



SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY'S  
**DISCOVERY**  
SCIENCE CENTER & PLANETARIUM

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

CELEBRATING 65 YEARS



# A YEAR IN REVIEW

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ERIKA ENG



It is with great pride and gratitude that I share with you the year's successes and our plans for the future. We continue to provide high-quality STEAM education to anyone and everyone, with a particular focus on meeting our learners at their own level. We make sure our programs are offered equitably, with revenue-based programs supporting the work we do with groups that cannot afford the same on their own. Grants and fundraising help fuel our education initiatives, including free field trips for Bridgeport schools, Title I discounts, and provide transportation for schools that could not otherwise make it to us.

Thanks to you, our dedicated supporters, this year we hit new milestones of service in our community. This summer we had a record number of enrollments thanks in part to our scholarship funding. Discovery welcomed over 65,000 guests in 2022-2023 with complimentary admission for our Bridgeport residents every Wednesday.

We continue to grow in partnership with Sacred Heart University in many ways including summer programming to Horizons at SHU; bringing SHU students in as volunteers and interns in education, exhibits, and business; and this year two of our Discovery staff are teaching classes at the university.

Another demonstration of community partnership is the revitalization of the planetarium at Hillcrest Middle School in Trumbull. This is only one example of the vast opportunities in the region that require the expertise of the team here at Discovery. Thanks to your continued support of our mission, we will be able to continue our important work as a keystone in STEAM education.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erika Eng'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.



# Discovery and Sacred Heart University

The “new” SHU Discovery Science Center & Planetarium has become a modern science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) learning destination for families, K-12 students, children’s groups and tourists. On free-admission Bridgeport Wednesdays, a line often forms before the door opens, demonstrating both the popularity of the Science Center and the need for low-cost or free community access. Meanwhile, a digital learning portal has extended our reach to communities in other states.

We have created a unique learning opportunity for SHU students in the Isabelle Farrington College of Education & Human Development who can work across grade levels and school districts, exposing them to diversity in culture, language and socioeconomic backgrounds. In collaboration, Sacred Heart University and the Discovery Science Center are setting a new standard for the future of education.





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# NEW DATA CULTURE

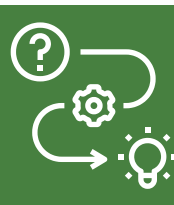
Discovery reached a stage of unprecedented growth this year that necessitated a fresh look at how we measure our impact and our success. Check out these milestones in our journey to developing an organization-wide data culture with space for community engagement!

## Reorganization



Made space for data management and created new roles focused on evaluation and reporting.

## Community Input



Designed new initiatives based on direct feedback from guests and program participants.

## Staff Training



Participated in workshops with Connecticut Data Collaborative's Data Academy.

## New Staff



Hired new staff from the community to help us responsibly collect information and input.

## Database Cleanup



Examined our existing systems and archival information to inform decision making and program development

## New Systems



Launched a new website that has better integration with our existing databases for a fuller picture of our work.



# SERVICES & SUCCESSES

## REVITALIZATION AND COMMUNITY

Donated equipment to the Trumbull Public Schools to revitalize their planetarium and observatory, with professional development

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Planted a pollinator garden in partnership with the Beardsley Zoo and offered new mediated activities throughout the guest experience

