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MUSEUMS FOR ALL WEBINAR

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>> Hello, everyone. My name is Chris Reich, and I'm the senior advisor in the Office of Museum Services, at the Institute of Museum and Library Services. We would like to welcome you to the second in a series of informational webinars about one of our newest national initiatives, the Museums for All for all program. Museums for All is a cooperative venture with the Association of Children's Museums, to expand access to the nation's museums by offering free or reduced admission for EBT, or Electronic Benefit Transfer cardholders. Over the past year, IMLS has been working closely with ACM to recruit museums as participants in this program. While we have targeted the program to childrens museums during this initial pilot phase, any kind of museum is welcome to join at any time. Our goal for the pilot phase of the project is 125 participating museums, and we are hoping this webinar will convince you to consider enrolling your museum in the Museums for All program.

Our first webinar about Museums for All focused on basic information about the program, how it works, how it can benefit your museum and your audience, and how it's worked in a number of other museums already. That webinar is posted on the Museums for All website. This webinar will focus on the leveraging potential of participation in Museums for All, and our speakers will share their experiences and insights about how the Museums for All program fits into their overall operations, and enhances their programming for the communities they serve. We are delighted and grateful to the Association of Children's Museums for joining with us in presenting this webinar, as well as two

of our participating museums, represented by Gina Evans, director of development at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, and Charlayne Murrell-Smith, vice-president, external relations and corporate development, and Kacy Hughes, senior manager of community engagement, both from the Boston Children's Museum. Both of these museums represent institutions that have many years of experience, with similar EBT admissions programs and have recently merged those programs into the national museums for all initiative.

First of all, I'd like to introduce Brendan Cartwright, a program manager for special initiatives at ACM to share brief introductory remarks about the details of the Museums for All program.

>> BRENDAN CARTWRIGHT: Thanks, Chris. ACM is very pleased to be part of this initiative. As Chris mentioned, our first webinar dealt with a specific details of Museums for All, but briefly, participating museums would offer a standing general admission rate of \$3 or less per visitor, to groups of at least four, with a member who displayed a EBT card. The guidelines established by the program are meant to provide a minimum baseline and each participating museum can determine what price if any they will charge or any other offerings they will include as part of the Museums for All. Gina, Charlayne and Kacy are going to share with us ways that their museums maximize their participation in Museums for All, but there is a number of philosophical and ideological reasons for participating in Museums for All as well. Primarily it is about making the museums more accessible to every member of your community, gateway to position your museum as a cornerstone of your community, and expand your outreach efforts. Museums for All has advantages for your visitors as well, because the discount is offered during all normal operating hours visitors have agencies to come whenever their scheduled allows, dedicated three days could be at inopportune times or be overly crowded in a way that would detract from the experience. And finally, Museums for All is the national initiative, it's free to join and you will have access to free branding, collateral and technical assistance, and you will have the opportunity to network with other participating museums, establish partnerships and share best practices. More museums are joining all the time, and the more museums that participate, the more momentum this program will have.

>> CHRIS REICH: Thanks, Brendan. Now we would like to hear from our museum presenters to tell us about their experiences with the Museums for All program in their communities, that have helped them leverage its impact in a variety of ways. To begin, we would like to reintroduce Gina Evans from the Children's

Museum of Pittsburgh.

>> GINA EVANS: Thank you, Chris. The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh has been working with the Museums for All project for the last few years. Our mission is to provide innovative museum experiences that inspire joy, creativity, and curiosity. As a part of that mission, we currently provide access to over 300,000 children and families to the museum each year. As part of that program, the Children's Museum's mission encourages us to provide subsidized admission to over 35,000 children and families who are potentially unable to visit the museum due to economic reasons.

We structure that access in a variety of ways, from free field trips that we provide to schools that receive Title 1 funding, free days, four of which we offer throughout the year, memberships for the families that attend the Children's Museum's on-site Head Start Preschool Program, and then admission programs for NAEYC members and military Blue Star families who come for free all throughout the year. The cornerstone of our current access program is the Museums for All program.

That access is granted to the Children's Museum through the EBT card. We launched this program at the museum close to ten years ago. And over that time, the museum has seen the audience grow significantly. In just the past five years, we have increased from seeing 11,000 people a year who are using their EBT card to come to the Children's Museum, to now 15,000, over 15,000.

Anyone who has a green or yellow EBT card can come to the Children's Museum for \$2 a person. We previously had that program start out when we first launched it ten years ago as \$1 admission to the museum for each person, up to four people. And that changed to \$2 in 2014, when the Children's Museum also expanded the program to include the yellow EBT card.

