

FOOD AS DISCOVERY

Curating Culinary Experience for Mission Alignment



A Case Study of *FoodShed* at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
March 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose extends its heartfelt gratitude to the following visionary partners who have worked with us on our decade-long journey to establishing our unique role in fighting childhood obesity in our community. Through their financial support, health education expertise, and volunteers, they have contributed to CDM's knowledge and understanding of the causes of childhood obesity and helped shape our innovative approaches towards solutions.

FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
Kaiser Permanente
Santa Clara County Department of Public Health
The Health Trust

This report was made possible by a generous grant from
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Written by:

Marilee Jennings, Executive Director, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
Wendy Weiden, Food Consultant, Karen Karp & Partners

Designed by:

Ben Kerrick, Consultant, Karen Karp & Partners
Brittany Waxman, Executive Assistant, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Published by:

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
180 Woz Way
San Jose, CA 95110
(408) 298-5437
www.cdm.org

An electronic copy of this report and an Executive Summary can be found at:
<https://www.cdm.org/learn-create/for-the-field/project-evaluations/>

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleague,

The opening of *FoodShed* at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose was three years in the making. It was possible because of visionary funders, expert consultants, and a Board of Directors with a clear and powerful mandate: reimagine the role of food in our Museum in order to nourish children's bodies so that they are ready to meet the physical, cognitive and emotional challenges of the Museum's 150+ interactive educational exhibits.

In hindsight, the path to reimagining the role of food in the Museum's pedagogy mirrored that of developing a major new interactive exhibition designed to inspire children's curiosity and deep investigation of important educational content. The first phase included defining the problem and opportunity, gathering data from our audience and other organizations, and securing the human and financial resources to vision the project fully. This was followed by prototyping, where we were fully engaged in pilot offerings that helped us figure out what our audience would respond to positively, define how it would fit in with the other museum exhibits and spaces, and identify an aesthetic that communicated goals and invited participation. Finally, the last phase involved bringing the project to fruition, completing summative evaluation, and compiling and analyzing results.

It was through this process that the biggest lesson was learned: in order to play a truly meaningful role in fighting childhood obesity,

the Museum's cafe had to become more than a visitor amenity perceived to have lesser value than exhibit and programmatic experiences. We realized that as a trusted Museum partner in supporting children's lives and learning for 25 years, we needed to put the depth and breadth of creativity and the quality of workmanship that characterizes our exhibits and educational programs into reinventing the visitor experience with food.

"We needed to put the depth and breadth of creativity and the quality of workmanship that characterizes our exhibits and educational programs into reinventing the visitor experience with food."

This report is designed to help other museums and family-serving attractions join in the effort to serve healthy food to families. We have documented our process – successes and challenges – and pulled to the forefront

some of the remarkable members of our community who were early adopters and ardent supporters. We are hopeful that you will be able to use the resources provided to move more quickly and efficiently based upon the learning we have shared.

I am truly humbled by the extraordinary support of key stakeholders in creating *FoodShed* and grateful to The David & Lucile Packard Foundation for supporting the development of this case study to enable others to begin similar work in their institutions.

Sincerely,



Marilee Jennings
Executive Director

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
A Letter from the Executive Director	3
About CDM	5
Case Study	6
Inception	6
Visioning	10
Transition	15
Implementation.....	22
<i>FoodShed's</i> Future.....	25
Keys to Success.....	26



ABOUT CDM

CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY MUSEUM OF SAN JOSE

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, California (CDM) opened its doors to the public in 1990 to serve the needs of children, families, and schools as a center for learning and discovery. The Museum's signature 52,000 square foot facility, designed by world-renowned Mexico City-based architect Ricardo Legorreta, signals the importance of its powerful vision: to equip today's children to become tomorrow's visionaries. With a mission to inspire creativity, curiosity, and lifelong learning, CDM's core values are reflected throughout the Museum and include

a commitment to excellence and integrity; understanding and responding to children's developmental needs, learning styles, and diverse cultures; and the essential role of play and inquiry in children's healthy development. Educational programming reflects strategic commitments in ten areas, including childhood obesity prevention and environmental stewardship. Visitors number approximately 400,000 per year and reflect a broad range of cultures, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds. The exhibits are oriented to children ages 2-8 years old.



FOOD AS DISCOVERY: A CASE STUDY

"It was the proverbial lightbulb moment. Here I was, standing in front of the Museum's cafe with one of our longtime funders and strongest advocate for our programmatic efforts to reduce childhood obesity. And right in front of us, every customer was purchasing chips, hotdogs, and soda – for their kids and themselves. I was deeply humiliated and sickened by it all and decided right then and there that things had to change."

–Marilee Jennings, Executive Director, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

INCEPTION

In 2012, when Jennings experienced the moment described above, CDM was nearly a decade into programming about healthy eating and active living as a participant in community-wide efforts to reduce the spiraling trend of childhood obesity. In-depth partnerships had been developed with key leaders in the health arena including Kaiser Permanente, Santa Clara County Public Health Department, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and The Health Trust. These partners helped CDM staff learn important nutrition and physical activity information that needed to be shared with parents, enabling the Museum to create fun, interactive ways to engage families with the content. Given the Museum's diverse audience base, this was an especially important undertaking for CDM, as childhood obesity and other diet-related diseases disproportionately impact children of lower socioeconomic status and non-white races and ethnicities.

Over the years, these partners and CDM jointly hosted large-scale events to spread their messages, created educational

programs for schools and childcare settings, developed an interactive curriculum that was published in the *San Jose Mercury News*, and even created a set of fruit and vegetable characters with trading cards that children could earn by making and keeping the *Healthy Eating Pledge*.

In addition to those efforts, when the idea to re-imagine the cafe was sparked, there were two major exhibit and program galleries related to food and healthy living already in place at the Museum:

1. The *Rainbow Market* exhibit provided an opportunity for children to role-play a day of healthy living by selecting produce at the farmers' market and then preparing meals in a pretend family kitchen and food truck. In the 2,000 square foot exhibit, activities supported children and families in learning to "eat a rainbow" of five or more different-colored fruits and vegetables every day and choosing to drink water rather than soda and sugary beverages.



Marilee Jennings
Executive Director
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Marilee Jennings has been the Executive Director of Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, California since 2008, responsible for fulfilling the Museum's mission to bring innovative interactive learning opportunities to the diverse children and families of Silicon Valley while stewarding plans for the Museum's continued development and world-wide

reputation as a leading children's museum. Her vision for the role of food in the Museum was fully realized in 2015 with the opening of *FoodShed*, a 2,000 square foot café that also serves as an educational program space. With the goal of helping children understand what healthy food is and where it comes from, *FoodShed* culminates the Museum experiences of role-playing shopping at a farmers' market in the *Rainbow Market* exhibit and seeing how produce grows in *Kids' Garden* with the opportunity to taste colorful fruits and vegetables firsthand.

