver funds secured through the Better Denver bonds. In 2007, Denver voters approved \$30 million in bond funding for the project. The ballot issue called for the Museum to raise \$23 million in private donations to match the bonds. With the \$8 million gift from the Morgridge Family Foundation, plus additional fundraising completed to date, the Museum has raised \$15 million toward the \$23 million match, or approximately 65 percent of the matching funds required by the Better Denver program.

"This is an amazing gift. We applaud the Morgridge Family Foundation for providing quality educational opportunities for the youth in our community," said Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper. "The foundation's generous contribution, together with funds approved by voters in 2007 for the Better Denver bond program, will go a long way in boosting an already thriving cultural community in the Denver area."

### **The Morgridge Family Foundation**

The Morgridge Family Foundation has given generously to education programs in Colorado, particularly for programs that create 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms that rely on technology to teach today's digital-native children. To date, the Morgridge Family Foundation has awarded \$4.4 million in grants to provide 1,100 teachers with a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

Carrie Morgridge, the foundation's vice president, joined the Museum's Board of Trustees this year. Her philanthropic endeavors are guided by her interest in 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, and outreach to Colorado's neediest children. Morgridge also sits on the Board of Trustees at the University of Denver, and she has served in the past on the Board of Advisors at the Denver School of Science and Technology, on the Board of Trustees at the Aspen Valley Community Foundation, and on the Board of Directors at the Denver Public Schools Foundation.

The Museum's Science Engagement Center project presented an exciting new opportunity for the Morgridge Family Foundation to further its mission to make innovative science education accessible to all.

"Partnering with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science is one of the best investments our foundation can make in science and education," said Morgridge. "We are very concerned that the quality of science, technology, engineering and math education might be diluted if standards are not maintained at a very high level. We need tools, partners, experts, master teachers and creative, critical thinkers to educate the next generation so we will have a competitive workforce. The Museum can play an important role in developing the scientists of tomorrow."

### **The Museum's Vision for the Future—Museum 20/20**

The facility containing the Science Engagement Center and the Rocky Mountain Science Collections Center is the next project in the Museum's ambitious Museum 20/20 Strategic Plan. The Museum completed the first

two projects in the Museum 20/20 plan in 2009. *Expedition Health*, the all-new permanent health science exhibition, debuted to rave reviews in April 2009. The Museum successfully raised more than \$10 million for the project, and opened the new exhibition on time and on budget. In September 2009, the Museum completed a total renovation of the Phipps Special Exhibits Gallery, where the Museum's temporary exhibitions are staged. This project was completed on time and under budget. Future Museum 20/20 projects include two new permanent exhibitions about earth science and anthropology.

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#### **About the Denver Museum of Nature & Science**

The Denver Museum of Nature & Science is the Rocky Mountain Region's leading resource for informal science education. A variety of engaging exhibits, discussions and activities help Museum visitors celebrate and understand the natural wonders of Colorado, Earth and the universe. The Museum is located at 2001 Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO, 80205. To learn more about the Museum, check [www.dmns.org](http://www.dmns.org), or call 303-322-7009.

#### **About The Morgridge Family Foundation**

The Morgridge Family Foundation is a private foundation whose vision is to become leaders in venture philanthropy so that the neediest of the needy will have greater opportunities to receive quality education. The foundation also supports several early childhood literacy and health initiatives.

#### **About Better Denver**

The Denver Museum of Nature & Science Education and Collections Facility Project is part of the City and County of Denver's \$550 million dollar Better Denver Bond Program passed by voters in 2007. Better Denver grew from the vision and stewardship of Mayor John Hickenlooper, civic leaders, staff, and citizens who challenged the Denver community to imagine a city with enhanced infrastructure and facilities to add to our quality of life. Bond funding is enabling the renovation and construction of roads, libraries, parks, hospitals, public safety facilities, cultural amenities, and other city facilities. The improvements are being implemented over five years through 2012, with most scheduled for completion by 2011. The City is accelerating as many of the projects as possible in order to stimulate the local economy and help to preserve and create jobs. More than 280 projects are included. As of January 2010, 83% of all projects are either complete (104); in design (79); or under construction (56), which represents an injection of approximately \$126 million into the local economy. For more information on Better Denver, please visit [www.Denvergov.org](http://www.Denvergov.org) and click on Better Denver.

*Many of the Museum's educational programs and exhibits are made possible in part by generous funding from the citizens of the seven-county metro area through the Scientific & Cultural Facilities District.*