

Press Release



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Contact: Maurine Jackson

601-622-3117

maurine@mcm.ms

Mary Alex Thigpen

601-709-8964

maryalex@mcm.ms

Gertrude C. Ford Foundation gift to name Mississippi Children's Museum Literacy Garden *MCM receives \$500,000 commitment from Foundation*

Jackson, Miss. (April 4, 2017)—On Tuesday, April 4, 2017, the Mississippi Children's Museum will announce the naming of the Gertrude C. Ford Literacy Garden. The Gertrude C. Ford Foundation, which made a \$500,000 commitment to MCM for the Literacy Garden, will be honored during the MCM Partners annual meeting.

"This gift is a continuation of the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation's commitment to the Mississippi Children's Museum. Literacy is an important part of our foundation's overall vision for improving education in Mississippi and increasing the quality of life for Mississippians," said John Lewis, member of the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation.

The Gertrude C. Ford Literacy Garden, a 13,000 square foot outdoor gallery, which opened in Summer 2014, is designed to encourage early language and reading skills development among children 0-8 years old. It combines whimsical, literary-inspired sculptures, innovative technology and native plants along with an edible garden to pull children into the creative, limitless world of stories and imagination.

This space is intended not only to meet children's need for outdoor play but to create a collaborative learning laboratory where children and their caregivers encounter elements critical for language and literacy acquisition. Since its opening, this space has grown MCM's educational capacity by allowing the museum to expand existing programming to the outdoors as well as to pursue new opportunities like *Know to Grow*, a monthly program which combines stories with hands-on gardening activities.

In October 2014, MCM was awarded a significant honor, a competitive grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to finish the final phase of the garden's development. The Literacy Garden was also named a 2014 Southern Travel Treasure by AAA. This spring, MCM was nominated as a finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, which is presented annually by IMLS and is the United States' highest honor for institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities.

“We are so grateful to the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation for their ongoing commitment to the Mississippi Children’s Museum, to literacy, and to providing innovative learning experiences for Mississippi’s children,” said Susan Garrard, Mississippi Children’s Museum President and CEO. “The Literacy Garden truly is one-of-a-kind. You will not experience it anywhere else. It was designed and developed by Mississippians, incorporating Mississippi artwork and native plant species, to create a place of wonder and learning for all Mississippi’s children.

About the Mississippi Children’s Museum

The Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides unparalleled experiences that ignite a thirst for discovery, knowledge, and learning in all children. MCM is dedicated to inspiring Mississippi’s children from all backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. The museum features 40,000 square feet of exhibit space designed around five primary initiatives: Literacy, STEM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts, and Mississippi History. The museum’s exhibits, programs, and outreach opportunities provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages. To learn more about MCM visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.

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