

EcoTarium

For immediate release

For more information, please contact:

Lucy Hale, President & CEO

lhale@ecotarium.org

508.929.2722 office

222 Harrington Way | Worcester, MA 01604

facebook instagram twitter

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EcoTarium President and CEO Lucy Hale named to international science/technology center board of directors

WORCESTER — The EcoTarium is proud to announce that its president and CEO, Lucy Hale, has been named to the Association of Science and Technology Centers' board of directors. ASTC represents nearly 700 science and technology centers in 50 countries.

ASTC's president, Christofer Nelson, says that Hale is one of six new board members from North America and the world to be appointed to the board this November. "We're delighted to have these leaders from science centers around the world working together with our team to advance our vision of increased understanding of — and engagement with — science and technology among all people," says Nelson.

Hale has served as EcoTarium president and CEO since August, 2018. Her experience working with science museums, zoos and nature centers made her a good fit for her leadership position at this highly regarded institution. The EcoTarium is New England's leading science and nature center. Founded in 1825, it offers both indoor and outdoor interactive experiences on 45 acres that includes a three-story museum center and the Alden Digital Planetarium. Visitors walk along a network of nature trails and spend time at the live animal habitats including the recreated mountain terrain that's home to two mountain lion siblings. The exhibit encompasses 18,500 square feet, making it one of the largest mountain lion habitats in the country.

Hale has dedicated her career to institutions of science and nature, starting early in her life. Even before she attended Boston College, she had volunteered more than 1,000 hours at Boston's Museum of Science through their teen volunteer program, in addition to two paid high school internships. She worked there through 2005 as a curatorial assistant. She went on to work at science-based cultural institutions in the Dallas–Fort Worth area, including the Dallas Zoo & Children's Aquarium at Fair Park as education manager. Recruited to help open the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, also in Dallas, she served as their Director of School Programs. And just before coming to the EcoTarium, she served as executive director of the Trinity River Audubon Center in Dallas for two years.

“ASTC is a membership-based organization that supports the work of science museums,” says Hale. “It’s a great way to bring science museums together. With so many important issues facing us, issues that come down to the core of science and technology, it’s important for us as a science museum to be engaged with this organization and its work.”

Among Hale’s board responsibilities is her work on ASTC’s COVID-19 task force. “Serving on this task force has been a true honor, and it’s been so helpful to connect with fellow science museum leaders during these difficult times,” she says. ASTC has assembled advocacy and media tool kits, as well as put together trainings around financial planning in times of uncertainty based on the needs of institutions identified through this task force.

“One of the largest challenges we face are the financial implications of this pandemic,” says Hale. “Science museums tend to be the largest of the museum earned-income generators, with their ticketed attendance and school involvement. Those earned-income sources were gone and the EcoTarium faced a projected \$1.8 million revenue loss. While we have done amazing work to limit expenses, we have some expenses that are difficult to curtail. We have live animals and those expenses are fixed. At the same time, we continue to have amazing community support. We’ve worked to make it easy for people to donate to our COVID recovery fund through our website, and we are incredibly thankful for each and every dollar of support raised.”

The pandemic does provide science centers like the EcoTarium with certain important opportunities, says Hale. “With all the politicization of science, we’re seeing a direct correlation between the way our trust in science has eroded and the rise in infection rates. We can help restore that trust and take the politicization out of it.

“Becoming excited about science is the most important thing that can happen when people come here,” she says. “Science is at the base of everything — decisions we make every day have roots in science. The cars we buy, the roofs we put on our homes, the food we buy at the grocery store. Science is part of it all. The more we know about science, the more informed we can be about the decisions we make for ourselves and our communities.”

While the immediate focus for the EcoTarium is to keep its core operations intact through the hibernation period, the museum is also developing and delivering exciting, fun and novel content — such as virtual birthday parties and Zoom animal guest appearances at business meetings — there’s much excited anticipation about the coming summer and what that will mean for EcoTarium’s members and visitors.

“We know from our exit surveys that the number one reason people come to the EcoTarium is to spend time together as a family,” says Hale. “This is a really important thing we do for our community. We all know that when you learn together as a family, it is a really special, very memorable moment. We are so hopeful for what 2021 will bring, and we can’t wait to see everyone again, hopefully sooner rather than later!”

ABOUT THE ECOTARIUM:

The EcoTarium is New England's leading museum of science and nature, an indoor–outdoor experience dedicated to inspiring a passion for science and nature in visitors of all ages. Founded in 1825, it has been a leader in informal science and nature education for nearly 200 years. Highlights of the 45-acre campus include a museum building with three floors of interactive exhibits, the Alden Digital Planetarium, daily Science Discovery programs, live animal habitats including the spectacular home of two mountain lion siblings, nature trails through forest and meadow, seasonal narrow-gauge railroad Explorer Express Train, and an expansive interactive outdoor exhibit, Nature Explore®. ecotarium.org

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Caption:

Lucy Hale, president and CEO, EcoTarium, has been appointed to the Association of Science and Technology Centers' board of directors. There are 700 science and technology center ASTC members from 50 countries.