TOLEDO’S SCIENCE CENTER

Annual Report
July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

imagination STATION
pure science. pure fun.
Dear Friends,

Imagination Station, Toledo’s Science Center, is grateful for the overwhelming show of support during fiscal year 2014 – 15. The science center had a record year this past year and welcomed our 1 millionth visitor in the fall of 2014. Over the course of the year, we were able to bring many new experiences to Toledo. Imagination Station introduced a new Simulator Theater film and hosted Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition, Dinosaurs Unearthed and GUITAR: The Instrument That Rocked The World. We continued to expand our educational programming with new Workshops on Wheels and new Pre-school Workshops on Wheels.

The stories in this annual report could not be told without the generosity of our community and supporters. Donors, community partners and volunteers have all helped us expand our reach into the community and share interactive science education with more people throughout Northwest Ohio. Though we are not able to highlight all partnerships or programs, every one advances our mission.

The impact that we have is profound. Every day, we have families come through our building and get excited about our educational programming or an exhibit that is teaching them about science. Every day, we go into classrooms and make science accessible and fun. The excitement that we generate cannot be quantified or overlooked. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our team and the generosity of our supporters. Their contributions enable us to reach underserved families and students, develop new programs, bring new experiences to Toledo and expand our impact.

We are entering an exciting time for the science center. Over the next year, through 2016, Imagination Station will invest $1.7 million in state and private capital funds into the science center with a new exhibition that focuses on innovation, grant-funded programs that cover new educational topics and reach new audiences, new educational programming to better serve preschool-age learners and improvements to our facility.

We are grateful for your unwavering support throughout the years. Thank you for allowing us to grow and thrive in Northwest Ohio and make a positive impact throughout our community!

Sincerely,

Lori Hauser
Chief Executive Officer

David Waterman
Chairman of the Board
Our Mission

Serve our community by providing informal science education and fun in order to spark a passion for the sciences by combining interactive exhibits and educational programming.

Our Vision

Be a science center whose impact extends well beyond our walls and inspires innovation, equips our visitors with valuable life skills and prepares our community for our knowledge-based environment. We do this because we know that we can inspire the people who will shape the sciences and the sciences will shape the world.
About Imagination Station:

Imagination Station, Toledo’s Science Center, provides a critical layer of science enrichment by serving as an educational partner for educators, schools, parents and the community. Around 44% of our visitors are Lucas County residents and over 25% of our visitors travel from Michigan with the rest of our visitors traveling from across Northwest Ohio and the country. Each year, the science center welcomes over 200,000 visitors and is Northwest Ohio’s resource for interactive Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education.

With 80,000 square feet of public space, hundreds of interactive exhibits and demonstrations, Imagination Station offers hours of exploring and learning for a multi-sensory experience that’s as fun as it is educational. Ride the High Wire Cycle balanced 18 feet above the atrium and become a human yo-yo on the BOYO. Step inside the Hurricane Chamber and experience hurricane force winds in Water Works, trick your brain in Mind Zone and explore the science center’s other Learning Worlds. There’s even a special area for our youngest explorers, Little KIDSPACE, which features a hospital, grocery store and larger-than-life tree house.

Why STEM?

An education in the STEM fields prepares an individual for life in the 21st century. Curiosity, creativity, tolerance of ambiguity, resilience and the ability to work effectively with people who have different perspectives are vital life skills. These are the same skills that are fostered by STEM education and that have the power to shape a community and prepare an individual for a career in the science fields.¹

The science center’s form of informal science education can have a strong impact on STEM education throughout the community. Learners who engage in STEM education through active learning, like the interactive opportunities offered at Imagination Station, are able to better retain information and improve their critical thinking skills.² Furthermore, students who are exposed to real-world STEM experiences that are not possible within the classroom are more likely to have significant, long-term increases in their achievement and attitudes towards the sciences.³

¹The Committee on STEM education, May 2013, Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education 5-Year Strategic Plan, p. 27.
³The Committee on STEM education, May 2013, Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education 5-Year Strategic Plan, p. 22.
2014 – 2015 by the numbers:
From July 2014 – June 2015,
Imagination Station had a record year.
• 216,212 on site attendance
• 15,727 reached off site through outreach programs
• Over 50 community events with a cumulative
  attendance of more than 150,000 people
• 54,461 visitors to Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition
• 35,527 visitors to Dinosaurs Unearthed
• About 6,000 members with a 52% renewal rate
• 354 summer campers
• 768 Scouts in our Scout Workshops
• More than 5,000 volunteer hours

We welcomed our 1 millionth visitor,
the Jerew Family, on November 9, 2014.

