

2012 MEDAL WINNER PACIFIC SCIENCE CENTER
Speakers: Bryce Seidl, Andrea Rose Nichols

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>> FEMALE SPEAKER: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways.

Pacific Science Center Director Bryce Seidl and community member Andrea Rose Nichols traveled to Washington, DC from Seattle, Washington to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the museum impacts the community.

>> BRYCE SEIDL: The Pacific Science Center is the first institution to open its doors from day one as a science center. A science center is a place that is a non-collections based institution dedicated to helping people learn about the wonders of science through interactive, inquiry-based learning.

The mission is quite straightforward but not necessarily easy to do. The mission is to inspire lifelong interest in science, math, and technology.

The function of that is really to help people understand how exciting science can be and math can be without being intimidating. We live in a society where people's experiences in school often are not good and particularly in early years and they feel they can't do science.

In reality, science is really part of our culture. It is part of our life. So the role of science centers is to some fair degree to help young people imagine what they could be when they are older and to help older people keep up with what is happening in the world of science with the rapid, rapid rate of change we have.

Discovery Corps is a program in which we bring in teens from high school age to the science center. They begin as volunteers but then they are able to quickly move on to the payroll.

We have about eighty teens from forty-three high schools involved in the program now. Many of them would be what you would consider to be kids from at-risk communities, from underserved communities.

>> ANDREA ROSE NICHOLS: I began volunteering in August 2007 with the Discovery Corps Program. It was the summer before my junior year. You can start from the summer before your freshman year all the way up until your senior year and stay until you graduate from high school which is really unique for eighteen development program.

And through the course of it, you get to work on the floor teaching visitors of different ages all about science and things that you are interested in as well things that they are interested in. There is also a lot of extra opportunities like workshops and internships. You can work with different departments in the Science Center like the animal care department or guest services or the planetarium just to get a really broad idea of what science is about and how the teens can actually fit into science.

>> BRYCE SEIDL: The first thing we do is teach them how to present some science. As they get better at it, they can learn more topics and work from a cart or ultimately as Andrea has done, become presenting the stage shows and all of these sorts of things.

But we really what we are also doing is we are teaching them how to present themselves.

>> ANDREA ROSE NICHOLS: When I started I was really shy. I was outgoing but only with really close people. I was really not very fond of strangers or starting conversations with people that I didn't know and Discovery Corps actually helped me become more confident in myself and my ability to talk to people.

They start you out by having you shadow people who are really good at what they do and know how to teach visitors and talk about certain topics. Then they expanded from there. You go from one-on-one conversations and when you feel comfortable with that, you get to start presenting activities to larger groups, and then as you develop and progress you can go to larger and larger groups and become more and more confident.

For me it was public speaking that I really gained my confidence in.

I still work at the Science Center. I am in the adult science interpretation program which is a lot like Discovery Corps but we have a couple more things that we are able to do like live science presentations is what I do. I actually do a live snake show which is completely different than when I started. I didn't like reptiles. I didn't like public speaking. Now I go in front of groups of about 200 people, present snakes and present live science demonstrations about chemistry and all of these different topics.

>> BRYCE SEIDL: It turns out to provide life-changing experiences. Many, many of the kids that come in become fascinated with science. They choose to go on to college when they hadn't even imagined going to college. It is absolutely a remarkable program and I am so proud of what the kids that come through that program do.