## FIELD TRIPS, AFTERSCHOOL, AND SUMMER

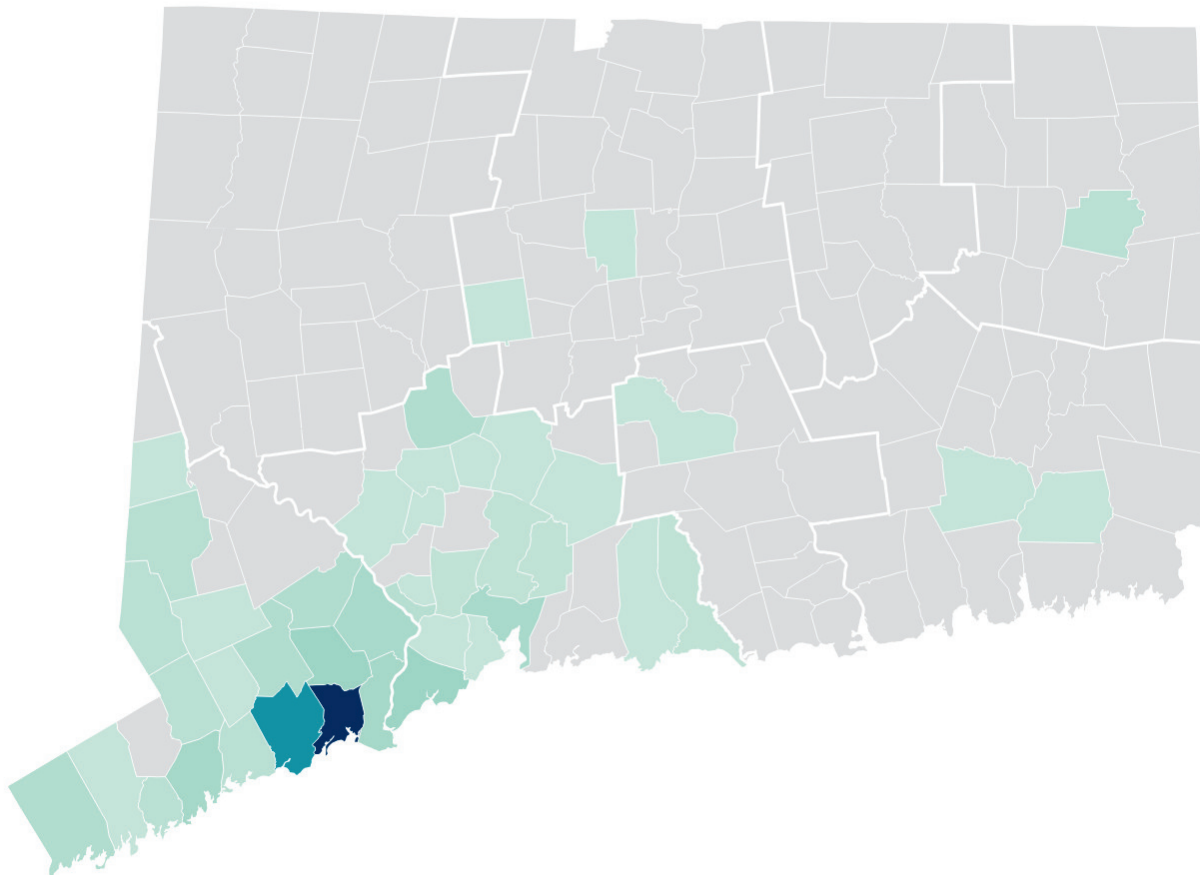
Served over 12,000 students with field trips and a record 273 unique summer registrants. We launched new community partnerships for afterschool and summer

## IMMERSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Opened our Flight Simulator, Wicked Plants, and launched new multilingual and multisensory exhibit elements

## 2023 Education Groups

Discovery served over 50 municipalities this year with over 300 field trips!



Map: Discovery Museum, Inc. • Source: Discovery Museum, Inc. • Created with Datawrapper



# SPOTLIGHT ON ACCESSIBILITY

**New amenities, exhibits, and more!**

**At Discovery, accessibility means making engagement available to ALL!**

## Recentering Center

In July 2023, we opened our Recentering Center, a semi-private space for guests to visit with sensory-friendly stimuli, calming lighting and furniture, and external sound dampening. The goal of the center is to provide a safe space to ground and refocus oneself before retuning to group activity.



## Tactile Images

Artwork isn't just about seeing--especially not this art! Discovery installed 2 Tactile Images, with plans to add more, that offer a hands-on approach to art appreciation. These works of art can be seen, felt, and heard, with audio descriptions in English and Spanish, as well as Braille signage.