Operating Revenue
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015

Our average cost per visitor: $17.63
Average cost per visitor for a science center
with our budget: $19.49

59% Earned
27% Public Funding
14% Development
Providing Access

The science center fills an important need as an interactive science resource that brings STEM concepts to life, and we strive to bring hands-on science learning to as much of our community as possible. Lucas County has a particular need for STEM education. In 2013, only 73% of eighth graders were proficient or higher in mathematics and only 64% were proficient or higher in science.

To ensure that we are addressing that need, we have created programs and initiatives to reach as much of our community as possible. Our Adopt-a-School program has served almost 30,000 people and gives corporations and foundations a way of directly impacting the children in their community by providing them with access to Imagination Station. Grant-funded programs allow us to reach underserved populations by partnering with groups and organizations like the Boy and Girls Scouts of Toledo, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library and Young Men and Women of Excellence. We have also supported the community by running a Buy One, Give One membership promotion the last two years that has resulted in us donating over 400 science center memberships to families in need.

While we have numerous programs designed to serve specific populations within our community, we also strongly believe it is important to act as an ambassador of science education and have pursued partnerships that allow us to share our excitement for the STEM fields widely. Some of the most visible examples of this are our partnerships with local media organizations that allow us to reach more than 33,000 viewers a week through 3—5 minute science experiments live on air. We also go to community events across Northwest Ohio and have shared quick activities and demonstrations at events with a cumulative attendance of more than 150,000 people this past year alone. Initiatives like these allow us to provide STEM education as a resource throughout Northwest Ohio and into Southeast Michigan.

Over 6,000 kids have received free admission on Saturdays through our free Lucas County kids days and over 32,000 visitors have taken advantage of our Lucas County discounts throughout the year.

Through our Adopt-a-School program, we have welcomed 4,636 students, educators and chaperones to the science center and brought our educational programming out to 2,711 learners at schools and organizations over the past year.
Imagination Station believes in creating a strong community throughout the region. Because of that, the science center has forged partnerships with many organizations and has developed programs that extend beyond our building to help create a strong, science-loving culture throughout Northwest Ohio. Some of these programs include workshops at Lucas County Children Services, Science Story Times at a TPS Hub school, science demonstrations at Mud Hens and Walleye games, a growing volunteer program that lets professionals share their passion for science education, reading lists with Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, a STEM Career Day for Girls and free science activities at over 50 events throughout the community.

Our team brought dino science to Toledo Children’s Hospital and shared dinosaur fossils and activities with the kids!

Our team performed science demonstrations at four Mud Hens games for over 29,000 people last year.
Lucas County Children Services Partnership

From 2013 through the present, Imagination Station has partnered with Lucas County Children Services (LCCS) and local funder Lockrey Manufacturing to create a program that applies interactive Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education in a unique way. The goal is to help parents separated from their children due to safety concerns improve their relationship with, and ability to relate to, their kids as they work toward reunification. The program involves two key initiatives: group workshops at the LCCS Family Visits Center and individual family visits to Imagination Station.

For each family, there are multiple stages in the reunification process, and the partnership between Imagination Station and LCCS begins with supervised time visiting with their children at LCCS. Three times each week, two trained team members from Imagination Station visit LCCS and deliver interactive science workshops. Imagination Station’s objectives during these activities are twofold: further STEM education; and, more importantly, to use the science center’s participatory style of learning to model for parents successful, engaging interactions between an adult and child.

After a supervised visit to Imagination Station, one caseworker said of a mom and her daughter, “It is wonderful to see parents have the opportunity to really play with their children. The Imagination Station gave this family that chance. Mom stated that she would be bringing her daughter back.”

To date, the science center has delivered more than 150 2-hour workshops and over 35 different content areas. These activities have proved to be a valuable part of the reunification process and are valued by both the LCCS team and the parents working towards reunification. Over the past year, an average of 10 families a week have participated in the activities at LCCS. Over 30 different families have advanced through the process and taken advantage of the trips to Imagination Station.

In October 2015, Imagination Station received the Nonprofit Innovation Award from The Toledo Community Foundation and the Center for Nonprofit Resources for our partnership with Lucas County Children Services. This award is intended to honor and showcase a project, program or initiative that demonstrates an innovative and effective response to community challenges.
Imagination Station’s Volunteer Program
Over the past year, through a generous grant from the Toledo Community Foundation, we have had the privilege to hire a full-time Volunteer Coordinator to further increase our dedication to our volunteers. In FY 2015, Imagination Station had 29 reoccurring volunteers, 22 summer camp volunteers, 13 interns and 155 short-term volunteers who combined for over 5,000 volunteer hours.