2. Just beyond that exhibit and through the glass doors to the outdoors, *Kids' Garden*, with its five giant raised beds surrounded by fruit trees and grape vines, introduced children to growing food, composting, and the important role of bees. In this space, children investigated firsthand how the foods they eat are grown. The experiences offered built upon compelling research which demonstrated that when children participate in growing their own food, whether at home or beyond, they eat more fruits and vegetables and are more willing to try new foods.

CDM's food operation, *Kids' Cafe*, stood at the literal intersection of the facility's two main ground floor corridors, in one corner of the *Main Street* exhibit: a busy, high-traffic location complete with authentic stoplights and crosswalks and crowned by a two-story atrium. Though central, *Kids' Cafe's* kitchen and eating area lacked compelling architectural elements to define the cafe space, giving it the feel of a snack bar at a ballpark. Children, adults, and strollers flowed willy-nilly throughout, which enabled easy maneuvering for the adults but distracted children by allowing them to see the engaging exhibits from their tables. The lack of space definition also prevented the cafe from imparting a distinct message other than the impressions conveyed by racks of chips, a pizza warmer, and a large soda dispenser on the counter.

Seeing with New Eyes

In early spring 2012, as Jennings stood with the funder, she saw the cafe with new eyes. Since the Museum's opening 25 years earlier, the cafe had been run by another local non-profit organization, whose mission was to provide job training for developmentally disabled adults. At that time, the organization operated multiple sandwich shops around San Jose. Given its purpose of integrating disabled adults into the workplace, having them provide food service in the new Museum was a mutually beneficial arrangement. The menu at *Kids' Cafe* was comparable to many eating establishments at that time and relied heavily on frozen, canned, and highly processed foods.

When a collective community effort was launched to address the regional childhood obesity problem in the mid-2000s, CDM reached out to Santa Clara County's Public Health Department for help and guidance coming up with strategies to improve the healthfulness and nutritional quality of the menu. CDM supported the cafe partner in implementing recommended changes by securing funding from long-term partners including Kaiser Permanente and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County to add refrigeration for fresh salads and fruit cups; to redesign and produce a new menu board that clearly labeled healthy choices; and to compensate the cafe for financial losses incurred when



Frederick J. Ferrer
Chief Executive Officer
The Health Trust

Ferrer is a nationally recognized expert in child development and nonprofit leadership strategies and an active community leader in Silicon Valley for more than 30 years.

Prior to joining The Health Trust, Ferrer headed his own national consulting firm working with nonprofit organizations and specializes in effective strategies to work

with families. Previously he was the Executive Director of Estrella Family Services in San Jose for 19 years.

He is the past chair and commissioner of the FIRST 5 Commission of Santa Clara County and a Board Member of Rocketship Charter Elementary Schools. He received the coveted John Gardner Leadership Award from the American Leadership Forum in addition to numerous awards for his leadership in child development, health, and human services.

asked to eliminate soda. However, as CDM's desire to offer fresher, healthier foods and beverages grew, the situation became untenable for the operator, who had already been struggling with the financial sustainability of the cafe. Adding the complexity of significant menu changes became too difficult for the staff to manage.

Frederick Ferrer, CEO of The Health Trust, a nationally respected, locally-based advocate for and funder of nutrition and health-related initiatives, surveyed the scene when Jennings approached him for support for yet more educational programs related to healthy eating – the reason he was meeting with her on the day referenced above. “Marilee,” he observed matter-of-factly, “You will never be able to achieve your goals around nutrition and healthy living until you change the food offered at this cafe.”

Vision to Mission – and Back Again

Jennings knew that Ferrer was right, and she knew from her years of experience working with the County Public Health Department exactly what needed to change. She didn't need the swell of reports on rising obesity rates, sugar toxicity, and soda impacts, nor conversely, the proliferation of farmers'

markets, fresh salad shops, or healthy eating initiatives to prove to her that the food at the cafe could be fresher, healthier, and more delicious. Nor did she need anyone to tell her that the cafe experience could be more fun, engaging, and, importantly, inspiring.

She, perhaps more than anyone, recognized that the cafe operator ran its own business, and while it was under the Museum's roof, Jennings had little control or influence over it. In fact, her ideas and the resources she worked hard to garner for them were met with the often-heard rejoinders: “Oh, people won't buy healthy food,” and “Every time we try fresh produce, we just end up throwing it away.” She needed help figuring out how to offer a healthy approach to food that would generate a sustainable profit for the operator. She

confided in Ferrer her deepest concern: she hadn't actually found a role model in the children's museum field that demonstrated a compelling – and profitable - case for healthy food service. She desperately needed a business plan that she could build upon. With funding and a referral from Ferrer, Jennings called Karen Karp of Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P), a nationally recognized food consultancy based in New York City. KK&P supports the healthy development, execution, and operations of food businesses and

“You will never be able to achieve your goals around nutrition and healthy living until you change the food offered at this cafe.”



Karen Karp
President
Karen Karp & Partners

Karen Karp is an enlightened entrepreneur and respected consultant with over 25 years of experience. Since founding Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P) in 1990, she has led the organization to become the nation's leading problem-solver for food-related enterprises, programs and policies. Based in New York City with a West Coast-based team member, KK&P works with clients from the government, business and non-profit sectors across the

country to plan, execute and evaluate comprehensive food system strategies.

KK&P works all along the food chain—from production to processing to distribution, and from procurement to policy—for measurable outcomes. Clients have included New York State Department of Agriculture and the USDA, New York City Department of Health, Louisville Metro Government, and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In addition to *FoodShed*, KK&P's efforts in San Jose can be seen in the *Fresh Carts*, which provide employment opportunities and access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

initiatives in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and having just completed a project for The Health Trust, was familiar with San Jose and greater Santa Clara County. Karp and Jennings met in the spring of 2012 for a tour of the cafe and initial discussion of Jennings' vision. Jennings felt passionately that the cafe offered an opportunity to highlight the region's rich agrarian past (Silicon Valley had been known as the *Valley of Heart's Delight* in the early 20th century), while also leveraging the burgeoning trend in urban farming in San Jose and surrounding cities. She saw great promise in using ethnic cuisine as a way to continue to draw diverse audiences to the Museum, and recognized that First Lady Michelle Obama's work to put children's health on the national agenda through the White House garden and *Let's Move!* campaign would help demonstrate that the Museum was ideally positioned to create a breakthrough strategy for serving healthy food to families.

Jennings explained to Karp that CDM had key visitor experiences already in place that would

provide an excellent foundation for new food service priorities: carry the message to "eat a rainbow every day" from the *Rainbow Market* exhibit into the cafe; continue the exploration of where food comes from in *Kids' Garden*; and focus the menu around fresh, seasonal, locally grown produce of cultural relevance to the Museum's visitors. And – emphatically – Jennings declared, *NO SODA!* The operation would need to be sustainable without those high-profit sales.

"If Marilee wanted to use the cafe as a means to 'engage and inspire' kids and their families, she couldn't have chosen a better place for it."