## Supporting Families

Discovery is proud to host Science at Play, a gallery designed for our youngest scientists and their caretakers. Science at Play features a Literacy Lab in our Bridgeport Rotary Book Nook, with reading tablets that share stories with any audience regardless of literacy level. Books are in multiple languages, including Braille! Science at Play also houses a Family Lounge, Nursing Lounge, and new fully accessible family restroom.



## Supporting Bridgeport

Thanks to the generosity of the Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation, Discovery offers free admission every Wednesday to Bridgeport residents. With the continued support of the City of Bridgeport through ARPA funding, we continue to offer our STEM Accelerators: Future Innovators afterschool program to Bridgeport students at no cost to families. Our Mighty STEM Girls+ program grew to new schools and community sites throughout Bridgeport, bringing hands-on science to girls and non-binary youth.







# SPOTLIGHT ON STEM ACCELERATORS: FUTURE INNOVATORS

STEM Accelerators: Future Innovators is an afterschool program for students throughout Bridgeport that recruits 5th graders and carries them through their secondary education with advanced programs designed to provide a broad overview of STEAM fields, pathways, and opportunities. High school students have opportunities for job training and mentorship, plus support in the higher education process.



Over 200 unique students enrolled!

Snack is included with each session, and since 2022, dinner is also included!

Transportation provided

Over 12 schools participate

New recruitment every spring!







# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

## Strategic Impact: Accessibility, Scalability, and Sustainability

Discovery's strategic plan centers on the three tenets of accessibility, scalability, and sustainability. These ideas underpin all of our efforts in Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Belonging (DEIB), including program offerings, community involvement, guest amenities, and more. In programs and education, guest services, and exhibits, we have accomplished many things this year that show these goals at the forefront. We also focused on staff recruitment, training and retention, including offering a 401(k) for the first time!



## Programs/Education

Discovery offered over \$25,000 in FREE field trips to Bridgeport students, and provided 37% of summer registrations with at least partial financial assistance. We hosted over 12,000 students on field trips, about 50% of whom were from Bridgeport. Our educational programs served over 220 groups this year, including public and private schools (preschool through higher education), Scouting groups, afterschool and community organizations, homeschool groups, professional development workshops, and more!

## Guest Services

We offer FREE admission to Bridgeport residents every Wednesday and served over 3,200 guests from throughout Connecticut with FREE admission in summer 2023. We served over 65,000 total guests, and have expanded opportunities for guest engagement through the opening of the Recentering Center and offering of concessions.



## Exhibits

We opened our Flight Simulator, which allows guests to step into the shoes of a pilot (fixed wing or rotary) and get a realistic understanding of flight physics. We opened Wicked Plants, a new highly immersive exhibit that teaches guests about the wonderful, weird, and wild world of plants around them, featuring multi-sensory engagement opportunities.







# WHAT'S NEXT?

Discovery has a commitment to excellence in all that we do, and our new initiatives are no exception! Here are some upcoming projects you can expect to see in 2024 and beyond:

- Upgraded projectors for Science on a Sphere
- Continued growth of data culture and practices
- Additional professional development and educational offerings
- New community partnerships
- Increased volunteer opportunities
- New accessibility features
- Updated classroom spaces
- Updated and refreshed exhibits throughout
- New membership types for organizations



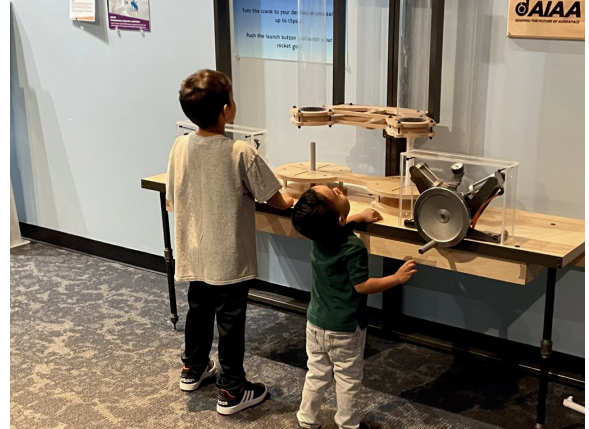


# HOW YOU MAKE AN IMPACT

Every dollar counts--in a very real and visible way. Discovery invests in creating educational experiences that truly make a difference. Your support at any level can contribute to our mission to make science education accessible to all.