Volunteers are one of Imagination Station’s most valuable resources and are team members in every sense of the word. Our volunteer program helps us serve the community by providing more resources for us to share STEM education, and this program provides opportunities for college students, corporate employees and retirees to share their expertise and interest with our community.

Meet Jeremy
Jeremy first came to us through Capabilities for three months of job training. He enjoyed volunteering at Imagination Station so much that he is now a regular volunteer here at the science center. He makes a positive impact on our visitors every day through his positive attitude and the work that he does in the café.

“Jeremy was enjoying being at Imagination Station so much that when we were offered another job training opportunity by Bridge of Transition, he absolutely did not want to go,” Jeremy’s father said. "He is proud to wear his uniform and tells everyone he meets that he works at Imagination Station. We were sitting in a restaurant one time when the newscast on TV did an article on Imagination Station, and Jeremy shouted so loud that everyone heard him 'That's where I work.'"
Children are natural scientists. They learn through discovery, exploration and play. Research shows that a child’s brain develops more before age five than at any other time. Quality education during this time period is critical to future academic, social and professional success and creates the framework upon which future skills can be built. Young children learn best when they can learn in an environment where they can move freely and explore.

The interactive nature of the science center makes it uniquely qualified to provide a rich environment for learning and discovery, and Imagination Station continues to maintain and create new programs to foster early childhood learning and build a foundation of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) skills. Imagination Station provides a Learning World, Little Scientists Week, Little Scientist Workshops, Pre-School Workshop on Wheels and a daily Science Story Time specifically for early childhood learners.

Little KIDSPACE at Imagination Station is specifically designed to help kids kindergarten age and younger learn and explore. Children learn through play. They have an innate interest in the world around them, and the skills and knowledge that children acquire as they play help them to make sense of the world. Young children are active learners who engage in science every day as they observe, wonder, experiment and talk about their findings. Our littlest adventurers can hop aboard a fire truck, shop in the grocery store or climb their favorite tree house while learning about forces, motion, math and life science.

The science center also serves young learners by creating educational programming specifically for kids five and under. Trained team members share an interactive story and hands-on activity every day during Science Story Time. Throughout the year, families with children ages 3 – 5 can attend Little Scientist Workshops and explore topics like Creepy Crawly Bugs and Sometimes and Anytime Foods. Schools and daycares can bring some of these workshops to their location through Pre-School Workshops on Wheels. Once a year, the science center celebrates Little Scientists Week with special activities tailored specifically for kids kindergarten age and younger. This past year, visitors learned how to be little paleontologists with dino activities!
Robinson Elementary Science Story Time
Another program stemmed from a partnership with Toledo Public Schools (TPS) and local preschools. This program formed to support a community initiative to help at-risk preschool learners enter kindergarten with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed. A local foundation generously provided the funds that allow Imagination Station to bring early childhood science and literacy education to preschool students in Toledo.

Weekly, Imagination Station sends team members to Robinson Elementary, a TPS HUB school, to share interactive storytelling and related activities with preschool students from the surrounding area. The program also included a family field trip to the science center for the opportunity to explore Imagination Station and participate in a workshop. Through this, we were able to reach around 30 preschool learners a week over a period of 16 weeks in an area that has traditionally struggled with science education at all levels. The program’s success has resulted in a second year of funding.

“This is a perfect example of community organizations partnering to positively impact the children of our community,” said Romules Durant, CEO/Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools. “Children are naturally curious, and providing these learning opportunities for preschoolers and their families helps to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to learn.”
Our constantly changing technological and scientific landscape introduces new, unforeseeable problems every day, so it is more important than ever to teach children HOW to think rather than simply teach solutions to specific problems. Innovation is rarely instantaneous, but rather an iterative process that is perfected over time through trial and error. To meet this growing need, Imagination Station has developed specific curriculum to foster innovation skills. Programs range from one-day challenges to protect an egg from an 18-foot drop to weeks long curriculum to get fifth-grade students excited about the sciences and teach them to be unafraid of taking risks.

Failure is an Opportunity
One such program arose when educators in the nearby city of Sylvania noted that their students were so afraid of “being wrong” that they had trouble taking risks and using creative problem solving. They approached Imagination Station with this problem, and we developed our Failure is an Opportunity program in collaboration with Sylvania Schools and the financial support of many local organizations that are part of the Sylvania community: Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, Canberra and the Sylvania Community Rotary Foundation. The program encourages innovative thinking in both students and educators and boosts persistence in 5th grade students by delivering curricula that encourages participants to view failure as an opportunity to improve and find new solutions to problems.

