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Independence Seaport Museum Wins Special Achievement Award
From American Alliance of Museums

Landmark Exhibit ‘River Alive!’ Chosen for Special Achievement in Interactivity

PHILADELPHIA (June 22, 2020) – In a virtual announcement on June 4, Independence Seaport Museum was named one of seven winners to receive the Special Achievement award in the American Alliance of Museums’ 32nd Annual Excellence in Exhibition Competition for their landmark exhibit, River Alive.

"It was an enormous pleasure to see the wide range of stellar entries that came in for the 32nd annual Excellence in Exhibitions Competition,” said Becky Menlove, Deputy Director, Director for the Visitor Experience at the Natural History Museum of Utah, who served as the competition coordinator. “With thirty-nine submissions from across the US and Canada, we reviewed exhibitions from large and small organizations representing the full spectrum of museum types, from fine arts museums to botanical gardens, children's museums to historical sites. It was inspiring to see the degree to which museums are striving to create relevant and meaningful exhibitions that not only engage, but in many cases also reflect the audiences served by these projects.”

Awarded for Special Achievement in Interactivity, River Alive!, a permanent exhibit at the Museum, provides a hands-on and state-of-the-art experience that asks visitors of all ages to dive deeper into the role the Delaware River plays in their everyday lives. Comprised of 17 interactive stations, including a Water Cycle Puzzle and Plankton Bloom Table, the exhibit’s centerpiece is a 32-foot, curved interactive Continuum Wall. Activated by five different input stations, the Continuum Wall challenges guests to virtually clean up the river while learning about our region’s reliance on the watershed.

“We built River Alive! with the idea of bringing our museum into the 21st century in terms of content and presentation,” said John Brady, President & CEO of Independence Seaport Museum. “It is inspiring to have the work of an incredible team validated by an award from the American Alliance of Museums. We are honored and gratified to have our efforts celebrated on a national stage.”
Since opening in November 2018, River Alive! has served as a community gateway to the Delaware River watershed and highlights Independence Seaport Museum’s status as a waterfront and watershed hub of study and exploration. Visitors are able to expand on what they have learned in the exhibit through newly developed on-water programming, such as kayak excursions and eco tours.

River Alive! was made possible by the generous support of the William Penn Foundation, which awarded over $4 million in grants to assist with the exhibit and expanded the Museum’s docks. Pennsylvania-based interdisciplinary design and interpretive planning studio Habithèque Inc. oversaw the initial design concept through the execution and opening of the exhibit. Additional exhibit partners include:

ARCHITECTURAL & EXHIBIT PLANNING & DESIGN
Hands On! Studio
Stemann & Pease Architects

CREATIVE CONTENT, MEDIA DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS
Handymakes Studio
Bluecadet

EVALUATION
Rachel Becker-Klein and Chris Hardee, PEER Associates

INTERACTIVE MEDIA COMPONENTS
Bluecadet
Azavea

CURRICULAR GUIDE
Rose Schlenk
Barbara Bjerring

SPECIALTY EXHIBIT FABRICATION
Creative Machines

GRAPHIC DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION
Bluecadet
Handymakes Studio

COMMISSIONED ART INSTALLATIONS
Stacy Levy
Will Owen
Lexy Ho-Tai
Nick D’Amico
Keith Hartwig
James Ijames

MEDIA INTEGRATION
H.B. Frazer Company
ELECTRICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
H.B. Frazer Company

FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION
B Fabrication
Cavo Design Build

ARCHITECTURAL RENOVATIONS
John Alberto General Construction
Metropolitan Contract Carpets, Inc.

SCIENTIST ADVISORY GROUPS
Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University
Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
Stroud Water Research Center
Philadelphia Water Department

About Independence Seaport Museum
Independence Seaport Museum deepens the understanding, appreciation and experience of the Philadelphia region’s waterways through history, science, and art, plus experiences on the water. Along with National Historic Landmark ships Cruiser Olympia and Submarine Becuna, the Museum is home to a boatbuilding workshop, Citizen Science Lab, and a Makerspace. Guests are also able to explore the river with small boat rentals, on-water programming, and one of the largest maritime art and artifact collections in North America. Independence Seaport Museum is the premier, year-round destination on the Penn’s Landing waterfront. See our full schedule of programs and events at phillyseaport.org.

About the American Alliance of Museums
The American Alliance of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. Representing more than 35,000 individual museum professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners serving the museum field, the Alliance stands for the broad scope of the museum community. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

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