

**2014 National Medal Winner: Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History  
Ernesto Vargas, Community Member Video**

I'm Ernesto Vargas. I'm 19 years old and I'm from Oklahoma City. My seventh grade geography teacher, Ms. Fox, handed me a flyer that, in her words, was perfect for me. And that was Oklahoma Science Adventure back in 2008. And Oklahoma Science Adventure is one of the middle school programs at the Sam Noble in the ExplorOlogy program, and through that program I was able to travel the states along with museum faculty to do science, which included jumping in the ponds and examining fossil track lays. That's my first experience with the museum, a fantastic one. The museum's programs have influenced me greatly. Through these programs was the first time I asked myself, what is science? What does it mean to be a scientist? What do I wanna do in the field? And through these programs, Paleo Expedition and Oklahoma Science Adventure, was when I reconciled these questions and I believe that helped me grow as a person. What I gained from them was a passion for science and a passion to share that with others and this of course includes team building, confidence building and building relationships with others. I think that the museum serves the function of being a gathering place for people really of all ages that want to pursue learning, educational resources or just build connections with their community. And whether it's just the city of Norman, the state of Oklahoma, the scientific community, I think it fulfills its function above and beyond. In my third year of participating in programs at the museum, which was Paleo Expedition as a peer mentor to other students, I remember digging fossils in the Oklahoma panhandle, specifically Jurassic dinosaur fossils, and then at that moment I realized that I was more excited than other students having and just experiencing these things and myself experiencing them. I think that's when I realized what I wanted to do with my life. It's, make these experiences available to other people and make sure they learned the lessons I learned in these programs. I worked as a docent in the Hall of Ancient Life and I spend around 100 hours talking with people, just sharing the experience with others. I think that may have been my favorite part of the museum 'cause of how much interaction I've had with the community there. The win for the Sam Noble Museum is also a win for the community because it shows how integrated the museum has become in this community and this could only further show how programs, such as, ExplorOlogy, other events, social media, even volunteer programs further influence this community.