

FY2019 Annual Report

CuriOdyssey's science playground and zoo nurtures kids' curiosity, fosters innovation and promotes the creative problem-solving skills their futures will demand



INSPIRE

As a serious science playground and zoo, CuriOdyssey builds the minds of tomorrow today

More than **89,000** kids in our community experienced CuriOdyssey



More than **59,000** people had a 1:1 encounter with an animal either on or off-site

3,000 kids experienced CuriOdyssey for **FREE**



Over **3,828** visitors attended **6** free Community Days

EDUCATE



207,551 people engaged with CuriOdyssey (10% increase over last year)



87 animals are in CuriOdyssey's Association of Zoos & Aquariums-accredited care



39,212 visitors attended our special exhibit *IlluminOdyssey: A Winter Light Experience For Kids* from November 2019-January 2020

11,074 kids and teachers came to CuriOdyssey for field trips (28% of these were **FREE**)



DID YOU KNOW? It takes 2/3 lb of fish to fill Gunner the otter's belly every day - that's 245 lbs of fish a year

VOLUNTEER & CONSERVE

Partnered with numerous schools & organizations for clean-ups, restorations & native plant research

11,215 hours of service by **1,199** volunteers (equivalent to **5.8** full-time employees)



792 volunteers contributed **1,240** hours to remove **858** gallons of trash and recyclables from Coyote Point Park



115 volunteers contributed **222** hours to remove **729** gallons of invasive plant known as LIRA from Coyote Point marsh



Collaborated with FrogWatch USA; Bay Area Bobcat; River Otter Ecology; Urban Wildlife Research; Ringtail Research; and Western Pond Turtle Ecology & Conservation Projects

RACHEL MEYER

Named Executive Director Emeritus

Rachel Meyer led CuriOdyssey from 2007 until June 2020, transforming it into the joyful learning destination it is today. Convinced that children are natural born scientists, she created an environment for Bay Area families that fosters curiosity and a belief that through observing natural phenomena and wildlife, children develop the critical thinking skills and self-motivation needed to create a better future. In appreciation for all Rachel has done for CuriOdyssey, the Board honored her with the title Executive Director Emeritus, and looks forward to building on her substantial legacy.

Rachel's interest in inquiry-based learning began in high school, when she took on a role as an "explainer" at The Exploratorium. She was mentored by founder Dr. Frank Oppenheimer and, following undergraduate work at UC Berkeley, spent 20 years at the Exploratorium in positions of increasing responsibility including Director of Exhibit Programs, Director of Facilities, and Chief Exhibit Curator. During this time, Rachel also provided consulting services on effective interactive science learning environments to museum professionals around the world, including Japan, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Mexico, and was Co-founder of an Exhibit Development Internship Program with a global reach.

Her next challenge was revitalizing an outdated 70-year-old community children's museum, the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo, with new exhibits, new programs, and new staff. She brought phenomenon- and inquiry-based learning to the museum and doubled attendance to 80,000, as well as adding external programming in the East Palo Alto schools for low income kids of color.

Rachel was recruited as Executive Director for the Coyote Point Museum at a very difficult time: there had been 8 leaders in 10 years and the mission of educating adults about the environment was not attracting many visitors. Rachel challenged the board to re- envision the museum, dismantled the adult-focused environmental exhibits, and replaced them with compelling science exhibits for the youngest learners.

With a name change to CuriOdyssey to signal the new direction and the help of strong team of co-workers that she recruited and trained, Rachel built attendance and membership to record levels, highlighting the need for a new facility. The Campaign for CuriOdyssey was the largest fundraising effort in the museum's history with the largest gifts received, and validated the importance of CuriOdyssey to the county.

As Capital Campaign Co-Chair Linda Lanier said, "I have never worked with such an inspiring, bright person who could so clearly articulate her vision for what CuriOdyssey needed to become. Rachel's passion for always treating kids as the intelligent humans they are and never dumbing anything down, her patience in getting me to understand what truly interactive exhibits are, and her belief that together as a community we could make a real difference in the lives of kids, caught me hook, line and sinker!"

In the past year, Rachel has worked with architects WRNS Studio to develop an exciting master plan for a new CuriOdyssey campus that will fully support her vision as well as take best advantage of the beautiful Coyote Point views. She passes the baton to new Interim Executive Director Aragon Burlingham with a clear roadmap to take CuriOdyssey to the next level.



LINDA LANIER

If you were to ask Linda Lanier if she was a fundraiser, the answer would be an emphatic “No!” Instead, Linda has always seen her role as offering almost anyone she meets the opportunity to invest in children in our community. And for 39 years she has done just that.

Linda joined CuriOdyssey as a volunteer in 1981 looking for a place to apply her energy and her interest in nature and animals. And, in typical fashion, she jumped in feet first, chairing the Grand Opening of the new Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education. Following the success of the event, she was asked to join the board and turned her attention to the creation of the animal habitats, leading the Wildlife Habitats Planning committee.