That yellow EBT card ensures that people with special needs or medical disabilities are able to also access the museum through the EBT Museums for All program.

The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh financially supports the Museums for All program, in a number of ways. First and foremost, we believe that there is a core alignment with the Museums for All initiative and the Children's Museums mission. We want to provide access to all children and families to experience the hands-on learning that happens in the Children's Museum.

One of the ways that we financially support this project is by creating a cross departmental strategy and commitment to the program. That means that we coordinate our fund-raising strategies, our marketing strategies, and our programming strategies across various departments in the museum, to ensure

that we are sharing the program with the right audience, in the right messaging, and then finding the support that we need through fund-raising strategies to make it happen.

The question about lost revenue, the Children's Museum takes a glass half full approach to the lost revenue. In fact, we see it as, down the line, that there is a very great return on investment by participating in the Museums for All project.

Over the recent years, over the past five years in particular, fund-raising has increased significantly around the Museums for All project, that formerly, the Children's Museums EBT program, now the Museums for All project. We established something called the Great Friends of Family Fund. The Great Friend of Families Fund here at the Children's Museum, that is a specific fund that we created to ensure that individuals can help to support families who may otherwise not have access to the museum and support the Museums for All program specifically.

Now that we have the Museums for All initiative, this unified initiative, it actually creates a much stronger platform to the museum to seek corporate sponsorship for funds to support the revenue and also corporate and foundation underwriting. That platform is really essential to the museum's fund-raising. At the same time, the museum has an institutional commitment to subsidize any additional costs that would be incurred.

There are great communitywide benefits to participating in this project, not just the overall goal to bring as many people into the Children's Museum as possible, but also to open the big door, the big door of the museum to families who might not see themselves coming to the Children's Museum or see themselves in a cultural environment like a museum.

We believe in that way that it builds the next generation of museum-goers. Many students come to our museums through free field trip opportunities, but they may not have had the chance to come to the museum with their families and to experience a family environment together.

This program makes that happen. It also establishes the museum as a resource in the community to potential partners, and it encourages new partnerships, in particular with human service agencies, who are working directly with children and families. The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh specifically partners with the, with our county's children's youth and family services department. We have fliers and materials that we share with the county, and then we also do specific programming with their family support centers all throughout the county. Through that programming, we are able to ensure that people who are being served through those family support centers can, they know about the fact that this program is available to them.

It builds, the other benefit of this project is that it

builds community trust. It shows that the Children's Museum has made an institutional commitment to ensure that all families have access. And through that commitment, we are able to build trust with community partners. A new partner in Pittsburgh called Hosanna House has recently really helped the museum to reach into a new community that we otherwise would not have really brought these families into the museum, because of distance, because of cost, and this program, the Museums for All program has broken down that barrier, and helped the museum to create strategies with this community-based partner to bus people in, to have special events that are all around the Museums for All brand.

It also has the great benefit of the Children's Museum being able to share the best practices that we learn about the Museums for All project, with not only fellow museum colleagues here in Pittsburgh, but also nationally, so that we can all sort of compare and contrast and learn from each other about what the best practices are on how to make this work for your institution.

I think that slide should have been deleted.

Advice? The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh offers advice to all of you participating on this call, that it's really important if you are planning to take up the Museums for All initiative, which I highly encourage you to do, to build internal commitment. The internal commitment across departments from your finance department to your visitor services department, to marketing and fund-raising and programming, is essential to making this project sing.

Ensuring that the logistics are in place is a really great place to start, making sure that you can easily have people come into your museum through this project, and that they are getting great customer service, just the same as every visitor, from the moment they come in the front desk to the moment that they leave.

Creating strategies and goals for each department I think is another really great way to build that institutional commitment, and working together as a team to organize around those strategies and goals. For instance, aligning the marketing with the fund-raising strategy around Museums for All can really help to leverage that platform for corporate sponsorship as a funding resource.

Creating fund-raising tools goes hand in hand with that former statement and recognition tools, opportunities for your organization to recognize the corporate partners or the individuals who are participating by supporting the Museums for All program.

And then finally, it's really important to seek support from

colleagues across the museum field. In the Association of Children's Museums, we are really lucky to have the association leading this initiative for us, and providing those connection points across museums across the country.

Thank you.

>> CHRIS REICH: Thanks so much, Gina, for sharing so many great ideas and perspectives from the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

Now we would like to introduce Charlayne Murrell-Smith and Kacy Hughes, to tell us about their experiences with Museums for All at the Boston Children's Museum.

