



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CuriOdyssey Science Playground & Zoo Announces
Interim Executive Director**

*Melissa Felder, Former Chief Experience Officer at California Academy
Of Sciences, Named Interim Executive Director*

San Mateo, CA (August, 2025) – [CuriOdyssey Science Playground & Zoo](#) is pleased to announce the appointment of Melissa Felder as the organization's Interim Executive Director. Felder brings a wealth of experience and leadership to the role and will guide the organization through a critical period of transition.

Felder steps into the role following the departure of Aragon Burlingham, who served in the role for five years. A seasoned executive with decades of experience in the nonprofit, aquarium, and museum sectors, Felder will work closely with the Board of Directors, staff, and stakeholders to continue advancing CuriOdyssey's mission. This appointment is effective September 1, 2025.

"I am delighted to step into this leadership role with CuriOdyssey and to help guide them during this pivotal time," said Felder. "Their mission to inspire a love for science and to create a better future aligns perfectly with my life's work. I look forward to working alongside the dedicated team to continue our mission of inspiring the next generation of nature and science enthusiasts."

During Burlingham's five years of leadership, CuriOdyssey experienced a period of record growth and expansion. The organization successfully navigated all the complexities of the COVID pandemic, and launched a campus campaign to create several state of the art attractions including the Whoosh! Physics-in-Action Playground, Bay Gallery & Labs, and Nature Story Loop and Environmental Education Garden.

Through their ACCESS initiative, CuriOdyssey grew the reach of their programs and admissions to include tens of thousands in the community who would otherwise not be able to experience their expansive programs, including Museums for All and their Scholarship Program.

Felder will oversee the nonprofit's day-to-day operations, ensuring the continuity of the organization's programs. She will also work with the Board of Directors to hire a permanent Executive Director.

Felder is a seasoned Bay Area cultural institution executive and leader. She recently retired from California Academy Of Sciences where she was Chief Experience Officer. In that role, Felder oversaw the Aquarium, Planetarium, and Natural History Museum. She was focused on visitor experience development and delivery, as well as earned revenue and its associated drivers. Prior to that role, Felder served as Chief Marketing and Revenue Officer. Before falling in love with mission-driven science organizations, she worked in leadership roles in consumer financial services, technology, food & beverage.

For more information, visit www.CuriOdyssey.org

About CuriOdyssey

CuriOdyssey's mission is to inspire a love for science and curiosity about the world to create a better future. As a non-profit science museum and zoo, CuriOdyssey lets kids observe wild animals, experiment with scientific phenomena and let the natural world answer their questions. Founded in 1953 as a junior museum, the museum was rebranded in 2011 as CuriOdyssey, catalyzing growth in audiences, educational programs and exhibits. Long a much-loved destination for families in the Bay Area, CuriOdyssey is increasingly known as a champion for a way of learning that engages children in science. CuriOdyssey is located at Coyote Point Recreation Area in San Mateo.

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