Beginning in January 2015, Imagination Station began delivering in-class outreach programs through seven Science Festivals and 23 Workshops on Wheels as well as classroom challenge kits that allow students to participate in open-ended challenges. The science center also provided six hours of professional development for 16 fifth-grade teachers to train them on how to facilitate innovation-based challenges and how to perform formative evaluations in their classrooms. All 628 fifth-grade students, in addition to attending a workshop and Science Festival, also took a field trip to Imagination Station to participate in an innovation challenge to create a balloon-powered car.

“Sylvania Schools and our fifth-graders graders across the district have truly enjoyed taking part in the Failure is an Opportunity partnership. The hands-on focus with learning science, mathematics and technology has provided our students with a STEM opportunity like no other,” said Adam Fineske, executive director of Curriculum and Assessment at Sylvania Schools. “With interactive, exciting lessons in their classrooms by their teachers that they love and respect, along with opportunities to learn more at Imagination Station, our students are very fortunate.”
STEM Career Day for Girls

Women are significantly underrepresented in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields. Despite making up 48% of the overall workforce, only 24% of STEM workers are women. The decline in interest in the STEM fields begins at a young age. With an expected 1 million more STEM jobs in the United States than people trained to fill them over the next 10 years, this is a nationwide problem that can only be fixed through a community wide effort. In addition to improving job equality, closing the gender gap in the STEM fields would make significant progress towards addressing the shortage of technical workers.

Imagination Station held the STEM Career Day for Girls on May 16, 2015 to address this problem by providing young women in our community with the opportunity to meet and learn from women in the STEM fields. Over 100 girls attended this event free of charge thanks to the generosity of the Women Helping Young Women supporters. Over 15 STEM professionals helped teach the girls what it means to work in the sciences, and girls were asked to imagine themselves in different careers and examine what it means to work in a STEM field.

The career day was well received, and the participants learned a lot about the careers available to them in the STEM fields. Here’s a representative sample of the responses from participating girls:

“She is just a regular girl/woman like me! I can have a STEM career!”
“I didn’t know (how) much STEM helped me in daily life.”
“The day challenged me to try harder on my school work.”
“Now I know girls can do anything and I want to be that girl.”

Muna Joshi, a former science teacher, supported this event and said, “As the data suggests STEM careers are on the rise but the number of girls pursuing those careers or having an interest as they get older is declining. It is important for young women to ‘see’ themselves in a STEM field by interacting with female role models. As an educator and a woman, I feel very passionate about providing opportunities for young girls to succeed. It’s all about exposure, and you never know when a particular interaction could light a special spark for a young woman and make all the difference. The event was a grand success, and I couldn’t be happier to support such an amazing initiative!”

All donor lists have been carefully reviewed for accuracy. We sincerely apologize if any names were missed. Please address any errors or omissions to: development@sttsscience.org.

Adopt-a-School
Since its inception, more than 29,000 students have visited Imagination Station or received science outreach through this important program.

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“As an engineer I am always looking for ways to provide children the opportunity to have their eyes, hands and minds open to the wonderful world of science, technology and engineering. As a parent I want children to be prepared to act on any opportunity that may excite them. This excitement can lead to simple knowledge gain, a career, and even that next great technological advancement to society. These are the things that we are trying accomplish at Imagination Station and are the reasons why I continue to support it.”

Mike Koralewski, Board Member

Annual Fund and Programmatic Support
Children are born scientists! They have an innate interest in the world around them. Imagination Station wants to develop this interest during visits at the science center and through the various programs we offer.

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Our signature event gives adults the chance to connect with their inner child and explore the science center. All proceeds are used to provide hands-on science experiences for our community.

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“Imagination Station is such a wonderful asset to our community that brings fun to math and science for all ages in an amazingly special way. We love to see all the new exhibits they bring to town, and the wonderful staff helps to make it an amazing experience every time we visit.”
Neal Sahni, Event Chair and Board Member
Laura Sahni, Event Chair

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“Our children began going to Imagination Station as little toddlers and the experience that the center provides grows as they grow. It is a true joy to watch our children light up with excitement while learning!”

Carla Nowak,
Event Chair and Board Member
Jeff Nowak, Event Chair
Women Helping Young Women
These supporters encourage girls to be curious problem solvers and find ways to connect with STEM opportunities.

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