



Underground Research Facility

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Journey Museum awarded 2021 CORES Award in recognition for science public outreach
SURF selected The Journey Museum and Learning Center as this year's recipient of the CORES Award, recognizing their passion for and visible commitment to science public outreach

LEAD, SD— Since 1997, visitors to The Journey Museum and Learning Center in Rapid City have explored the Black Hills area through the lenses of history, science and culture. In 2021, the Journey Museum was recognized with Sanford Underground Research Facility's (SURF) CORES Award for their dedication to public outreach in the sciences.

“The Journey Museum exemplifies everything the CORES Award stands for. They are committed to creating awareness about many topics among the general public, including science. We are thrilled they were selected and congratulate the team at the Journey Museum,” said Constance Walter, communications director at SURF.

“On behalf of the museum, we're very grateful to be recognized,” said Troy Kilpatrick, executive director of the Journey Museum. “The award really speaks to the whole Journey team, past and present, who has worked so hard to be engaged with our community. We are honored to receive this award. It's just a great feeling.”

The Communication and OutReach Experiences in Science (CORES) Award is given annually to an individual, group, business or organization that supports public STEM education and outreach within the region. The recipient is selected by a committee that takes into consideration ongoing support of science education—whether through sponsorships or service—a passion for science education and a visible commitment to public science outreach in the region.

The CORES Award will be presented to Kilpatrick on behalf of the Journey Museum during SURF's virtual [Nobel Day celebration](#) on Dec. 10.

Experiencing the Journey Museum

Walking through the Journey Museum, visitors stand at the base of the skeleton of Tinker the Tyrannosaurus Rex who lived in northeastern South Dakota more than 80 million years ago; learn about the geological forces that lifted the Black Hills from its surrounding plains; discover Lakota constellations and the myths they depict through Native American star charts; and watch the riveting tale of the 1972 flood that washed through Rapid City, one of the deadliest floods in U.S. history.

“We want to over-deliver on the opportunity for our visitors to learn about all kinds of different things,” Kilpatrick said. “From geology, paleontology, archaeology, Native American culture

and pioneer history, along with NASA and space sciences—I just I don't know what we're missing!”

The education staff at the museum helps audiences dive deeper into the sciences through the museum’s STEAM weekend programming. Hands-on, interactive learning activities explore topics like “Bird Beaks” and “Animal Tracks” with children and adults alike.

“We don't want to be a quiet museum,” Kilpatrick said. “We don't want anybody shushed; we want the energy and enthusiasm that happens when people are learning.”

The Journey Museum’s inflatable planetarium takes their “Journey into Space” program to schools, event centers and even SURF’s Neutrino Day festival each summer. Museum educators take audiences on tours of space, exploring moons or star formations through NASA space imagery. Because there is no prior recording, every experience is guided by audience questions and curiosity.

Since its creation, the Journey Museum connected with its audiences through in-person visits and hands-on activities. But that entire approach changed in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused the museum to shut their doors for 105 days.

Unable to use their exhibits and educational spaces, the museum team found ways to connect with their audiences virtually. In just under two years, they’ve created an online library with experiments for children, lesson plans for educators and “Journey Discussions,” a series of expert presentations for adults.

Although they’ve made efforts to adapt, Kilpatrick said the pandemic has taken a toll on the museum. In 2020, the Mysteries at the Museum fundraiser helped the organization make it through the year financially. And although the pandemic still impacts their operations in late 2021, the Journey Museum held the event again; this year, it was a celebration of moving forward.

In 2022, the Journey Museum will be featured in “Behind the Scenes with Laurence Fishburne,” an award-winning documentary series. Kilpatrick said they were featured because of their unique approach to public outreach. “Our goal is to reveal the connections of both scientific and cultural history and heritage,” Kilpatrick said. “We caught the documentarist’s attention with our conversation of science and culture being intermixed.”

Next year, the Journey Museum will celebrate its 25 anniversary. Kilpatrick says the CORES Award recognition comes at a time when the museum is renewing their dedication to public outreach and looking forward to the next 25 years.

Sanford Underground Research Facility is operated by the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority (SDSTA) with funding from the Department of Energy’s Office of Science. Our mission is to advance world class science and inspire learning across generations. Visit SURF at www.sanfordlab.org.