Nyirah remembers her sense of wonder, at age 5, when she first visited Pacific Science Center on a field trip with Seattle’s African American Academy. Now a college student, she still loves science and is studying pre-nursing while working and raising 4-year-old Layla, also a science enthusiast. Nyirah was happy to become a member of Pacific Science Center through our new, affordable Family Access program because it means she and her family can visit as often as they want.

“\text{When I walk into Pacific Science Center, I feel happy, like there’s going to be an adventure. What are we going to learn today? What are we going to see? A laser show, snakes, bees. You’re going to see a cool exhibit and it’s going to open your mind. I’m fascinated with how things work. That’s part of the reason I go; I’m a kid too! At her age (4), it’s all about experiencing. I’m always busy doing homework and work, but I make time for the Science Center because I feel it opens Layla’s mind to the world. It makes her adventurous. When Layla grows up, I don’t want her to think that just because she’s a girl, she has to have a “girl job”. When she says the word scientist, I want her to envision herself. I want her to think big. Lawyer, doctor, scientist, that’s all fine with me. As long as she goes far, I’ll be happy. Once you open that thing in their mind, it keeps them wondering, What’s next?”

WHY ENABLING ACCESS TO SCIENCE IS IMPORTANT
Everyone deserves the chance to ignite their curiosity and cultivate a passion for discovery, experimentation, and critical thinking. But for some families, a visit to Pacific Science Center is sometimes out of reach. We understand the importance of out of school learning experiences. These fun and engaging experiences can be vital to a student’s success in school and beyond. Expanding access to families in need is just one way the Pacific Science Center is working to combat the widening achievement gap.

Youth come to school from a variety of different backgrounds and experiences. Low-income households and at-risk youth often enter kindergarten less prepared than their middle-class counterparts and often lag behind in school throughout adolescence. For students who need extra support to be successful academically, what happens before and after school can be as important as what happens during the school day. Unfortunately, students who could benefit most from extended learning opportunities, like a visit to PacSci, are those that have fewer opportunities to participate in high quality, affordable extended learning programs.
FAMILY ACCESS MEMBERSHIP
Pacific Science Center provides all the benefits of regular membership to low-income families receiving public assistance, with each family contributing only $19/year. This allows a family in our community to experience interactive learning together; from 3D printing in Tinker Tank to exploring the Butterfly House, they’ll gain a shared excitement and wonder for the world around them.

YOUTH ACCESS MEMBERSHIP
Pacific Science Center provides all the benefits of regular membership to homeless and foster youth at no cost. Youth between 14 and 18 can receive free memberships in their names while foster caregivers can sign up for youth younger than 14. We also provide organizational Access Membership to nonprofits that work specifically with foster and at risk youth, so that our reach in these communities is further extended.

Over half of the guests staying at Mary’s Place shelters are children. We provide outlets for youth that reduce the stress and the burden of life in shelter with experiences that remind families of their connection and support in the wider community. Pacific Science Center has actively worked to reduce barriers and welcome in families experiencing homelessness. They have hosted regular group outings from our Kids Club programs, provided full scholarships for PacSci summer camps, and have created a system where families experiencing homelessness can access memberships. —James Flynn, Mary’s Place, Access Partner

We were homeless for 14 months. I’m struggling with words as I write this, because that $19 was so much money last year. But we did it because we knew our kids needed it. And they LOVED it. They learned about biology and physics. They made LEGO boats to be moved by wind. We love that they love to learn.” Family Access Member

COMBATING SUMMER LEARNING LOSS WITH SCIENCE SUMMER CAMPS
When school are out, PacSci summer camps are in. Campers gathered at eight locations in the Puget Sound area, and new technology camps offered hands-on experience in animation, graphic design, and coding to combat summer learning loss. A lack of access to summer learning opportunities continues to spread the achievement gap between lower and higher income students in our area. To fight this inequity, camp scholarships are offered each summer for children participating in our Family and Youth Access Membership programs.

Expanding access goes beyond just eliminating barriers to entry. PacSci has crafted experiences that are tailored to specific needs in the community.

An additional 41,000 people experienced a day long field trip to the Science Center this year. We are specifically focused on serving Title I schools, which are designated as such if they have 40% students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. This year we have 6,000 Title I students come to the Science Center on field trips.

One day each month, the Science Center opens its doors before opening or after closing, softening lighting and sound at our exhibits. In fiscal year 2019 we served over 850 guests through Exploration for All: Autism Early Open.

In addition to Exploration for All, we have 11 Sensory Friendly Summer Camps and Sensory Friendly Kits for daily use that provide, Ear Muffs, Ear Plugs, Fidget Spinners, Sunglasses, and much more, so that more experiences and programming are available on a daily basis.

We also trained more than 250 staff on how to make guests of all abilities feel welcomed, seen, heard, included, and safe, an effort that impacts every interaction on our exhibit floor.

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as a featured speaker
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