Community support helps bring fresh exhibits that excite, engage and inspire learners and problem solvers.

\$50,000 per year gets naming rights to a gallery!



Your support makes summer learning possible for all students, regardless of financial means.

\$5,000 in sponsorship provides 10 middle or high school students with all-inclusive scholarships for one week.



Your generosity makes Discovery a special place for every guest.

You can support a gift membership to a family in need for as little as \$100.

A gift of \$50 buys a new microscope for student use.

Support of \$25 brings new books to our literacy center or supplies to our classrooms.

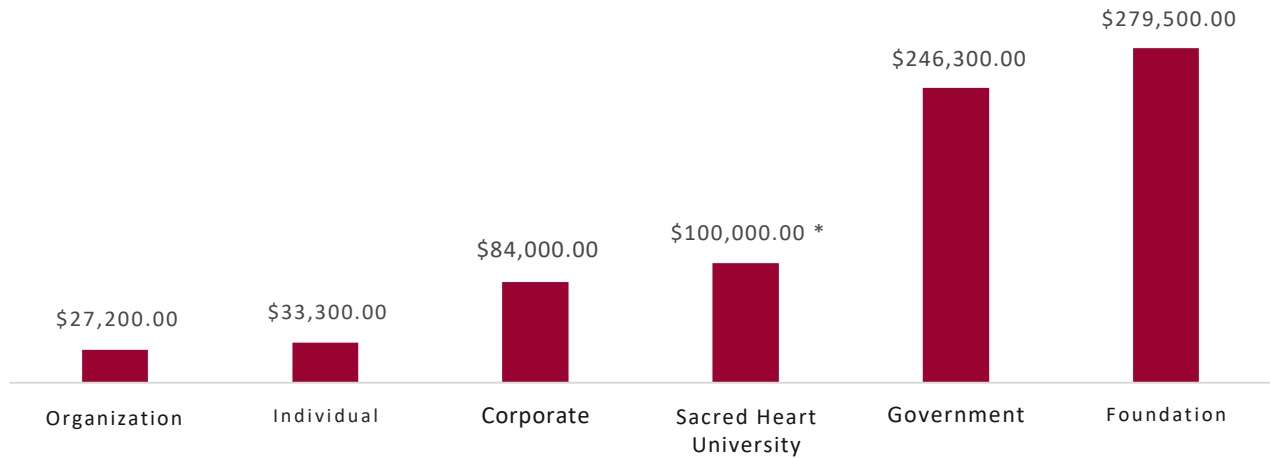




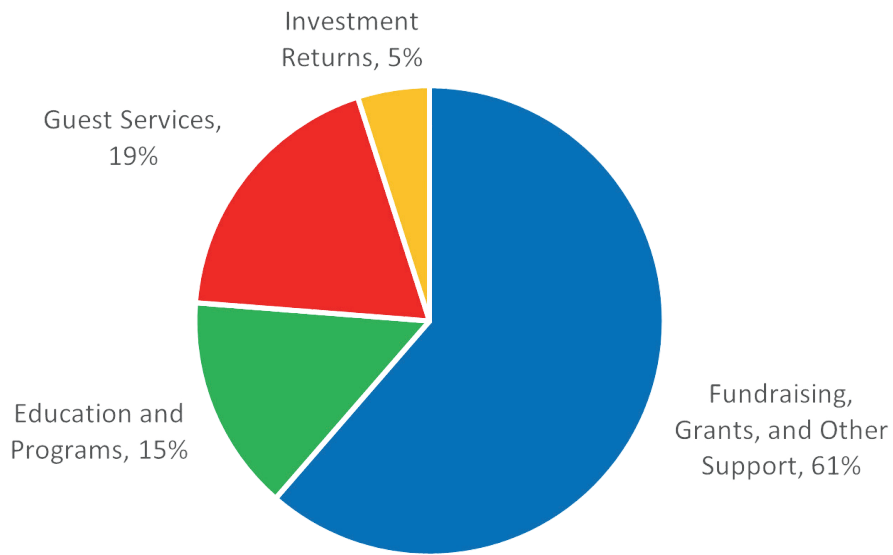
# 2023 Supports by the Numbers

## Support Revenue 2022-2023

Discovery also receives in-kind support from contributors, 93% of which comes from Sacred Heart University



