



## President's Corner

### Summer 2010

**Kevin Sullivan**  
President and CEO of The Children's Museum

Summer is a great time to be outside. So let's share a few thoughts about why it's so important that The Children's Museum is here – "outside" of the regular school classrooms "outside" the regular school year.

This past spring brought little but bad news stories about state and local education cuts. Fewer teachers. Bigger classes. Less time for kids to experience science in the classroom or after school. More pressure on parents and PTOs to fill the gap. Fewer opportunities for field trips to or outreach from science education centers like The Children's Museum.

This is not the "broader, bolder approach" recommended in 2008 by the national Economic Policy Institute. Our schools cannot do it alone. The key is getting more educational value from time out of school, which is 88.5% of children's lives, especially for young kids. Without fun and challenging resources to fill the gap (particularly during summer and other school vacation periods), children really do lose ground educationally and developmentally.

The report of the National Research Council makes a compelling case for the importance of places like The Children's Museum in broadly and boldly improving science outcomes:

*What is often overlooked is the potential for science learning in non-school settings, where children spend the majority of their time. . . . Far more than supplementary enrichment, science museums and centers, especially those focused on younger children and caregivers, offer the direct, hands-on experience of science that motivates, deepens and sustains scientific knowledge, practice and values.*

Non-school science and nature programs and activities feed and stimulate the interests of children and adults, improve academic achievement attainment, and expand awareness of science as a career option and an important part of daily life. As George Hein writes in *Learning in the Museum*, children's museums and science centers are needed more than ever as places where kids "can actually do science."

Most children will not become scientists. But we need more who do and we need all children to master foundational skills and knowledge. As Brian Greene said in "Put a Little Science in Your Life," a 2008 *New York Times* op ed, "We realize how crucial it is to cultivate a general public that can engage with scientific issues." As the Connecticut State Board of Education's Position Paper on Science Education makes clear, "Parents play an essential role in ensuring a quality educational program in science by. . . providing children (and their parents) with access to science resources such as museums."

At The Children's Museum, our business purpose and our public purpose is to be a vital center for science and nature education with a strong developmental focus. We know that the earliest years of life are the most important to future learning. So we work to get it right from the start by engaging and developing the natural inquiry of younger children through age 12. Younger kids are scientists at heart, experimenting with the world in much the same way that scientists experiment in the laboratory. The Children's Museum is kid-sized, hands-on and fun because that's how younger children learn best about science and nature.

**Put a little science in your children's summer! It will last for years.**

## the children's museum

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