In that first meeting, Jennings sheepishly noted the "awkward placement" of the cafe, in her mind in the midst of the immersive, energetic, exhibit-based experiences, but Karp immediately seized upon the possibilities it presented. The prominent location – right in the center of the Museum, across from the *Rainbow Market* exhibit, and next door to the garden entrance – was a huge opportunity for CDM to embrace its cafe and make it a core, central part of the Museum visit. Karp noted, "If Marilee wanted to use the cafe as a means to "engage and inspire" kids and their families, she couldn't have chosen a better place for it."



Wendy Weiden
Consultant

Wendy Weiden is a food systems expert with a focus on using multi-sector strategies and collaboration to fuel innovation. She has worked with a diverse set of clients to develop, launch, and support sustainable, financially viable programs and products; her passion lies with exploring the intersection of economic, social, and health benefits that come from more robust regional food networks. For Karen Karp & Partners,

Wendy's projects are both national and West Coast-based, including, most recently, the visioning, planning, and launch of *FoodShed*, the innovative new cafe at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose.

In addition to her consulting work, Wendy is an adjunct faculty member at Presidio Graduate School, where she teaches an innovative, intersectoral approach to solving intractable sustainability challenges and is developing a new food systems certificate program focusing on cross-sector strategic thinking. She also teaches classes on food and business entrepreneurship.

VISIONING

Karp began her work by synthesizing the multi-faceted case that Jennings had presented into a compelling one-sentence mission statement that became the basis of funding proposals and advocacy for the project. It read:

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose will foster healthy relationships to and behaviors with food for children and their families in ways that inspire, delight, and educate them about what healthy food is, where it comes from, how it can be prepared, and why it's important.

With this mission in hand, the KK&P team, led by local project manager Wendy Weiden, began its work by helping Jennings understand the landscape of both children's institutional food service and possibilities for expanding CDM's conception of food and related programming. Research techniques included:

- site visits and interviews with other institutions (child-oriented and other);
- research related to children's food programming and initiatives regionally and nationally;

- analysis of related food opportunities including catering, events, and retail; and
- business and financial modeling.

Within a few months, the KK&P team had developed several alternative pictures of the future of food at CDM. While the business models differed, each scenario involved the same commitment to using the cafe as the anchor for engaging children and their families with fresh, healthy food. The cafe would become the focal point of CDM's institutional commitment to embodying the practices and behaviors it championed: a space where a colorful array of fresh

ingredients (some, hopefully, grown in the garden) could be seen, cooked with, and tasted.

As Karp explained, "It's very difficult for most museum food service to make money if it is not

also open to the public, which is the case at CDM. The audience is limited, the traffic varies by day of the week and month of the year, and the constraints are significantly higher than for a typical restaurant. However, with Jennings' dedication to having the cafe exemplify aspects of CDM's mission, a critical difference for this space emerged: this would

"A critical difference for this space emerged: this would be a programmatic space, as much as any of the other exhibits were."

be a programmatic space, as much as any of the other exhibits were. As such, fundraising to support development and programming within and related to it became completely valid, as it would be with any other exhibit space. That shift in thinking proved critical in helping internal and external stakeholders – particularly finance-conscious board members – get behind the project.”

Building Key Stakeholder Buy-In

With the modeling and visioning process complete, Jennings was starting to get a good picture of what was both possible and sustainable. KK&P’s analysis had shown that the best option, both financially and operationally, was to contract with a mission-aligned operator to run CDM’s food service *and* to support the Museum’s food-related programming (cooking classes, demos, tastings) as it developed. Jennings knew that before proceeding, she needed to gain the support of CDM’s Board of Directors. Changing the food service would entail both divesting the Museum from a 25-year partnership with the current operator (and potential negative publicity because of that decision) as well as a significant capital outlay to update and improve the kitchen and dining area. KK&P’s report estimated a minimum of \$300-\$400K for capital improvements in order for the cafe to generate the kind of engaging, holistic experience envisioned.

Food Service Reconsidered: From Profit Center to Programmatic Space

KK&P’s recommendations, while highlighting the capital needs and programmatic possibilities of a re-imagined food program, were modest in their projection of anticipated

revenue from the cafe. The previous cafe operator had not been able to provide much data about sales, so KK&P built models based on knowledge of comparable institutions, industry averages, and reasonable estimates. Further, CDM’s contract with the previous operator specified that the Museum would get a percent of profits in lieu of rent, but the cafe had never actually been profitable – so CDM had never collected any revenue from it.

KK&P suggested an entirely new way of thinking and proposed a partnership model, in which CDM received a percent of gross revenue from the cafe and catering sales. It

The revenue share approach created an incentive for both partners to deliver on their respective roles.

was forecast as enough to cover the Museum’s overhead for the space (e.g. utilities, security, janitorial, administration, etc.) and supported the notion of joint partnership

and collaboration. The revenue share approach created an incentive for both partners to deliver on their respective roles: CDM was to promote the cafe and bring in as many visitors as possible, and the cafe operator was to deliver delicious, appealing food and excellent service.

Enlisting the Board

While providing a realistic illustration of the challenges and expenses of operating a cafe in this setting, Karp cautioned Board Members against viewing the cafe as a strong potential profit center. She reminded them that CDM sought to create opportunities for children to taste, enjoy, and interact with healthy food both during and after their Museum visits. She reinforced that just like the Museum’s fee-based outreach programs, profits were only one metric of success for the goals of food service at CDM.



Raj Bhandari, M.D.
Physician-in-Chief
Kaiser Permanente San Jose

Dr. Bhandari joined The Permanente Medical Group, San Jose in 1983 and is board certified in Neurology. Recognized as one of the top Neurologists in the Valley, in August, 2003 he was appointed Physician-in-Chief and Chief of Staff at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center overseeing San Jose and Gilroy and serving over 220,000 Kaiser Permanente

health plan members, some 450 physicians and 2,000 staff. In 2005 he was selected by the California Health Care Foundation as a fellow to better understand and fulfill the healthcare needs of all Californians in partnership with key community and business stakeholders. His community service includes serving on the Children's Discovery Museum volunteer board (2005-Present) and Medical Advisory Board SOMOS Mayfair. He has also served on the Santa Clara County INSPIRE leadership group overseeing a federal grant for Obesity prevention and Smoking Cessation.

During the key Board Retreat in March 2013, at which the decision to move forward with the cafe project – or not – would be made, Karp presented her team's full findings and recommendations. Before she had gotten halfway through the presentation, a key Board Member – and one Jennings had thought would be the toughest sell due to the financial risk inherent in projects of this nature – was asking whether discussion needed to continue, as this seemed to be such an obvious, important step for CDM.

"If we really want to move the needle on reducing childhood obesity in this community, we have to enlist the kids in knowing about and wanting healthy foods. CDM is uniquely positioned to do just that."

Dr. Raj Bhandari, Physician-in-Chief of Kaiser Permanente and Member of CDM's Board of Directors, advocated strongly, "If we really want to move the needle on reducing childhood obesity in this community, we have to enlist the kids in knowing about and wanting healthy foods. CDM is uniquely positioned to do just that."