>> Thank you, Chris. The mission of Boston Children's Museum is to engage children and families in joyful discovery experiences that instill an appreciation of our world, develop foundational skills and park a lifelong love of learning.

We support the Museums for All program in several ways, but the most important one is that we have a broad-based commitment to full access through sponsored admissions, because that is just who we are, and part of our long history.

In 2015, we had 400,092 visitors, and 103,000 of those were free or sponsored in part, and of those, 16,000 were EBT cardholders. This program is very successful. We do actually do some targeted fund-raising and have received foundation support for this program.

We also invest staff time in creating marketing materials to promote this program, and most every department promotes it in some way.

The community engagement teams is constantly promoting the EBT discount at every event and workshop and meeting that we go to, and of course our development team is always thinking about ways to raise money for it.

As a larger more established Children's Museum, Boston's Children's Museum has maintained a long-standing commitment to expand options and improve access for all children and families, so this long-standing commitment outweighs any concerns about adding the, what we know is the EBT program and now the Museums for All program to our menu. We have a 40-year history of maximizing accessibility through a variety of sponsors admission programs, and the EBT program that we launched as the first museum in Massachusetts in 2012 was the, became the hallmark of our sponsored visits programs. Most importantly, we raise funds for all of the sponsored visits programs to help underwrite our commitment to full access for all families interested in attending the museum. And we do this through a variety of initiatives. We have a corporate connections membership program, where the revenues from this annual, the annual membership of corporations goes to support sponsored visits. We

also solicit foundation support and specific corporate sponsorships in general, to support what ends up being between 28 to 30 percent of the annual attendance at the museum. We support at least a third of our attendance through free and discounted admissions.

There are a number of benefits to being part of this larger network, the Museums for All network. The first one is Boston Children's Museum has a lot of partners working toward alleviating the achievement gaps, which we really recognize as an experience gap. The Museums for All program allows us to offer experiences to families who might not ever have come to the museum or have been able to come as they wanted to.

The more museums that offer this program, the more children we can offer these skill building and curiosity inspiring experiences to.

And also, Children's Museums are really a first museum experience for a lot of children, and we are hoping to spark a love of museum-going and grow a generation of museum-goers to support all museums in the future. Museums for All allows us to tap into a audience who probably wouldn't have come to us before.

In Boston, we are very lucky to live in an area with many museums who are offering a discount with the EBT card. So that impact is shared. It isn't significant on one museum. And because of this discount program, we also have more organizations interested in collaborating with us, because of, the discount offers families they work with opportunities to come back to the museum again and again, affordably. Our EBT discount is \$2 per person.

Previously, we were able to offer sponsored visits to a variety of groups, but with this EBT program, the families can come back on their own again and again at any time that it's convenient for them. So it offers kind of a freedom and an incentive for museum-going.

Regarding the cost of promotion, we really, we have been in conversation with lots of museums in the area to promote this program together, which will maximize our resources and reach new audiences for each of us.

One of the biggest lessons Boston Children's Museum learned when it began what is now our Museums for All program in 2012, was that it was important for us to keep in mind that EBT is a government program, and recipients are very vulnerable population. When we began our program, we began it during a time when EBT in general was a source of controversy in the media, and so we worked very closely with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance to get our new admissions program up and going in a way that would be fully supported by

the public.

So we have been very thoughtful in selecting funders that will be appropriate matches for both the initiative, being a government initiative, and for the audience that is served. Currently, we have been successful in having a foundation support this program and continue to renew it on an annual basis.

And we are looking at a few corporate sponsors as additional supporters that, keeping in mind who they are, and how they will be perceived in relationship to this initiative.

So thank you very much from Boston Children's Museum.

>> CHRIS REICH: Thanks so much, Charlayne and Kacy, for sharing your insights and experiences. Thanks to all of you for listening today. Now Brendan Cartwright will share some closing comments, and information about how to register your museum for Museums for All.

>> BRENDAN CARTWRIGHT: Registering for Museums for All is very easy and free. There is a short registration format WWW.museums4all.org -- and that is the number 4 -- and quarterly attendance numbers and invite you to share stories and testimonials of your experiences. The website also has answers to some frequently asked questions, downloadable collateral in both English and Spanish, and is being updated all the time. You can also send questions you might have to info@museums4all.org.

Gina, Charlayne and Kacy have all generously provided their E-mails as well, if you would like to contact them with questions about something you have seen. Chris and I are also available at any time. Thanks for joining us today. Hopefully, you have seen how Museums for All can be extremely beneficial to both your community and to your museums. Thank you.

>> Recording stopped.

(end of webinar at 9:09 a.m. CST)

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