AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND HAHN February 6, 2024

Expanding Access to Educational Opportunities

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County have a host of educational resources to engage with students of all ages from across Los Angeles County. To bring these experiences to students who may not be able to easily access the museums, either because of finances or distance, the Natural History Museums launched their mobile museum program. These full sized semi-tractor trailers are transformed into fun, interactive experiences for students to explore onsite at their school or at local community events.

For many years, the program included two mobile museums: an archeology experience for 3rd to 5th grades and an ocean experience for 6th to 12th grades. The programs are free for students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) through funding donated by the Max H. Gluck Foundation. While the funding from the foundation is exceptionally generous and has enriched the lives of many LAUSD students, the parameters prevented those mobile museums from going to the other 79 school districts in the County. The Natural History Museums began a strategic expansion plan in 2018 with the approval of the Gluck Foundation, which made way for the mobile museums to begin serving other school districts in the County.

In fall 2023, the Natural History Museums opened a new La Brea Tar Pits mobile museum featuring the Ice Age for students in kindergarten to 2nd grade. The California Natural Resources Agency awarded the Natural History Museums with funding to support the mobile museum in its inaugural year. This museum can be scheduled for up to three classes a day at a given school and is staffed by two educators from the La Brea Tar Pits, who come equipped with educational materials to engage youth before and after their visit. The mobile museum encourages students to feel empowered to learn, play, and imagine while getting excited about making discoveries. Since this mobile museum is not limited to any school district, it is available to students in every area of the County.

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Connecting children to educational experiences through museums at an early age has proven long-term impacts. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than children who did not. These hands-on opportunities not only enrich students' learning in the present, but also set them up for success in the future.

Because the La Brea Tar Pits mobile museum is new, the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County are still getting the word out about this free program. For students, especially those who are not able to attend a field trip to The Natural History Museum or La Brea Tar Pits, or who do not attend an LAUSD school, the new mobile museum presents a terrific opportunity to bring exciting and hands-on learning directly to students.

While the mobile museums are targeted primarily for school settings, they are also available for communitywide use. It would be valuable, especially during summer months when schools are out of session, to partner with County parks and libraries and community-based organizations to bring all three mobile museums to public events for youth to enjoy at fairs, festivals, parks, libraries, and other community venues.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the director of the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County to:

1. Draft and disseminate a letter to school districts countywide sharing information on how to access the La Brea Tar Pits mobile museum, in consultation with the Los Angeles County Office of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture;

2. Create communications content, in partnership with Countywide Communications, to share with relevant County departments, including Arts and Culture, Children and Family Services, Parks and Recreation, Public Library, Public Social Services, and Military and Veterans Affairs, to let community organizations and residents know the mobile museum is available; and

3. Engage with the Center for Strategic Partnerships to explore philanthropic funding streams to support funding for the La Brea Tar Pits mobile museum program.

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