

# Family Learning Across the Nation



**A Workshop for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals**

*Sponsored by Institute for Museum & Library Services*

**Developed by the USS Constitution Museum**



# USS CONSTITUTION

- Active duty commissioned warship
- Undefeated in War of 1812
- Guided tours provided by USN sailors
- Located on Boston's Freedom Trail

# USS Constitution Museum

- Across the dock from “Old Ironsides”
- Free Admission
- 300,000+ Visitors / Year
- Family Audience
- Mission = memory & educational voice



# The Benefits of Embracing a Family Audience

- Expand your audience
- Build future museum visitation
- See people laughing and learning together
- Show visitors that museums can be engaging
- Perhaps even see the impact in the bottom line!



*Caution: it can be noisy, messy & very rewarding!*

# Is Family Learning Right for your Museum?

## 10 Steps to Encourage Family Learning

1. Get acquainted with your family visitors
2. Step into the shoes of your family visitor
3. Check out your exhibitions
4. View your program schedule
5. Reread your mission statement & goals
6. Reflect on your commitment
7. Strengthen your knowledge
8. Practice a family-friendly perspective
9. Revisit your exhibition
10. Reflect on your family-friendliness



# The Family Audience

*A survey of 5500 museum-going families by Reach Advisors*

## Bad News

History museums and historic sites are the least popular

- 31% visit historic sites
- 23% visit history museums



## Opportunities

Age of oldest child determines what museum to visit

- When oldest child enters elementary school, history rises

Grandparents are 20% more likely than parents to take children to a history museum

## The Appeal of History

- An authentic, hands-on, active experience for families
- See, touch, feel and experience it vs. book (just read about it)

# The Family Learning Project at the USS Constitution Museum

- Study successful models
- Prototype exhibit
- Extensive formative evaluation
- Visitor research
- Share results online

*“Conversation is the currency  
of family learning.”*

- Minda Borun, Franklin Institute



# IMLS National Leadership Grant Goals

- Study how families learn in unfacilitated galleries in history museums
- Encourage family learning through **CONVERSATION**
- Identify low-cost, low-tech interactive elements that can be replicated
- Disseminate effective techniques through website “tool kit”



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals

## Family Learning Across the Nation

- Share proven techniques
- Hands-on, minds-on exhibit elements
- Low-tech, low-cost interactives
- Steal these ideas!

**Idea Incubators**

**Share Successes**



# A New Strategy at the USS Constitution Museum



**The Museum will provide a hands-on minds-on environment where inter-generational groups seeking an enjoyable, educational experience can have fun and learn as they explore history together.**



## Share Successes!

Where do visitors laugh and learn together  
at your museum?