

Contact:

Julie Parente; julie.parente@msichicago.org; (773) 753-6249

MSI CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH WITH NEW INITIATIVE TO INSPIRE GIRLS TO ENTER STEM CAREERS

CHICAGO (March 24, 2021) – The Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago (MSI) marked Women's History Month by announcing a new initiative to encourage girls to enter STEM careers, thanks to a generous gift from business leader and MSI Trustee Ann M. Drake.

The donation will support MSI in deepening its commitment to inclusion and realizing its vision to inspire and motivate all children to achieve their full potential in science, technology, engineering and math.

The new initiative focuses on girls in grades 4 through 8, a critical time when many students may lose interest in science. Gender differences in learning appear in adolescence and persist through high school and post-secondary study, contributing to significant workforce disparities: in 2019 women comprised 51% of the national population but only 27% of the STEM workforce (U.S. Department of Labor).

A variety of factors contribute to this underrepresentation, including unsupportive learning environments, limited visible role models and sociocultural exclusion from STEM. The Museum will conduct research to assess the current landscape of gender-inclusive STEM learning for its audiences and identify opportunities that MSI can address.

New efforts aim to:

- Introduce more girls to making and design skills through a summer camp program in MSI's digital fabrication lab.
- Increase girls' participation in Black Creativity Family Day and Jr. Science Café programs by partnering with girls-focused organizations.
- Spotlight female role models in STEM careers by featuring them as instructors and experts throughout Museum programs.
- Develop a long-term strategy for gender-inclusive practices and programming across the Museum's educational initiatives.

Programs will begin this summer. The Museum hopes to engage over 3,000 girls annually through direct programming efforts.

This work builds on the Museum's long-standing commitment to youth for whom there exist systemic barriers to full participation in STEM. The Museum has reached more than 4.8 million youth since 2006 with a unique youth-centered approach to science education programs that focuses on Chicago-area schools and neighborhoods.

Drake also made a gift to support the development of a new exhibit about space exploration. The current exhibit, the Henry Crown Space Center, showcases mission-flown spacecraft like the Apollo 8 module and Aurora 7 capsule. The gift will help the Museum continue the planning process for this future exhibit.

"We're grateful to Ann Drake for these generous gifts, which will allow us to excite, inspire and connect even more Chicago-area girls with STEM," said Chevy Humphrey, MSI President and

CEO. “We know that learning environments designed for all genders are critical for young people to fully participate and thrive, and these gifts will ensure MSI strengthens its commitment to equity.”

Drake has dedicated herself to advancing the careers of women. After a barrier-breaking career in business, in 2013 she founded the nonprofit organization AWESOME (Achieving Women’s Excellence in Supply Chain Operations, Management, and Education). In 2019, she founded Lincoln Road Enterprises, which seeks new ways to advance the influence and contributions of women in business, supply chain, engineering and technology, infrastructure, design and space.

“Throughout my career I’ve focused on paving the way for change and working to make an impact in industry, especially for women. It’s critical to have role models, support networks and opportunities that can help girls find their future,” Drake said. “With this gift, I hope to encourage and advance girls and women in STEM fields, and create a brighter future for us all.”

Drake joined her family business in 1990 and soon became CEO in a male-dominated industry. During her tenure, DSC Logistics became one of the nation’s leading supply chain management companies. She guided DSC through continual transformation aimed at providing supply chain leadership to customers with changing needs. For spearheading this transformation, Drake received the Committee of 200’s Entrepreneurial Champion Luminary Award in 2018 among other honors.

The Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago (MSI), one of the largest science museums in the world, offers world-class and uniquely interactive experiences that inspire inventive genius and foster curiosity. From groundbreaking and award-winning exhibits that can’t be found anywhere else, to hands-on opportunities that make you the scientist—a visit to MSI is where fun and learning mix. Through its Welcome to Science Initiative, the Museum offers a variety of student, teacher and family programs that make a difference in communities and contribute to MSI’s larger vision: to inspire and motivate children to achieve their full potential in science, technology, medicine and engineering. The Museum is grateful for the support of its donors and guests who make its work possible. MSI is also supported in part by the people of Chicago through the Chicago Park District. For more information, visit msichicago.org or call (773) 684-1414.

###