The Board's transition from viewing CDM's role in children's learning about healthy food as peripheral to essential had been made!

Gathering Resources

With the Board's support confirmed, the agenda was clear: reframe the cafe experience to embrace the goals of offering fresh fruits and vegetables and engaging

children. When Jennings approached the cafe operator about the new direction, they decided not to renew their contract with the Museum at the end of the year, leaving Jennings with the need to recruit a new food service company which could take over food service even before the cafe had been renovated.

Resources provided by key Board Members proved critical at this point. One, who represented a local foundation, recommended to Jennings that she

renew the contract with KK&P to act as project consultants and managers for the duration of the transition and implementation phases. Jennings recalls, "I remember clearly what she told me. 'Marilee, this is going to be a wonderful project, but how on earth are you going to manage it? You're a museum director with a full plate, not a restaurant operator. I suggest that you focus on figuring out how to make this transition work for the community and the staff, and let the Board find the resources that you are going to need to make all of this happen.'"

With a grant in hand from the foundation, CDM contracted with KK&P to help oversee the transition to the new cafe, including developing a process to search for and vet



Cecilia Garibay, PhD
Principal
Garibay Group

Garibay Group is an audience research and evaluation firm, and Cecilia spends her time working with museums to help them better understand their visitors and communities. Most of her work focuses on exhibits and programs in informal learning environments, particularly those aimed at reaching underrepresented audiences. Another area of her research focuses on inclusion and organizational change in museums. She brings a bilingual/ bicultural perspective to her

work and specializes in culturally responsive/contextually relevant research and evaluation approaches.

Garibay has led numerous research and evaluation projects, including initiatives funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Science Foundation.

Her 20 years of research and evaluation experience also includes working with non-profit organizations, foundations, and corporations.

candidates to operate the cafe who were both experienced and mission-aligned. Another Board Member leveraged his company’s large public relations contract with a high profile agency that agreed to take CDM on as a pro-bono client, developing a plan to handle any negative feedback related to the end of the existing cafe partnership with the non-profit operator. And Jennings began working with the Board to create a financial plan for the cafe renovation and development of educational programming.

To support the fundraising effort and refine the goals for a new food service, Jennings commissioned an experienced evaluator to conduct a series of in-depth interviews and conversations with Museum visitors (both children and caregivers). The goals were twofold:

- 1) to better understand families’ needs, desires, and relationships to food and cooking; and
- 2) to gather input on what parents perceived CDM’s role could and should be in fostering healthy behaviors.

The findings showed nearly universal support for CDM taking a more active role in teaching children and families about where and how food is grown and prepared, what makes food healthy (or not), and providing better quality, healthier food choices in the cafe. These insights validated Jennings’ previous beliefs and helped strengthen the foundation upon which CDM’s food mission was being built.

The top 5 findings regarding parents’ perceptions of CDM’s role in supporting healthy eating were:

- Showing children where food comes from
- Providing experiences and programs related to food preparation
- Relaying information about food nutrition and science
- Helping children understand the process by which commercial food is made
- Providing healthier options at the CDM cafe

Evaluator Garibay Group’s full report can be found at <https://www.cdm.org/learn-create/for-the-field/project-evaluations/>





Jolene Smith
Chief Executive Officer
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County

Since the passage of Proposition 10 in 1998, Jolene has been instrumental in establishing FIRST 5 as an organization that supports the healthy development of children prenatal through age five. She has been recognized for leadership in ensuring that the healthy development of our youngest children is viewed as a high priority in the County. She has worked collaboratively to tackle such challenging issues as children's health

insurance, literacy, high-quality early childhood education, model court programs, among others and has worked closely with policymakers to improve the lives of our community's youngest.

As a major partner with Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, she has provided resources for early learning in art, science, and literacy, supporting the social, emotional and cognitive development of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. FIRST 5's book and beloved character, *Potter the Otter: A Tale About Water*, was the inspiration behind the Museum's decision to eliminate sugary beverages.

Assembling the Financial Puzzle

Long-term funders who had supported CDM's previous efforts to promote healthy eating and active living were thrilled by CDM's new imperative.

Jolene Smith, Executive Director of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, was an early adopter of the campaign against sugary beverages and initiated the development and publication of a children's book to excite young children about the importance of drinking water. This bi-lingual book, *Potter the Otter: A Tale About Water*, features a lovable furry otter as its central character and his quest to convince his animal friends to drink water rather than juice, punch and soda.

The agency also produced a character costume, and actors circulated throughout the community dressed as *Potter the Otter* and distributed the book. Audiences at CDM loved *Potter* appearances and book readings by the author, and one day CDM had the idea to create an interactive play based upon the story. With support from FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, CDM wrote and produced a *prequel* to the book in drama form, which highlighted why *Potter the Otter* loves to drink water and engaged family audiences in a deeper understanding of water as the healthiest beverage choice. Families packed CDM's Theatre for performances and celebrated *Potter's* learning about the benefits of drinking water.

When CDM made the decision to eliminate sugary drinks from its cafe menu and feature water, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County sponsored *Potter the Otter*-branded reusable cups and twirly straws as take-aways for children to remind them to drink water. Inspired by the goals for a new café, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County subsequently granted resources for CDM to develop a *Potter* play about healthy eating!



Potter the Otter



Ken Yeager
County Board of Supervisors, District 4
Santa Clara County

Yeager was first elected County Supervisor in 2006 after six years on the San Jose City Council. He is well known as a strong supporter of public health, and a champion for preventive health measures such as efforts to fight the obesity epidemic in the County. He has been an important advocate for expanding parks and trails as effective

incentives for increasing physical activity and a proponent of adopting healthy food practices in all County-funded facilities.

As the Chair of the Board of Supervisors' Health and Hospital Committee, he is aware of the health issues facing the County's population and of the public institutions providing services. He also serves as the Chair of the California State Association of Counties' Health and Human Services Committee and is a member of the FIRST 5 Commission of Santa Clara County.

Additional funding from sources interested in a fresh approach to childhood nutrition and obesity were cultivated as well, including Santa Clara County, which had never provided financial support to the Museum before. County Supervisor Ken Yeager, a highly visible, longtime advocate for children's health, proved to be an enthusiastic ally of the project, noting "Changing dietary habits and teaching kids and families healthy behavior is a long-term challenge and goal. If we can use non-traditional places—such as civic spaces and child- and family-focused places and destinations— to help with that, it's a great, new opportunity. I was thrilled to hear that Marilee was taking this on, and supporting it definitely fit within Santa Clara County's priorities."

"Changing dietary habits and teaching kids and families healthy behavior is a long-term challenge and goal. If we can use non-traditional places—such as civic spaces and child- and family-focused places and destinations—to help with that, it's a great, new opportunity. "

Beyond CDM's most committed partners, however, fundraising proved to be a difficult challenge. Not only was it for capital support, which is not popular locally, CDM was raising money for a renovation project that would be operated as a for-profit endeavor by a third party. Many prospective donors offered support for the educational programming components, but shied away from a gift for the design and construction.