Once planning was complete, Linda partnered with fellow board member Tom Brown to secure the necessary funding to build the new habitats, working closely with Linda Liebes, the museum’s Executive Director. Notes Tom regarding Linda Lanier: “Linda and I were both relatively young then but early on we shared the vision of an organization that was determined to fertilize the minds of young people in and around San Mateo County so they could better appreciate and understand the environment in which they live.”

With funding in hand, Linda returned to serve on the construction committee working again with Linda Liebes and with George McCoy (retired CEO of Guy F. Atkinson Construction Co.). When asked about Linda, Liebes was full of praise and admiration. “Everything and every moment [working with Linda] was a joy. Linda made commitments and followed through on every detail. She was conscientious, and indefatigable. And she was charming.”

Hard times hit the museum in 2006 and the museum was on the verge of closing. “Not on my watch!” was Linda’s response. Drawing on a deep well of personal connections and a rock-solid personal conviction that San Mateo’s children needed a place like Coyote Point Museum, Linda met the challenge. Beginning in August, Linda worked closely with former ED Linda Liebes to secure over \$600,000 in six weeks, as well as a single matching contribution, bringing the total raised to over \$1M, saving the museum from closing its doors permanently. Judy Barton, a fellow board member remembers that time this way: “We all worked very hard and succeeded in saving Coyote Point Museum and it all was due to Linda’s amazing leadership.” In 2009 Linda was awarded Volunteer of the Year by the Silicon Valley chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.





The following years brought other challenges but also new hope with the recruitment in April 2007 of a dynamic new director Rachel Meyer and a focus on hands-on science for young children. However, the now aging building was not well suited to this evolving mission and a capital fund drive to raise money for a more appropriate facility was in order. Once more Linda stepped in. As an active member of the building task force and co-chair of The Campaign for CuriOdyssey with Kat Taylor, Linda helped raise over \$27 million in support of an inspiring building that will be a showpiece for all of San Mateo. Kat Taylor notes “It was a pleasure and a privilege to have served with Linda as co-chair for The Campaign for CuriOdyssey. Linda’s rare combination of tenacity, commitment and compassion made her an exceptional advocate for CuriOdyssey and its mission.” Executive

Director Rachel Meyer had similar praise for Lanier, “Linda had the courage and

tenacity to embrace a bold and differentiated learning philosophy and to unabashedly find the resources to bring those ideas to fruition. She is unlike anyone I have ever had the opportunity to work with.”

A thoughtful and collaborative leader, Linda was always able to draw out the best from her volunteer colleagues. She listened and acted. She was decisive and supportive. She led by example. From Linda Liebes, “There was no job too small or too big for Linda to take on in furthering the goals of the museum.” Former board colleague Andrea Higuera-Ballard had this to say about her work with Linda: “Her passion for CuriOdyssey’s mission and her ability to make connections with and among all different kinds of people are unmatched. Linda cares deeply about getting all kids excited about science and nature, and this authenticity shines through in all of her interactions.”

