Update: Spring 2018

From the Campaign Chair

What an exciting time to be involved with the South Florida Museum! Three years ago, we announced the Connect Capital Campaign, a wide-reaching effort to raise funds to support the Museum’s vision for the future — a new design of the Museum’s spaces, programs and exhibits that will allow us to create new, awe-inspiring visitor experiences through excellent exhibitions and programming, while providing a vital resource for our educational partners throughout the region.

Thanks to broad community support, we broke ground on the brand-new Mosaic Backyard Universe and North Education Center on Jan. 16, and are ushering in a new era of natural sciences education for our community. Early support for this expansion came from Mosaic and The Mosaic Company Foundation, which not only encouraged the Museum’s Board to “think big” in terms of planning potential new programs and spaces, but also provided important financial support — a $1.3 million grant — to help get the Connect Campaign under way. Other strong community support has come through:

- The Manatee County Tourism Development Council (TDC), in conjunction with the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, which provided a $1 million grant;
- $9.175 million in donations and grants from private individuals and foundations;
- $450,000 in grants from the state of Florida;
- $75,000 in donations from private business;
- An additional $2.48 million in funding is coming through the New Markets Tax Credit program, a federal program that encourages investment and development in underserved communities.

To date, we’ve raised $14.6 million to support the beginning of this new chapter in the South Florida Museum’s story. The expansion made possible through Connect will ensure that it will remain a vital part of the region’s educational, tourism and business landscapes long into the future.

I would like to personally thank all the donors who have so far contributed to the Connect Campaign. The gifts we have received from long-time supporters and new friends are allowing us to begin to transform this much-loved Bradenton institution into the museum of the future and I hope the community will continue to support the Connect Campaign. I’m proud to be associated with this treasure located right in our very own backyard. And I hope you are, too.

With warmest regards,

William Blalock
Connect Campaign Chair
The South Florida Museum has been helping people explore the world around them for generations — engaging audiences, encouraging understanding and inspiring all ages to connect to the past, present and future of the planet we all share.

On Jan. 16, Museum staff, Trustees and supporters, as well as local officials and children that will one day benefit from the Museum’s expanded offerings, broke ground for the North Education Center and Mosaic Backyard Universe (MBU), which will bring innovative exhibitions for young learners and their families and new classrooms that increase the Museum’s capacity to engage students, educators and the public. The expansion will allow the Museum to do more of what it does best: immerse visitors in experiences that support an understanding and appreciation of science and nature.

The expansion will be 12,600 square feet of new and renovated classroom and exhibition space and 15,300 square feet of outdoor program space. It will allow the Museum to serve as a permanent home to the successful Ballard Satellite VPK program it currently houses and provide daily opportunities for public programs like Lunch & Learn, expanded home school courses and science camps. It will also be home to collaborative endeavors like the USF/SFM “Teaching Elementary Science” course for undergraduates and will allow the Museum to host expanded programs with the School District of Manatee County and other partners to serve thousands of additional children and their families each year.

The expansion includes the MBU, an immersive STEAM learning environment for children in pre-K through grade 2 that will be modeled on a typical backyard setting. The MBU will be unique in the region: a place for hands-on exploration and investigation where kids can interact with the simple wonders of nature — rocks, soil, water, weather and living plants and animals.

“This new learning environment will provide a place for active discovery and exploration where learning is fun,” said Museum CEO Brynne Anne Besio. “A child’s success in both academics and life is heavily influenced by their early learning experiences, even before they start kindergarten. We also know that children who are performing at grade level by the third grade realize significant gains throughout life, including better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors and employment. The Mosaic Backyard Universe will also lay the foundation for future scientific investigation and discovery in the Museum’s exhibits, Planetarium and Aquarium and help set children on a path for a lifetime of success.”

“It’s great when you can see everyone working together on a private-public partnership. I’m very excited about what this is going to mean, especially for children. Children make up 25 percent of our population but 100 percent of our future and that is what this is all about to me; it’s to help our kids learn more about science. Someone mentioned that 15,000 kids might be coming through here a year. That really grabs my heart. This is very exciting for Bradenton and Manatee County; it’s incredible what we’re doing with the waterfront here. I’m glad to be a small part of it.”

— U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-Longboat Key)
Donor Profile: Investing in the Museum’s Future

Many museums nationwide are supported through ongoing, direct funding from local and state government entities. At the South Florida Museum, we’ve always been independent of such line-item support. Instead, most of our gifts come directly from the champions and philanthropists who believe in our mission and have made a personal commitment to help sustain our organization.