CDM's Board, which believed that a renovation of the existing space was necessary in order to successfully roll out a new approach to food service for families, debated options for moving forward, including local non-profit lending agencies with

programs for this type of endeavor.

Ultimately the Board decided to advance the funds needed from the Museum's Board-Designated Reserves and repay it by exercising its Spending Policy on the permanent endowment, which CDM had never used

before. It will take five years to repay the Board-Designated Reserves.

TRANSITION

Buy-In Beyond the Board

Achieving the vision of fresh, healthy, delicious food service and related programming was a major undertaking not just for Jennings, but for the rest of CDM's staff too. From the moment the project was green-lighted by the Board, Jennings was thinking of when and how to tell the staff of the upcoming changes, including the departure of the existing operator. Many of the developmentally disabled staff had worked at the cafe training site for nearly two

decades, so the leaders of the two organizations worked out a plan together: the existing partner would stay on board until the new operator was ready to take over in order to create a smooth transition. The Museum and its cafe partner would announce the change together shortly before the new operator took over.

Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Jennings, the cafe partner decided to announce the change right away, rather than in six months as agreed, forcing her to inform the Museum staff well before a new vendor had been selected. The uncertainty of who would run the cafe, along with speculation that a renovation could result in significant disruption to the Museum's floor and increase demands upon an already-stretched internal facilities team, caused anxiety for both Jennings and the rest of the CDM staff. While all of that deepened her conviction to make the new cafe a resounding success, Jennings had to work hard to build excitement and buy-in, with only a promise of good food to come!

Critically, Jennings recruited Donna Butcher, CDM's Manager of Sales and Business Development, to help her oversee the project. Butcher's position managing the facility rental program and special events gave her a unique perspective on the role of food in the visitor experience, both during regular hours and after, in the context of private parties. Butcher proved to be an excellent advisor on the many decisions that followed, from logo design to furniture selection, and was also a knowledgeable and helpful resource throughout the cafe's interim service (during construction) and after *FoodShed* opened. Her ability to decipher visitor experiences and staff comments and to relay important

information to front-line staff proved to be invaluable.

RFP – Request for “Partner”

KK&P's highest priority was to find the food service operator, and they issued a detailed, invitation-only RFP to a number of pre-screened potential partners. Given that the right partner was key to the cafe's success, Weiden had been searching for potential operators throughout the fundraising process, via word-of-mouth referrals, research into

KK&P's highest priority was to find the food service operator, and they issued a detailed, invitation-only RFP to a number of pre-screened potential partners.

other comparable institutions, and ongoing networking. With the significant renovation that would take place in the coming months and without detailed financial records from the previous operator, the opportunity called for a unique collaboration

between a progressive food partner and CDM, one in which both parties were willing to embrace the unknown and learn together as the design, buildout, and food service itself evolved.

Articulating CDM's mission and goals as they related to the cafe operations was a critical part of writing the RFP, as it was essential that the operator both believe in and be able to execute on them. KK&P also highlighted the unique elements that CDM brought to this partnership, including the investment of financial and human resources needed to build an innovative, engaging kitchen and dining space and an ongoing strategic commitment to promoting the importance – and fun – of healthy eating and related activities such as gardening and cooking.

Of the nine prospective partners, three submitted formal written proposals. Each articulated a unique approach to operating the cafe, with differing degrees of commitment to CDM's educational goals



Nicole Jacobi
Owner and Executive Chef
Gourmet Lunch

Jacobi has been cooking since she was 10 years old. Her innate joy for food comes from her heritage growing up in the villages of northern Germany. She founded her Menlo Park-based catering company *Gourmet Lunch* realizing that businesses

were looking for healthy, delicious and contemporary options for catering.

Passionate about good food and the mother of twins, she was drawn to the opportunity to create a new approach to food service at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose. Nicole draws her inspirations from California's many great restaurants, ethnic cuisines and abundance of locally-grown fruits and vegetables and showcases her love for food at *FoodShed*.

about healthy eating and with varied levels of prior experience. The submitting entities ranged from a food service management company specifically targeting children's museums, to a local company operating the cafe at a neighboring science museum, to the founder and owner of a local catering company. CDM and KK&P agreed that the latter, Nicole Jacobi, would be an excellent partner in running the cafe. The mother of then-six-year old twins, Jacobi was a champion of fresh, uncomplicated food in her catering business; an ardent believer in involving her own children in cooking, tasting, and eating; and she shared the mission and values CDM's cafe would embody. She was thrilled at the opportunity to be able to help other families eat and experience fresh, seasonal, from-scratch food. *She said*, "When I take my kids out to an event or a fun outing, it can be so hard to find good food not only for them, but for me! I love cooking good, healthy, fresh food, and helping my kids to love to do it too is one of the best parts of being a parent. Getting a chance to build my own business within CDM, and with a partner like Marilee, was a really exciting opportunity for me."

While one of the other candidates had superior prior experience and the other brought financial backing and a fully developed brand, the synergy between Jacobi and Jennings was palpable, and her food was both aesthetically beautiful and delicious. In late summer 2014, Jacobi and CDM signed

an agreement for her to take over food service at the Museum, first running an "interim cafe" while the design and buildout of the cafe renovation occurred, and then coming on full-time when construction was completed.

Building a Scaffold for Success

As the internal team coalesced, local KK&P project manager Weiden began the search for the other external partners that would help transform the food service at CDM. While CDM typically designs and builds its exhibits with its in-house master crafts-people and designers, Jennings realized that the cafe's central location within a Ricardo Legorreta signature building, coupled with the significance of the goals of the new food program, called for a highly skilled architect.





Hans Baldauf
Principal
Baldauf Catton Von Eckartsberg Architects

A San Francisco native and a graduate of the Yale School of Architecture, Hans is an architect with a long standing interest in the public realm. This interest has led him to pursue a wide variety of project types which at their core enliven the public realm, including mixed use urban projects, grand market halls and projects as small as flower stands and bus shelters. A LEED accredited professional, Hans

is also a strong advocate of a wider vision of sustainability which incorporates inspiration from the tenets of the Slow Food Movement. The combination of the celebratory aspects of Slow Food which constitutes “good” and its insistence with “clean” and “fair” rounds out the more technical aspects of the LEED rating system. Hans has also been active in the Bay Area arts and architecture community serving on various boards including the Friends of the Bancroft Library, The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture, and as chairman of the Maybeck Foundation.

KK&P helped Jennings understand and articulate that for the Museum to ensure that *FoodShed* was seamlessly integrated into the overall Museum experience, rather than an afterthought or someone else’s business, CDM needed to own the design and aesthetic as well as major equipment, furnishings, and the brand identity. The food operator would provide culinary expertise, operating prowess, and stellar customer service. This split in responsibility would be designed to create a true partnership from the outset – as well as protect CDM’s new investment for the future.