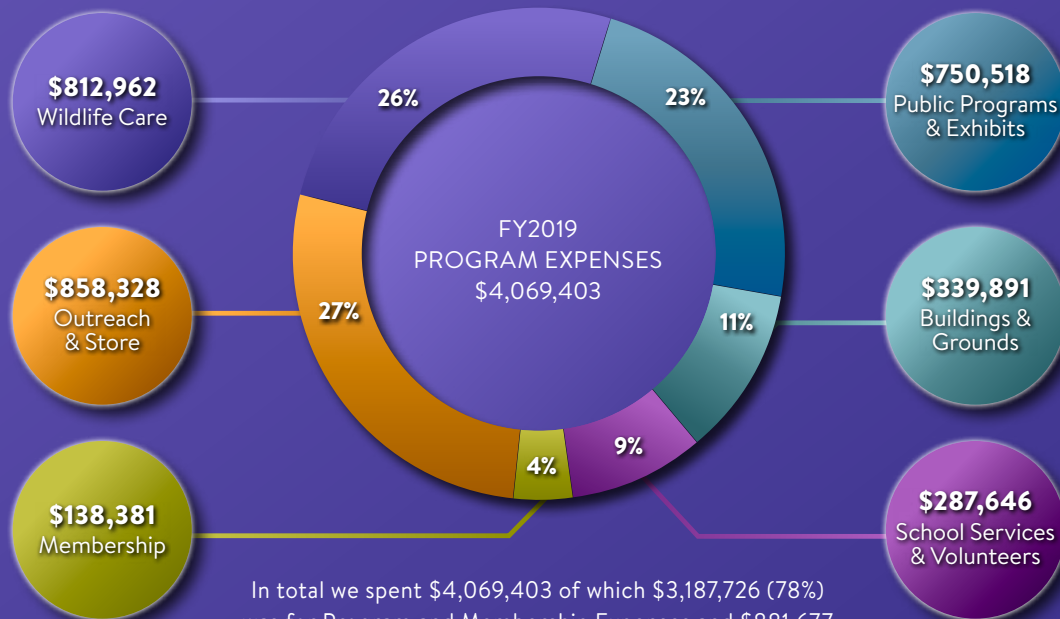
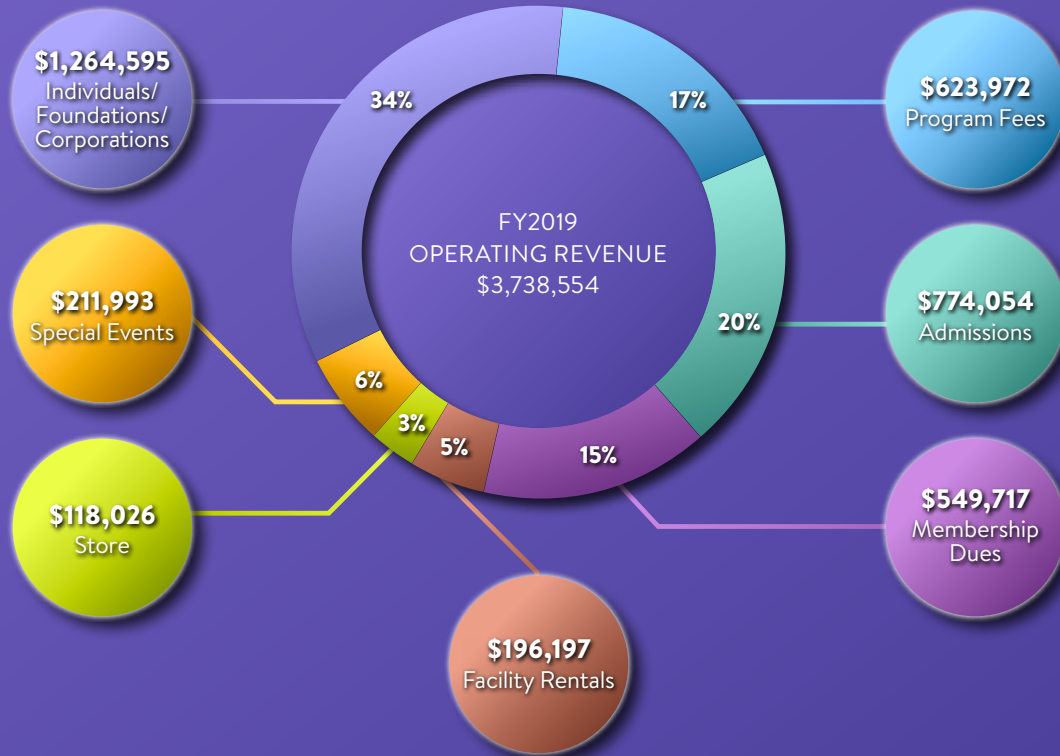
Linda’s involvement with CuriOdyssey connects with nearly every part of her life. A devoted grandmother, she has shared her love of all things CuriO with her four grandchildren helping to develop a strong interest in science and nature in each and every one. All have attended camp and grandson Cole has served as a leader in training with anticipation of becoming a leader.

In Linda’s own words, she is an “old fashioned” volunteer. Someone who treasures making connections, remembering birthdays and children’s names with ease. Her letter and card writing is legendary and friends of CuriOdyssey treasure Linda’s personal and thoughtful notes thanking them for their donations.

While Linda may be retiring from her active role on the board, she will continue to remain involved as a Director Emeritus and will be serving with Congresswoman Jackie Speier as an Honorary Campaign Co-Chair. As Tom Brown notes, “Linda’s leadership has been an everlasting gift to this organization.” We are immensely grateful for Linda’s tireless devotion which has had such a profound effect on CuriOdyssey and the children and families in our community.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

FISCAL YEAR OCTOBER 1, 2018 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2019



In total we spent \$4,069,403 of which \$3,187,726 (78%) was for Program and Membership Expenses and \$881,677 (22%) was for Administrative and Fundraising Expenses.

CuriOdyssey saw a 14% increase in Annual Giving and a 19% increase in earned revenue as compared to the prior fiscal year. The expense numbers represented here do not include non-cash adjustments such as in-kind, depreciation and rent expense.

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING CURIODYSSEY'S QUARTERLY EVENTS!

2,659 visitors attended
Bubbles & Rainbows.

29,448 visitors attended
STEMOdyssey in
Spring 2019.

First Friday Family Nights
continued in 2019! Each
first Friday of the month,
parents and kids enjoyed
a live band and other
entertainers while meeting
wildlife up close and playing
with fun science exhibits.
6,879 visitors attended these
family night outs in FY2019.



*As a science and wildlife center, CuriOdyssey helps children
acquire the tools to deeply understand our changing world*

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