



Six Honored with ASTC Leading Edge Awards

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Four ASTC-member organizations and two science center professionals were honored with 2007 Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards at the ASTC Annual Conference in Los Angeles. Now in their third year, the “Edgies” recognize both small and large ASTC members 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 at the conference banquet, commemorate the late Roy L. Shafer, a former science center director, ASTC president, and organizational coach. Recipients receive an etched glass award and a paid registration to the following year’s ASTC Annual Conference.

The Leading Edge Award for Business Practice (Large Institution) was presented to **EdVenture Children’s Museum**, Columbia, South Carolina, for its *Afterschool Initiative*. Comprising four distinct programs—Club EdVenture, Enrichment Field Studies, Future Leaders, and Science Jam—the initiative has not only boosted annual attendance with 15,000 additional youth participants, but also become a significant net revenue source, with annual income exceeding \$200,000. The initiative meets critical community needs, serves diverse audiences, and has positioned EdVenture as a leader in after-school issues.

The recipient of the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution) was the **Clore Garden of Science**, Rehovot, Israel, for its *EcoSphere*, a geodesic glass structure in which visitors can physically experience and explore environmental phenomena through hands-on experiments. With its terrestrial and aquatic plants, pools with small fish and fresh water crabs, and six workstations, the *Ecosphere* is an ideal venue for understanding the interdependence of biological systems.

The jury decided to give two Leading Edge Awards for Visitor Experience (Large Institution), one for a new type of science center and one for programming. **MIDE, Museo Interactivo de Economía**, Mexico City, Mexico, won for pioneering an interactive museum in which economics, science, history, architecture, and art meet. MIDE opened in July 2006 in a restored 18th-century convent. Its exhibitions foster dialogue and invite visitors to discover not only basic economic concepts but also complex social issues, such as poverty, development, and environmental sustainability. MIDE’s Market Simulator, created with ASTC-member Magian Design Studio, won the American Association of Museums’ 2007 Gold Muse Award for Interpretive Interactive Installations.

OMSI, in Portland, Oregon, won its “Edgie” for partnering with libraries to provide underserved rural communities with access to high-quality science education through the NASA-funded *STARS* (Science, Technology, and Rural Students) project. By integrating in-person and distance-learning technologies, STARS has been able to offer workshops to more than 240 teachers, librarians, and administrators in 18 counties. The project has also brought OMSI’s Discovery Dome portable planetarium to nearly 50 communities and made telescopes and global positioning units available for check-out at 47 public libraries. Plans to implement the STARS model are under way in Idaho and Montana.

George Sparks, president and chief executive officer at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS) since November 2004, won the Leading Edge Award for New Leadership in the Field. With staff, Sparks has created a new vision for DMNS, immersing the institution in community

partnerships, working to attract and retain a diverse workforce, and making the museum more attractive and accessible. During his short tenure, he has increased the DMNS budget for training and professional development by 300 percent.

Jane Werner, executive director of the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh since 1999, was the recipient of this year's Leading Edge Award for Experienced Leadership in the Field. Werner recently led the museum through a \$28 million capital campaign that culminated in the grand reopening of an expanded, LEED-certified, award-winning facility in 2004. But the change was more than just architectural. She also took the opportunity to invite local child-focused groups, among them *Reading is FUNdamental Pittsburgh* and the city's *Public Schools Head Start/Preschool Program*, to move into the new building. By linking educational and cultural organizations throughout Pittsburgh, Werner has made the children's museum a "go-to" place for advice on community partnerships and created a model of institutional citizenship from which all museums can benefit.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers is an organization of more than 440 science centers and museums in 44 countries dedicated to furthering the public understanding of 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. ASTC provides professional development for the science center field, promotes best practices, supports effective communication, strengthens the position of science centers within the community at large, and fosters the creation of successful partnerships and collaborations.

Visit www.astc.org to learn more about ASTC and the *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards*, or to find a science center near you.

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