Weiden called upon her Bay Area network to identify mission-aligned experts who not only understood CDM’s mission, but were energized and inspired to bring it life. Foremost among these was architect Hans Baldauf, Principal at BCV Architects, a renowned Bay Area firm. Baldauf brought a particular experience with and affinity for food-related spaces, having overseen the redesign of San Francisco’s Ferry Plaza Market and numerous other restaurants, market halls, and food retailer establishments.

A strong proponent of “Slow Food” and sustainable values, Baldauf was the perfect collaborator to help Jennings further refine

her vision not only for food at CDM, but for how the cafe fit within the broader mission of the Museum. “My job was to help the visitors, whether kids or adults, understand the experience they are having while eating at the cafe, but also – and maybe more importantly – to understand how that cafe experience is a part of the larger conversation they are having

Ultimately, I think we were very successful in creating a space – and an identity – that visitors can experience on multiple levels, from just a tasty lunch to the start of larger inquiry about where food comes from and how it is made.”

about the world around them while they are in the Museum or in the garden,” said Baldauf. “Marilee was clear that she wanted the cafe to be both part of and defined separately from the Main Street, and so that gave us a good starting point for design options. Ultimately, I think we were very

successful in creating a space – and an identity – that visitors can experience on multiple levels, from just a tasty lunch to the start of larger inquiry about where food comes from and how it is made.”

An essential element of the cafe experience fell into place when a name was selected for the new cafe. In a process led by Dave Braden of *The Engine Room*, a design and branding firm, and Weiden, the name *FoodShed* quickly rose to the top. Initial design concepts had promoted the region’s history of agriculture and featured walls covered with paneling made from authentic,



Dan Amend
CDM Board Member

As President of Toeniskoetter Construction, Dan and his team develop high-quality tenant improvement projects and oversee the projects from inception to completion, including *FoodShed*. He has more than 15 years of experience working in management at Toeniskoetter.

Dan sits on the Board of Directors of the Associated General Contractors of California Santa Clara District, is Vice President of the

Board of Directors of Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, and is the Past-President of the Board of Directors for Senior Housing Solutions. He is Past-President of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties and he is a member of the Building Owners and Managers Association.

As the father of three, he is a passionate advocate for food education and has wholeheartedly supported CDM's efforts to showcase fresh fruits and vegetables and eliminate sugary beverages.

reclaimed barn wood. Playing off that notion, Braden and Weiden noted the possible dual meanings of the term "foodshed," a technical term that defines the region in which food for a particular location is grown, processed, and consumed. The name established a philosophical orientation for the space, and provided a foundation upon which both graphic identity and architectural design could be built.

Design with Purpose

CDM hired General Contractor Toeniskoetter Construction, whose President is CDM Board Member Dan Amend and a true believer in the cause. He said, "As a father of three young children, the rationale for the project was clear. If kids can participate in choosing their own colorful, delicious food, they are so much more likely to eat it. If the Museum can help parents in the often-challenging battle to get their kids to eat good food, then we're doing an even better job of meeting our mission. It was exciting to think of taking this on, and becoming a real leader in this space."

Understanding and designing for the specific type of food the cafe would (and would not) offer enabled the kitchen modifications and

equipment purchases to be streamlined. A refrigerated display space was built into the service counter to create a *Rainbow Station*, enabling children to choose from a selection of fresh, seasonal vegetables to accompany their entrees. A mirror above that counter was installed so that even very little children could see

the array of fresh produce. It would also enable the space to double as a teaching area when cooking classes or demos were launched in the future.

"If the Museum can help parents in the often-challenging battle to get their kids to eat good food, then we're doing an even better job of meeting our mission. It was exciting to think of taking this on, and becoming a real leader in this space."



Rainbow Station

One unanticipated complexity came from the need to provide new sound-proofing for the two story ceiling over the dining area. The happy shouts of children at play had become an unwelcome din as the old, decaying soundproofing material on the walls had begun to fail in the prior several years. Again, Weiden and Jennings sought mission-aligned partners to resolve the problem, and found San Jose-based architecture firm Modulus. Inspired by *FoodShed* and CDM's mission, David Fenster and Andy Brandt designed an evocative and eye-catching ceiling structure made from sound-absorbing baffles. Designed to complement the colors, materials, and shapes used in the dining area, the structure (masterfully, delicately hung by yet another partner, Tobias Construction), quickly became a hallmark of the Museum. And it effectively provided the acoustic mitigation needed to make *FoodShed* a comfortable place to share food and conversation.

While delays, unexpected problems, and budget shortfalls are inevitable with any construction project, this values-aligned team demonstrated a strong ability to stay positive and clearly focused on the ultimate goal: providing a fun, engaging, and delicious experience for children and their families.

According to Jennings, “Identifying partners that could see our vision was a really critical aspect of keeping this project moving on time and within budget. Whenever we experienced a setback – and they did come – the team members focused on presenting viable, effective solutions. I really do believe that a huge reason for that was because they all – whether CDM staff or not – shared a passion for getting better foods to kids. This team was the scaffold on which *FoodShed* was built.”

Purposeful Prototyping

At Baldauf's suggestion, CDM decided to bring the upcoming cafe transformation to the forefront of visitors' experience, putting its philosophy of experiential discovery and exploration into action. Jacobi took over the food service and temporarily moved into the existing kitchen and cafe space while the design work continued. The Museum staff, a creative and resourceful team, crafted giant wall banners that cheerfully proclaimed *A Taste of Things to Come* to welcome Jacobi's new menu. Customers responded eagerly and enthusiastically, and from the beginning, sales exceeded expectations. It seemed that just as the evaluator's report had revealed, visitors really were hungry – and willing to pay – for fresher, healthier, more delicious options.



This “interim” period of design and construction, which lasted from October 2014 – May 2015, not only gave the project team time to create the *FoodShed* identity and space, it also provided an extremely useful opportunity for Jacobi to experiment with menu items, develop recipes, test and validate customer preferences, understand traffic flow, and recruit and train her staff. “While at first we worried that the interim period would be a challenge,” says Jennings, “it actually turned out to be a huge gift. When *FoodShed* opened in June, we knew we were ready to hit the ground running with a cafe that knew how to respond to the unique circumstances within the Museum.”

Setting Standards

Concurrently, with grant support from Kaiser Permanente, the KK&P team guided the development of “*FoodShed Standards*,” a document that articulated procurement and nutrition standards and goals for the operation. “The objective was to create a dynamic document that both reflected CDM’s current priorities and also gave them a roadmap for continued development as a leader in providing healthy, sustainably sourced food as their skills and experience grow,” explained Weiden. “We wanted to keep the museum looking forward while also ensuring that visitors’ biggest impression about *FoodShed* was ‘that was delicious!’ – and only after would they realize that all the options were healthy, too.” Jennings was consistently clear in her vision for key food categories. There would be no French fries,

no pizza, and no candy. The focal point of *FoodShed* would be its beautiful, colorful fruits and vegetables and high-quality foods.

