

## Sciencenter Offers Free Memberships to Community's Low-Income Families



CHARLIE TRAUTMANN  
Sciencenter Connection

"My daughters and I truly love coming to the Sciencenter, but I have just lost my job and heard that you offer free membership to low-income families." This statement came from one of the Sciencenter's regular guests, and we were pleased to tell them, "Yes, we have a program that fits your needs."

The Sciencenter is able to share inspiring science experiences with all members of our community, regardless of income level through programs like our Membership Access Program (MAP), which are made possible by gifts to the Sciencenter's Annual Fund.

As a community museum built by volunteers, the Sciencenter feels a strong responsibility as a stakeholder in the Ithaca and Central NY communities. Our mission is "to inspire excitement for science through interactive exhibits and programs that engage, educate and empower." Therefore it is our priority that all children living in our local community, regardless of financial means, have the ability to visit the museum often and to forge personal connections with science.

Through MAP, we provide free one-year memberships to families with children eligible for free or reduced price lunch at school. The family level membership includes free admission to the Sciencenter year round, as well as many other benefits including free reciprocal admission to more than 325 museums worldwide; invitations to member events; discounts on programs, Galaxy Golf passes and birthday parties; 10% off purchases at Sciencenter Take-Out, the Sciencenter Store; free enrollment for children in our Birthday Club; and a free subscription to our quarterly publication, *SciencenterNews*.

MAP was first developed in 2009 to ensure that all children in our community, regardless of financial means, can visit the museum as often as they'd like without cost being a barrier. MAP now represents 15% of the Sciencenter's total membership, and in 2011 our MAP members made over 2,500 visits to the Sciencenter.

A MAP member has told us, "We attend some of your free days because we can't afford to come otherwise and you have such great activities and programs. By having a membership, we can make it more of a program for us and make it part of our daily lives. Thank you so much for offering this program." It's stories like these that inspire us to imagine a world in which every young person is empowered to use science in shaping a better future for themselves, their community, and our global society.

If you'd like to take an advantage of the Membership Access Program or know a family that would, contact us for application instructions at [www.sciencenter.org/access](http://www.sciencenter.org/access) or call Christine Bissen at 607-272-0600 ext. 19.

*Charlie Trautmann is the executive director of the Sciencenter.*

*Sciencenter Connection appears the second Thursday of the month in Ticket.*