In November 2017, Southwest Florida celebrated National Philanthropy Day — a special day set aside to recognize how philanthropy enriches our lives, our community and our world — and we were honored to pay tribute to one of our very own champions, Paul Hoenle.

Paul Hoenle is a model philanthropist who supports numerous organizations in the region and has helped further the mission of the South Florida Museum for more than 30 years. His support has facilitated the education of hundreds of thousands of students.

But his philanthropy also touches all aspects of the Museum through contributions he has made to our general operations, our endowment and capital growth. Paul’s most recent gift is helping to bring the Mosaic Backyard Universe and North Education Center to life.

“Paul’s support truly makes a difference in our community and we thank him and champions like him for their continued support,” said Jeanie Kirkpatrick, Chair of the Museum’s Board of Trustees.

Statewide Recognition for Our Outstanding Trustee

We’re pleased to announce that Bill Blalock, Trustee and Chairman of our Connect Campaign, was chosen as Florida’s Outstanding Trustee for 2017 by the Florida Association of Museums, a statewide organization created to enhance the ability of museums to serve the public interest.

Bill has served on the Museum’s Board for nearly 20 years and his commitment to the Museum is a continuation of a family legacy; each generation of the Blalock family has made significant contributions to the Museum’s success since its founding in 1946.

Bill grew up in the Museum; his Board tenure began in 1998 and he became President in 2008. Following in his family’s tradition, Bill has been, and continues to be, an agent of sound growth and change, providing trusted leadership as we build the museum of the future on the solid foundations laid over the past seven decades.

Bill has been a key player in moving the Board and staff through planning for campus and program expansions, led the decision-making process considering a capital campaign and took the reins as Campaign Chair in 2011. His leadership has been instrumental for the Campaign and his success is obvious in the January groundbreaking we just celebrated. “We can’t thank Bill enough for his leadership and are so pleased to see him recognized for his many contributions to our community,” said Brynne Anne Besio, Museum CEO.
The Connect Capital Campaign

Donors to the Connect Capital Campaign are making the expansion of the North Education Center and the Mosaic Backyard Universe possible, and we can’t thank them enough for their support. To learn more about Connect or our vision for the future, please contact Ashley Berridge, Community Engagement Manager, at 941.216.3457, or ABerridge@SouthFloridaMuseum.org.

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The Museum’s expansion with new places dedicated to young children and their families, new multi-purpose spaces for the community, classrooms for educational programs and more is being made possible in-part through the New Markets Tax Credit program.

This federal program helps investors finance projects that benefit the greater good in their local, underserved communities in return for a reduction in their federal tax burden. The investor — in this case, PNC Bank — still pays their taxes but instead of ending up in federal coffers, the money is directly invested locally in projects that improve services in their own backyards. The City of Bradenton and the nonprofit Florida Community Loan Fund helped to facilitate this investment.

This investment is a shining example of a true community investment — showcasing support for the Museum and its mission, which in turn is providing a greater benefit to the region.

**donors, cont’d**

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*Includes gifts made in memory of Dan S. Blalock, Jr.

**The Mosaic Backyard Universe**
Construction of the North Education Center and Mosaic Backyard Universe, including its exhibits, is expected to cost around $8 million. This expansion is part of the larger overall vision for the Museum developed by staff and the Museum’s Board of Trustees.

Projects already completed, thanks to funding through the Connect Capital Campaign include:

- The Bishop Planetarium projection system was upgraded and remains state-of-the-art;
- Development of the initial software structure for the Pathways program;
- Facility upgrades including the roof, a new chiller, security cameras and phone system;
- Branding research and creative development;
- Planning, architecture and engineering for the Museum Campus;
- Purchase of the DeSoto House to give the Museum access to the entire campus.

More recent projects undertaken as part of our overall vision include work on our indoor improvements. To accommodate construction needs, Discovery Place is closed until further notice and, in its place, we created a special reading nook in the corner of the Planetarium Lobby near the east doorway. We have also replaced the seats and carpet in the Planetarium and are making changes to our galleries — closing some exhibits and incorporating collections into new areas.

Construction is expected to take 14 to 18 months and the Museum is expected to remain open during construction, though access to some areas may be limited for brief periods. Street parking will continue to be available on 10th Street West, in front of the Museum, but the Museum’s north parking lot is closed for construction. There are several parking locations available in downtown Bradenton that are convenient to the Museum, including the County parking garage at the corner of Manatee Avenue and 10th Street West.

The Museum will provide construction updates through its website and enewsletter and will have updated parking suggestions and maps online. Visit us for the latest news at www.SouthFloridaMuseum.org.

**Exciting Changes are Already Under Way!**

In February, the Bishop Planetarium received a seat-makeover. Sit back and enjoy the show!