This was also when CDM moved its thinking beyond simply “no soda” to eliminating all sugar-sweetened beverages, including fruit

juice. “We decided to take a leadership role on this critical issue,” remembers Jennings, “and I knew it would only work if we went ‘all in.’ If sugar was there, visitors would choose it. So, we issued a challenge to Jacobi and the Karp team to come up with delicious, signature beverages without

added sugar, and didn’t look back.”

“While at first we worried that the interim period would be a challenge,” says Jennings, “it actually turned out to be a huge gift. When FoodShed opened in June, we knew we were ready to hit the ground running with a cafe that knew how to respond to the unique circumstances within the Museum.”



Discovery Bento Box

IMPLEMENTATION

Open for Business

When June 17, 2015 finally dawned, it was hard to recognize the central space that had previously been occupied by *Kids' Cafe*. In place of a dark counter cluttered with soda dispensers, pizza and hot dog warmers, giant condiment containers, and a seating area packed with utilitarian tables and chairs was a warm, inviting, semi-enclosed space paneled with reclaimed wood from a coastal California barn; a bright, clean open kitchen tiled with an array of colorful green tiles; and a dining area lit up by zinc tables and eye-catching orange chairs and filled with two large, dramatic pieces: the green and orange acoustic sculpture, hanging dramatically down from the ceiling, and a giant map of CDM's own foodshed, showing the locations and products of local suppliers. Customers were drawn to the space, and traffic was high from the moment the cafe opened.

The FoodShed Menu

FoodShed's menu centered on an inspired item for kids, the *Discovery Bento Box*, which accomplished the dual goals of enabling children to make their own food choices and showing them (and their parents) how to “eat a rainbow every day.” Kids could choose one of several scratch-made entrees, including whole grain mac and cheese, baked chicken tenders, or turkey meatballs; select two fresh, seasonal produce sides; and have a homemade “energy ball” treat made of almond butter, honey, and coconut.

Conceived of during the “interim phase” by Jacobi, the *Discovery Bento* became a focal point not only of the menu, but of the *FoodShed* design: the service counter was built to ensure children could see and choose from the array of colorful fresh produce



available. Even the smallest visitors can see the *Rainbow Station* using the mirror directly above. For adults, the menu offered a carefully curated assortment of grab-and-go sandwiches, salads, and snacks made fresh daily in the *FoodShed* kitchen, as well as a hot “Special Feature” – a single option inspired by a range of ethnic cuisines offered as a bowl, sandwich, wrap, or salad (at the opening, the item was Lemongrass Chicken or Tofu, with typical Vietnamese herbs and spices.) In place of soda, *FoodShed* offered *CDM Sparklers*, sparkling water flavored modestly with seasonal fruit puree and herbs or spices, positioned to become the signature beverage for kids and adults. The menu also facilitated operational efficiency for Jacobi and her staff, keeping resources needed for preparation and serving manageable and procurement straightforward.

From the opening, customer feedback was extremely positive. In the first few days after opening, Weiden spent time in the cafe, watching how visitors experienced the menu and space and talking with kids and parents about their impressions. While the clean plates suggested they enjoyed the food, the most important – and rewarding – comment came from a parent who said simply, “Thank you. I always have to fight with my daughter over what she can eat when we go out somewhere fun, and now here, I don’t have to. It’s all good. And she likes it!” This sentiment was echoed by others, and an evaluation report commissioned in September (from the same evaluator who visited in early 2014) revealed that *FoodShed* was universally perceived as providing healthy, appealing food options for families. (Topline summative evaluation can be found at [https://www.cdm.org/learn-create/for-the-field/project-evaluations/.](https://www.cdm.org/learn-create/for-the-field/project-evaluations/))

“Thank you. I always have to fight with my daughter over what she can eat when we go out somewhere fun, and now here, I don’t have to. It’s all good. And she likes it!”

It wasn’t just Museum visitors who enjoyed the food, either. For the first time in memory, CDM staff became cafe regulars, a nice source of revenue for Jacobi, and with an

employee discount, a welcome perk for the staff. Jennings and Jacobi also worked together to create a shared culture between *FoodShed* and the CDM staff, trying to instill the same values and service-oriented mentality across both sets of employees.

A Special Seal of Approval

FoodShed was visited by Sam Kass, former White House chef and founding Executive Director of First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Lets Move! campaign*. In his remarks, he congratulated CDM for creating a “new standard” for serving food to families, taking a leadership role in our community, and demonstrating that good food is also good business.



