



Five Honored with Leading Edge Awards at 2010 Annual Conference

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 2, 2010

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, four ASTC-member organizations and one science center professional were honored with *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards* at the 2010 ASTC Annual Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. Now in their sixth year, the awards recognize both small and large ASTC member institutions and/or their employees for extraordinary accomplishments in Visitor Experience, Business Practice, and Leadership in the Field during the past three years. The awards, presented annually, honor the late Roy L. Shafer, a former science center director, ASTC president, and organizational coach. Winners receive an etched glass award and a paid registration to the following year's ASTC Annual Conference (the 2011 conference will be hosted by the Maryland Science Center in Baltimore, October 15-18).

The Leading Edge Award for Business Practice was presented to **COSI**, Columbus, Ohio for *Partnering with Others @COSI: Creating a Center of Science in the Community*. Tapping the extra space in its 300,000-square-foot facility, COSI shifted its business model from a stand-alone science center to a "Center of Science" rich in resident partners—such as Ohio State University, Battelle, and TechColumbus—whose work supports COSI's mission. The enhanced model not only yields rental income from the partners, but also increased sponsorships by 27%, expanded grant income, and created a higher stature for COSI in the community. The Leading Edge Award jury was impressed by the science center's willingness to share its new model with the field.

The recipient of the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution) was the **Omaha Children's Museum**, Omaha, Nebraska for *Construction Zone*. In response to economic conditions, the Omaha Children's Museum decided to focus on its core audience and deliver outstanding experiences with fewer dollars. In an effort to create its own blockbuster exhibition to fill a 10,000-square-foot gallery, the museum partnered with community organizations—including nine labor unions—to create *Construction Zone*. Volunteers contributed 5,000 hours to build the exhibition using inexpensive materials, and the new approach is working: the museum has seen an increase in attendance and member retention rates since the exhibition opened in 2010.

The Award jury decided to give two Visitor Experience awards in the Large Institution category. The **Denver Museum of Nature & Science**, Denver, Colorado was recognized for *Expedition Health*, a 10,000-square-foot permanent health science exhibition that uses a hike up Colorado's Mount Evans as its theme. Visitors engage in full-body, interactive exhibits, while a virtual learning companion delivers information about how the human body responds to elevation-related variables like wind chill, UV exposure, and exertion. More than 425,000 people experienced *Expedition Health* in its first year. ASTC member Jeff Kennedy Associates, Inc. helped create the exhibition.

The **Pacific Science Center**, Seattle, Washington received its award for the *Portal to the Public* project. *Portal to the Public* provides tools to help museum staff and researchers create high-quality, face-to-face programs for visitors. The project's guiding framework forms the basis for sustainable program models that bring local scientists onto the science center floor, communicating their research through conversations and specialized activities. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project involved several ASTC-member collaborators, including Institute for

Learning Innovation, Explora, and the North Museum of Natural History; the result is a framework that is scalable, flexible, and appropriate for many types of organizations to adopt.

The jury bestowed the Leading Edge Award for Experienced Leadership in the Field upon **Ann Fumarolo**, president and CEO of Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center in Shreveport, Louisiana. Fumarolo was honored for her devotion to cultivating new leaders and aspiring professionals in the field. She demonstrated inspiring optimism and ambition for herself, her center, all of her staff, and the field of informal science education itself. The jury found her practice of actively seeking out and personally funding professional development opportunities for her staff especially notable.

Guidelines and nomination forms for the 2011 Leading Edge Awards competition are available online (www.astc.org/about/awards/leading_edge.htm). The application deadline is April 12, 2011.

About ASTC

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is an organization of science centers and museums dedicated to furthering public engagement with science among increasingly diverse audiences. ASTC encourages excellence and innovation in informal science learning by serving and linking its members worldwide and advancing their common goals. Through strategic alliances and global partnerships, ASTC also supports science centers and museums in proactively addressing critical societal issues, locally and globally, where understanding of and engagement with science are essential. Founded in 1973, ASTC now numbers nearly 600 members in 44 countries. Members include not only science centers and museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and natural history and children's museums, as well as companies, consultants, and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. Visit www.astc.org to learn more about ASTC and to find a science center near you.

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