



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

May 17, 2022

2021- 2022 Board Members

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“Discovery Place at 75” Catherine Wilson Horne, President and CEO of Discovery Place

By Suzanne Bledsoe

Catherine Wilson Horne, President and CEO of Discovery Place, and an esteemed member of our Club, has led the organization since 2013. She has devoted her 30+ year career to museum, non-profit and higher education sectors; her extensive background, passion and commitment to the Discovery Place mission “...to bring science, nature and design together to create transformative experiences that enable our community to understand, enjoy and apply science to our lives...” is evident in the growth and transformation of the organization during her tenure.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Discovery Place. A community based collaboration of the Junior League of Charlotte, the Lions Club and Mecklenburg County, Discovery Place has grown from a small nature center near Freedom Park to 4 locations around the state: Discovery Place Kids museums in Huntersville and Rockingham, and Discovery Place Science and Discovery Place Nature in Charlotte. Programs have expanded to include traveling exhibitions (upcoming *Unseen Oceans* and, most recently *Mind Matters*), IMAX visual experiences, educator and school (both digital and on location) programs and camps. The museums have upwards of 700,000 visitors per year. Accessibility to all of this has been enhanced and improved through a variety of initiatives including the Welcome Program, offering reduced admission to non-member families meeting certain criteria.

When the museums were forced to close in March of 2020 due to the

Pandemic, Catherine led broad initiatives that point to the museum of the future. With a laser focus on continuing to effectively deliver the mission of Discovery Place, digital programs were expanded, the workforce was re-positioned and facilities were reconsidered. The IMAX theatre (a community favorite) was transformed with Laser technology, enabling delivery of state of the art visual and audio experiences. Plans are underway for a new facility for Discovery Place Nature that will be a model for other nature museums in the United States. Surrounded by canopied walking paths, curated outdoor areas, including waterways, and live animals, the building will be a great community resource for science and nature educational programming and activities. Completion and grand opening is expected in 2024.

Celebrate the community treasure that Discovery Place has been for the past 75 years by becoming a member, visiting a location and spreading the word. No telling what wonders will be revealed in the next 75 years!

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/710942904>
The presentation begins at 11:40 minutes.