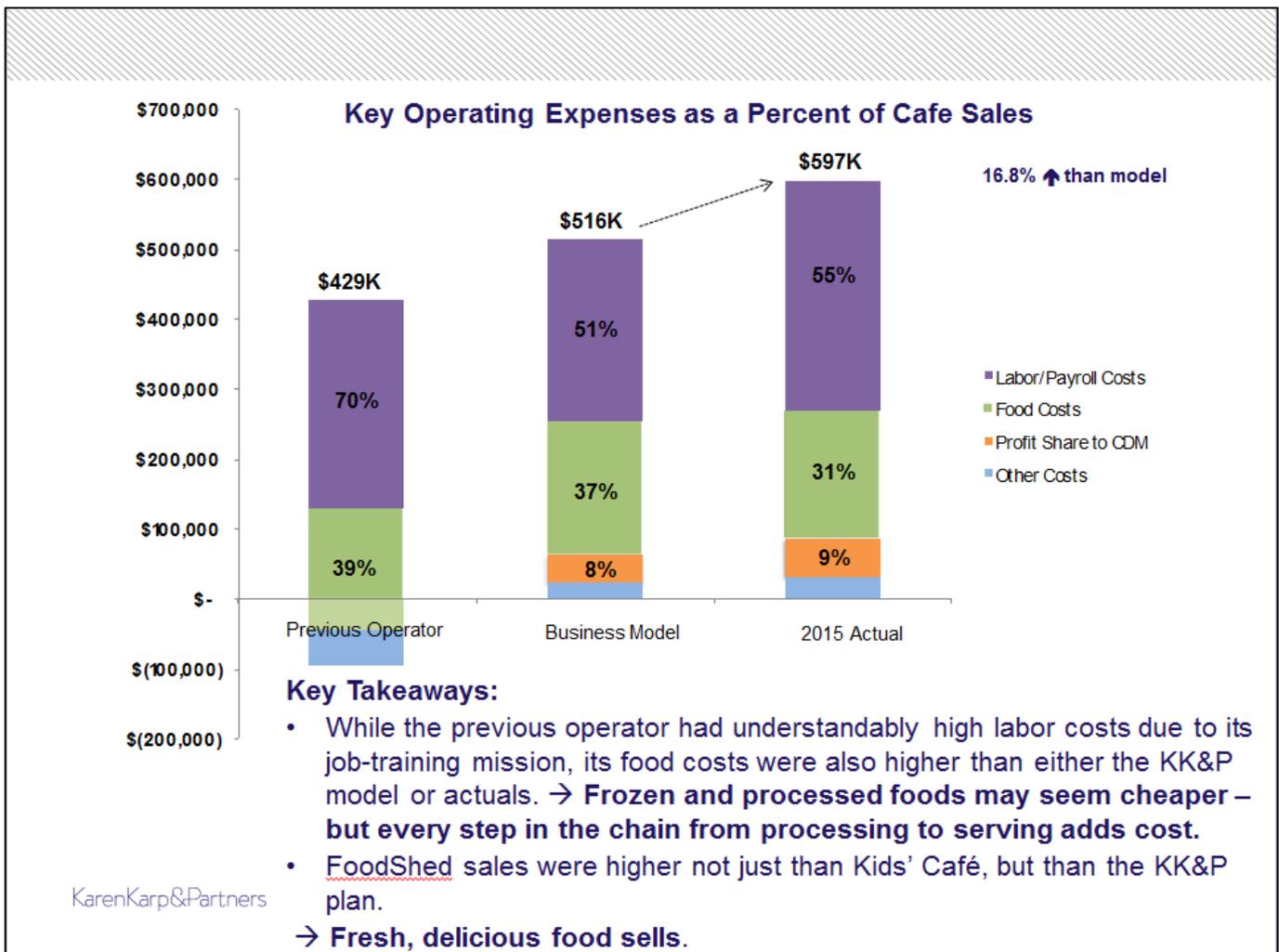
Chef Sam Kass

Lessons Learned

By the end of 2015, *FoodShed* sales told a very positive story. Revenue for 2015 was 17% more than planned, and 39% more than the previous operator had collected. For the first time in its history, CDM had shared in revenue earned through its cafe – nearly \$50,000. The months of careful planning and close, thoughtful collaboration among partners on every detail (from line management to ingredient sourcing to menu board design to staff training) had both literally and metaphorically paid off. Visitors to the Museum – both kids and caregivers – were pleased by their choices and the dining experience, whether they say it is because of or in spite of the healthy offerings (there will always be those who demand a soda!) For the first time, nearby office workers were asking if they could visit the Museum at lunchtime just to eat at *FoodShed*, and the Board and funders felt their investment was

paying off. Jennings’ belief – and Karp’s experience – that better food would mean better business had proven true.

And yet there was always more work to be done. Jacobi, despite her continued dedication to *FoodShed*’s mission and values, struggled some months to achieve profitability. Labor costs were high, and the uneven traffic flow in an institutional setting required skill and experience to manage efficiently. Meeting *FoodShed*’s sourcing standards, providing the ideal balance of menu diversity and innovation, and building operational efficiency required continued, rigorous engagement by Jacobi, many conversations between Jacobi and Jennings, and expert advice from KK&P. That some of the values underlying *FoodShed*’s menu options and sourcing practices were opaque to visitors prompted Jacobi and the Museum team to engage in ongoing dialogue about





signage and clear, visually-compelling customer communication. “I quickly realized that our role in figuring out how to provide good food at Children’s Discovery Museum did not stop when *FoodShed* opened,” explained Jennings recently. “*FoodShed* is an ongoing, evolving part of CDM, and it is our responsibility and commitment to the cafe to help our visitors understand why we offer the food we do, and why it matters. While I’m thrilled to see that healthy food for children and families can sell well and be profitable, there is the social change mission in *FoodShed* to help reduce childhood obesity that can’t be measured in dollars. Perhaps we’ll know we’ve accomplished it when we’ve heard the last request for a soda,” she said with a smile.

FOODSHED’S FUTURE

While *FoodShed* has already rooted itself in the culture of CDM, Jennings’ comment above proved prescient. In late 2015, Jacobi was presented with the opportunity to pursue a lifelong dream, and regretfully gave her notice to CDM. As dedicated throughout her departure as she was during her tenure,

Jacobi provided several months’ notice to ensure a smooth transition to a new operator.

The KK&P team, led by Weiden, was once again engaged to assist Jennings with the search for a new operator. But rather than being bothered by this unexpected news, Jennings took it in stride. “Nicole was the visionary partner to help us develop, iterate, and launch *FoodShed*,” she said, “and now we know more and are better prepared to take on the next phase of our food program. *FoodShed* is a dynamic place and space, and we are still growing into it. I’m excited to see where it goes from here.”

In a bold move, CDM ultimately decided to self-operate *FoodShed* in order to maintain the original commitments to educational mission and visitor engagement. The majority of Jacobi’s staff stayed in their roles, and with some new hires and a consultant, *FoodShed* continues to thrive.

In 2017, CDM will begin piloting a series of free educational workshops with an eye to fee-based programming in the future. It may also introduce a *FoodShed* catering business, focusing on corporate breakfast and lunch serving the many nearby companies in downtown San Jose. Exploration into *FoodShed*-branded retail food products is planned, in conjunction with the opening of a new 27,500 square foot outdoor gallery called *Bill’s Backyard*, which will feature a farm-to-table garden and major beehive community. Watch for *FoodShed* honey, jams, and salsa in the coming years!



FOODSHED

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Jennings has distilled down the three-year effort into a few critical pointers:

Go “all in.” If there are unhealthy options available, people will gravitate to them and it will prove the perception that healthy items don’t sell. They DO sell – when they are delicious and when they are the only options.

Partner with a visionary cafe operator/chef. A successful cafe requires both fresh, delicious, appealing food as well as an unequivocal commitment to the mission-driven goals undergirding the change in the food service. This shared purpose and accountability between the cafe operator and the institution’s staff make the decision-making process more straightforward.

Create a stellar team of experts who share your values and vision. Without the unique talents, experience, and networks that each of our team members brought to the table, *FoodShed* would not have come together as it did – and certainly not as quickly or within budget.

Make the food project an executive leadership initiative, but enlist the critical support of at least one key management staff member, who will be a synergistic partner and problem solver and an “in the trenches” listener and communicator. That staff member will provide information and insights that cannot be found elsewhere.

Understand, articulate, and sell the link between programmatic and experiential engagement to potential funders. Said Fred Ferrer, CEO of The Health Trust, “Funders need to start recognizing that supporting operational planning and feasibility for experiences that embody programmatic messaging is critical.” Learn how to make this case to them.

Engage your stakeholders, and cast a wide net in defining them. Our engagement process included everyone from Board Members to funders to floor staff, not to mention Museum visitors, media, public health advocates, and the project team. Including all in the process – at the right moments – ensured that this effort felt exciting and fresh, not confusing or burdensome.

Be prepared for – but not derailed by – surprises and setbacks. Construction is challenging, food service is challenging, and the two together can be a double whammy. But scolding, sighing, or screaming won’t solve the problem. Stay focused on solutions – and if you have a good team in place, they will know to do the same.

Celebrate success. The level of organizational change and risk undertaken in reimagining a vital visitor amenity is immense, and all who participated in or suffered through it need a collective moment to step back together and take pride in what was created for the community.

Have fun!