## FY23 Revenue by Type



**462 active memberships, including 59 libraries, community organizations, and businesses**



**101 new donors between 2022-2023**



**49% increase in returning or consecutive year donors**

*Thank you to our premiere sponsors!*



Sacred Heart  
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## **Universe Supporters**

### **\$50,000+**

#### **Sacred Heart University**

Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC)

City of Bridgeport, CT-- American Rescue Plan

Connecticut Humanities and the Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts

Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Nor' Easter Foundation

Scripps Family Fund

State of Connecticut

## **Supernova Supporters**

### **\$25,000-\$49,999**

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National Federation of the Blind

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### **\$10,000-\$24,999**

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### **\$5,000-\$9,999**

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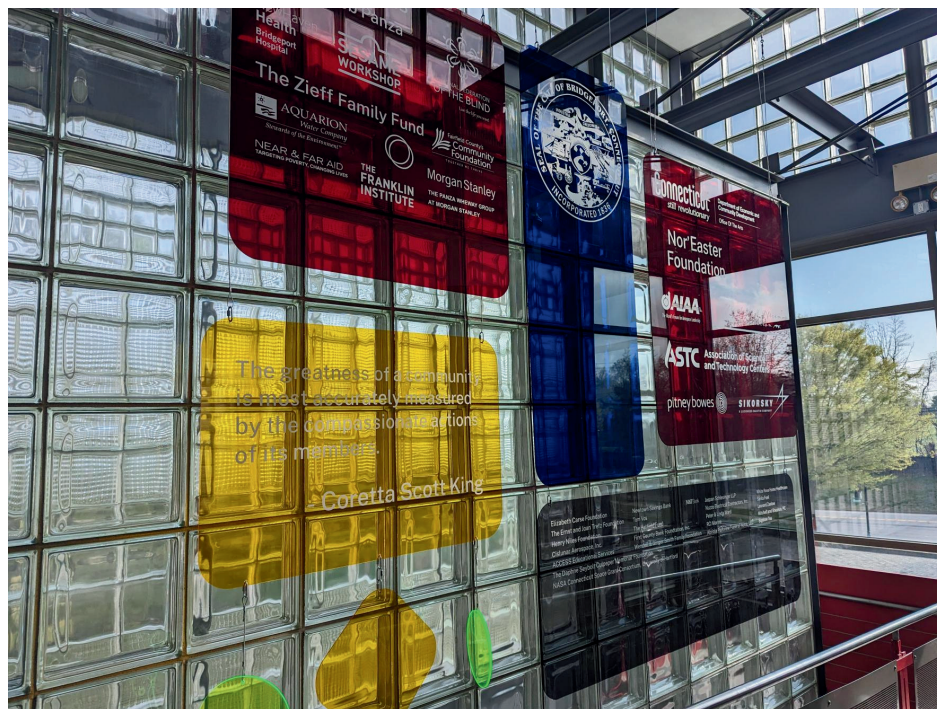
*Thank  
You*



We value every donor! If we have inadvertently omitted a name from this list, please contact us so we can immediately correct it!

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## Be a part of our community!

Make your contribution today and support STEAM for all through inclusive exhibits, high-quality education, and true community impact. Scan the QR code to make your gift via our secure website, or mail your gift (payable to Discovery Museum, Inc.) to:

**Discovery Science Center and Planetarium**  
**4450 Park Avenue**  
**Bridgeport, CT 06604**



For more information, call 203-416-3521  
or contact [info@shudiscovery.org](mailto:info@shudiscovery.org)