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Sciencenter Receives International "Leading Edge" Award



BY LEA ELLESEFF



The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) in Washington, D.C., has awarded the Sciencenter the 2009 Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Award for Innovative Business Practice in recognition of its Sustainability Initiative.

ASTC is an international organization of more than 422 science centers and museums in 42 countries dedicated to furthering the public understanding of science among increasingly diverse audiences. This ASTC award program recognizes extraordinary accomplishments and contributions to the field made by large and small museums of science around the world.

This is the second time the Sciencenter has received this award, making it the only museum in the world to have been recognized for innovation in business practice twice. The Sciencenter's first Leading Edge Award was received in 2005 in recognition for the Sciencenter's Wall of Inspiration exhibition.

The Sciencenter launched its Sustainability Initiative in 2006 to inspire and empower a new generation of youth to apply science to the biggest world issues and help put our global society on a more sustainable path. This work began with an early focus on aligning the management and operational practices of the Sciencenter to address aspects of environmental, financial and social sustainability.

The Sustainability Initiative then expanded significantly to the larger task of engaging the community in sustainability education. Through these efforts, many new educational programs have engaged children and adults alike, including: family workshops on wind energy and home energy conservation, museum floor programs on climate change and watershed health, and field trip programs on ocean conservation and renewable energy. Also in development are new interactive exhibits on alternative energy, waste reduction, and watersheds.

"Our Sustainability Initiative has had a positive impact on every aspect of the Sciencenter," says Sciencenter Executive Director Charlie Trautmann. "But the real excitement of this award is that it helps us advance a community conversation on sustainability that's relevant to children, parents, teachers, business and community leaders alike."

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