

2013 National Medal Winner Video: Boston Children's Museum

Narration: 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. Boston Children's Museum President and CEO, Carole Charnow, and community member Tayquan Pomare-Taylor traveled to Washington from Boston, Massachusetts to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the museum impacts the community.

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Carole Charnow: Well, the mission of the Children's Museum is to engage children in a joyful experience of discovery and learning. And the museum is a hundred years old this year. It was founded in 1913 by a very dedicated group of science teachers and it really is one of the pioneers in child-focused and family-focused programs and exhibits in the world.

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Carole Charnow: I think what's unique about the Children's Museum is that we are not there particularly for any subject or content or collection. We are there for our community. So every single exhibit program-- everything we do is embedded in who are we serving, how can we bring them into a deeper understanding of the world around them?

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Carole Charnow: The BNY Mellon Youth Leaders program is a magnificent community program that was started by Mellon to engage teens in a workforce experience so that they get professional development. But, as importantly, to bring teens from the neighborhoods into these community settings and then go back into the community settings and bring the community into the museum // and every year we take on another couple of kids, but really we have the teens for several years. You know, hopefully, they've come to the museum when they're sophomores in high school and they stay with us through graduation. Many, many of them actually come back and become employees of the Children's Museum's full-time staff. And they work their way through the museum into even levels of management. So it's just a tremendous workforce development experience.

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Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: I started working at the Youth Leaders program. // I like being around positive energy and when I stepped in the museum I feel that like immediately.

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Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: Well, we work with the visitor experience workers. And we sometimes help them on the floor or sometimes we go on the floor ourselves and we make our own activities to engage the kids and keep them having a-- enjoying their time at the Museum.

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Carole Charnow: Well, the museum has about two or three hundred programs a year. // So we have teams of educators and, as Tayquan mentioned, the visitor experience workers who work with kids on all kinds of themes. And we have art programs, we have theatre programs, we have literacy programs. // We have a exhibit called The Construction Zone on the third floor where we just have a whole series of ramps and pulleys and trucks. And kids are coming-- there's kids from all over // Their moms are all talking. So // we're helping people to learn more about their community.

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Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: The kids are awesome. The kids, their energy is always innocent, happy. Like, they have nothing but good to give. // 16:45:59 I'm usually picked on at school and people talk about me and stuff. But when I go to work I feel like I have a purpose. I used to believe everything that the people at school would say, but now I feel like I have something to give and it really lifts my spirit, makes my self-esteem go up.

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Carole Charnow: The changes in Tayquan are dramatic. When I first met him, he was quite childish, very childlike--

Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: <laughs>

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Carole Charnow: --and now he is just so articulate about his goals. He's so respectful. He so responsible. You know, I just remember finding that he really was thinking much more deeply about what he was doing at the museum and expressing himself in such a really deep and profound way. You know, we're just so thrilled to see how he's grown during his time with us.

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Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: The difference in learning at school and learning at the museum is that school you sit down and you look-- // It's lecture-style. But at the museum you're in it, you're moving around, you're with the kids. And then after, you talk about everything that you just did on the floor. And that teaches you how to deal with them better or more. It just helps-- I'm the type of learner where I have to move around. I have to move around. If I move around, I will focus more and I will get a lot more from it.

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Tayquan Pomare-Taylor: My future goal is going to Gordon College and majoring in astrophysics and minoring in theatre.

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Carole Charnow: Everyone who works there has a tremendous love for their community, for the children and for each other. There's so much buoyancy, creativity, enthusiasm. There's so much sort of serious thinking about what we're really doing, what we have to offer. And we're so welcoming and we want people to come into the museum because they bring so much to us. We learn so much from the people who come to see us every day. // When I tell people I work at the Boston Children's Museum and almost everyone gets this warm smile on their face and they say, it changed their lives. You know, it gave them bravery to be able to climb up to the top of the climber. It helped them understand the world around them through our programs, our e-station programs. They were up on the stage for the first time acting in a theatre show or they had their first arts experience in our art studio. And it's just been a wonderful hundred-year journey for the children's museum and we're just so excited to see what the next hundred years are gonna bring.

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Carole Charnow: When the marathon happened that day on the fifteenth of April, which none of us will ever forget, the instinct I think we all had immediately was this is a safe haven, how can we help? From the very next day, we packaged-- I think there were fifteen children in the hospital-- we packaged gift bags for them from-- we went down to our shop, we filled them with toys and books and souvenirs from the Children's Museum. We then began providing passes for patients who had children so that their families could bring the kids. Then we started giving passes to the doctors and nurses who had children who were really terribly disturbed by what happened. And then before you know it, we were learning about all kinds of people who had been involved as first responders at the marathon and we decided to create a whole month, a First Responder Month at the museum, which we're doing in May where every first responder in the commonwealth and also all hospital employees in the nine or ten hospitals that treated the people who were injured immediately from the marathon bombing can come to the museum for free. // And I think what has really opened my eyes is the tremendous generosity of the museum. And really what a safe and warm and wonderful haven it and what a healing place it can be for the community. And we have just been so, so humbled that we've been able to reach out to the people who were so deeply affected by the marathon bombing and provide them a home where they can come and feel safe and have fun and feel healed and be with their families.

During the 2013 Boston Marathon, bombs placed near the finish line killed 3 and injured 170 people. The Boston Children's Museum rushed to help.