



Sciencenter INSIDE LOOK

A Beloved Gallery Gets Updated

By Adrienne Testa,
Director of Exhibits & Facilities

The Sciencenter has undergone many exciting changes over the last few months— from design changes in the museum to brand new exhibits to the revitalization of older, well-loved exhibits. One of these many projects was the redesign of our Watergates Gallery.

This gallery has always been an active and engaging space, with exhibits running reliably for almost 20 years. However, the field of exhibit design has evolved in the last decade, and we saw a need for upgrades to the space. Our team redesigned the gallery to preserve what our visitors loved about it while improving the visitor experience through increased engagement and accessibility.

The first step of this redesign process was for the Exhibits Team to evaluate the exhibits within the gallery. For this phase of the project, the team collaborated with the Cultivating Curiosity class at

Cornell University. Throughout the process, the students spent time at the museum performing evaluations and working on exhibit prototyping. This collaboration culminated in the students presenting their findings and feedback to our Exhibits Team. Their input helped spark new ideas, validate plans that we already had, and provide further evidence for the need for upgrades.

While the class greatly contributed to the Sciencenter, the students also shared that they gained valuable insights into science communication.

Professor Marianella Casasola, the instructor of the Cultivating Curiosity class at Cornell, stated, “My students and I could not have asked for a better experience working with the exhibit design team at the Sciencenter. [They] welcomed the students as true collaborators on exploring how to improve the Watergates Gallery.”

In addition to collaborating with Cornell, we also worked with the Finger Lakes Independence Center

to better understand how to make this space and the exhibits within it more accessible to all visitors. Their feedback was woven into many of the design components of the exhibits.

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Thanks to the hard work of our Exhibits Team and the insightful feedback from the Cornell class and the Finger Lakes Independence Center, our Watergates Gallery now has new exhibits, updated a favorite exhibit, a cohesive educational theme around “forces,” and two beautiful murals painted by local artist, Molly Reagan.

Come visit the museum and explore all the beautiful changes that have taken place this summer!

The changes to the Watergates Gallery are made possible in part with funding from Institute of Museum and Library Services and BorgWarner.



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Collaborating with GIAC to Address Community Flooding Concerns

By Alyssa Johnson, Education Program Coordinator

The Sciencenter and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) recently collaborated on a project to address community concerns around flooding in the Ithaca area. Many homes and businesses in the area regularly experience flooding, leading to damaged infrastructure and personal property. This issue is predicted to worsen as the climate continues to change.

The collaboration with GIAC consisted of educational programming for GIAC youth and a Dialogue and Deliberation event for the community. Youth programming is an important link between GIAC and the Sciencenter, so this partnership included six weeks of water investigations for youth enrolled in the GIAC summer camp. Campers participated in green and gray space mapping, several weeks of creek flow measurements at Buttermilk Falls State Park, and an educational boat trip on Cayuga Lake.

The Dialogue & Deliberation event took place on July 29th, with nearly 70 community members in attendance. The City of Ithaca’s Director of Sustainability spoke about climate change and flooding in the region, the GIAC youth presented on their summer investigations, and the community participated in facilitated dialogue around the issue of flooding and ways to remediate it.

The outcomes, including images from the event and a map of community-indicated flood zones, were displayed at an exhibit at the Tompkins County Public Library and will also be shared with local government representatives. This project is part of our ongoing partnership with GIAC to offer relevant, STEM-focused programming for youth in GIAC programs.



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