



## DISCOVERY PARK OF AMERICA

### Organization Profile

January 2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

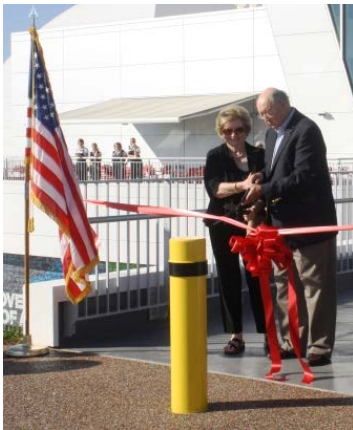
Discovery Park of America is a one-of-a-kind, a 501(c)(3) non-profit museum and heritage park first envisioned by Robert Kirkland.

Getting his start at his parents' Ben Franklin five-and-dime store in Nashville, Kirkland acquired a local retail store and launched a chain of Kirkland's stores that eventually expanded to three hundred locations.

His business portfolio expanded to include commercial real estate properties and community banking, as well as CBK Ltd., which sold gift items and home décor throughout the country and around the world, all shipped from a Union City, Tenn. distribution center.

In the late 1990s, he and his wife, Jenny, sold their business holdings to concentrate on philanthropic efforts, including leading his community of Union City, Tenn. in the building of a museum and heritage park.

The museum and park was intended to, in Kirkland's own words, "enhance education for children as well as adults and to do it in an entertaining way."



He added, "I hope it will be a destination that people will visit again and again and walk away each time with an expectation for continued innovation."

The combined efforts of experts, novices and volunteers were fully realized on Nov. 1, 2013 as Robert and Jenny Kirkland cut the red ribbon.

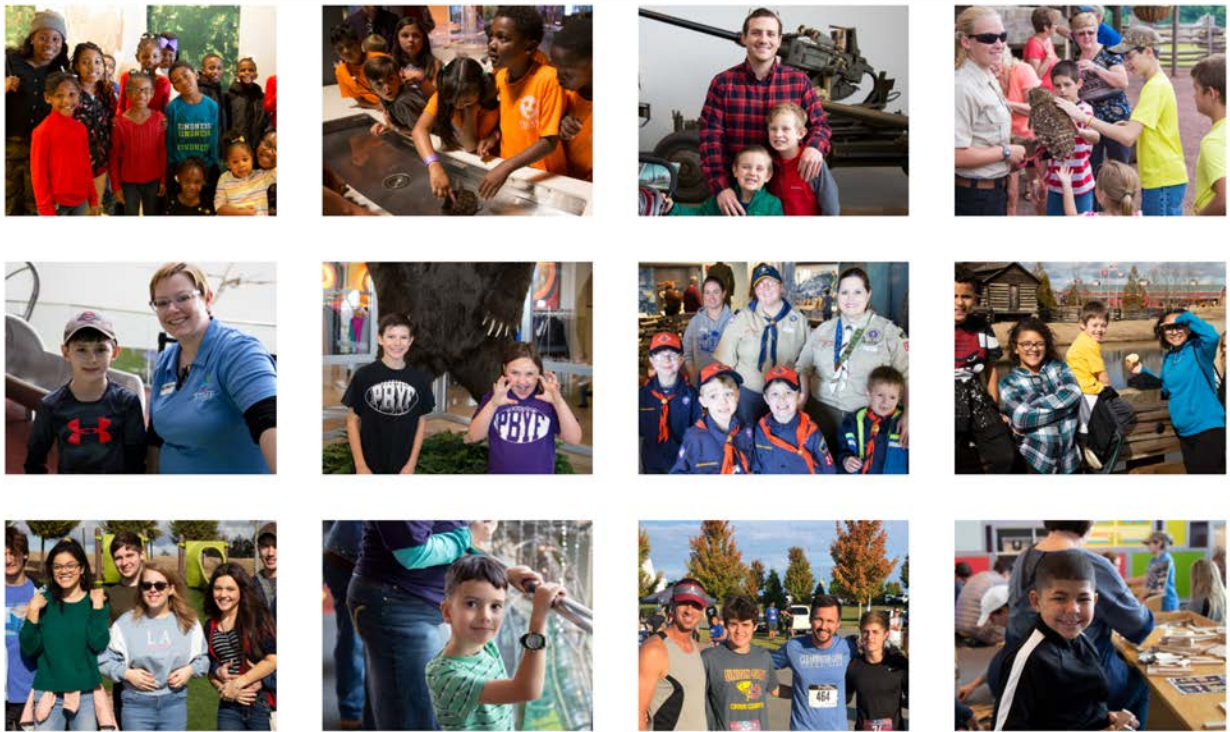
The public was impressed from the start. Not only had there never been anything like this in Obion County, there had never been anything quite like Discovery Park in the world.

Although Robert Kirkland died in April 2015, his vision has been realized and, since opening, more than 1.3 million guests have experienced this 100-million-dollar masterpiece now sitting in what was once a quiet cornfield.

The Robert E. and Jenny D. Kirkland Foundation continues the work of their founder with a commitment of a support gift to Discovery Park each year.



## MISSION



### Mission

To inspire children and adults to [See Beyond](#).

### What makes us unique?

- The size and scope of the experience in the 100,000-square-foot museum and 50-acre heritage park.
- The multisensory aspect of the whole place inside and out, including encouragement to touch the artifacts, walk on the grass and to have an entertaining experience using all your senses
- The museum and park include nods to the things Robert Kirkland envisioned because of personal passions and interests including the arts, international travel, business and agriculture
- Rather than being designed by museum professionals and presented to the community, Discovery Park was designed by the community and then turned over to museum professionals for building

## MUSEUM AND PARK OVERVIEW



### Inside

Discovery Park of America's iconic 100,000-square-foot museum showcases ten exhibit galleries focused on topics like science, space, technology, the military, natural history, regional history, art, transportation and more. Guests experience:

- 4-D simulation of the early 1800s earthquakes that created the beautiful landscape in this region
- 20,000-gallon aquarium revealing the underwater life of the region's lakes
- Dinosaurs, fossils and prehistoric artifacts
- Military equipment, vintage automobiles and an actual Titan missile ready to launch
- Interactive displays focused on science, technology, engineering and math—and dozens more hands-on experiences
- Unique state-of-the-art meeting spaces for groups ranging in size from ten to thousands
- Gourmet southern meals prepared by Sabin's Café Catering

### Outside

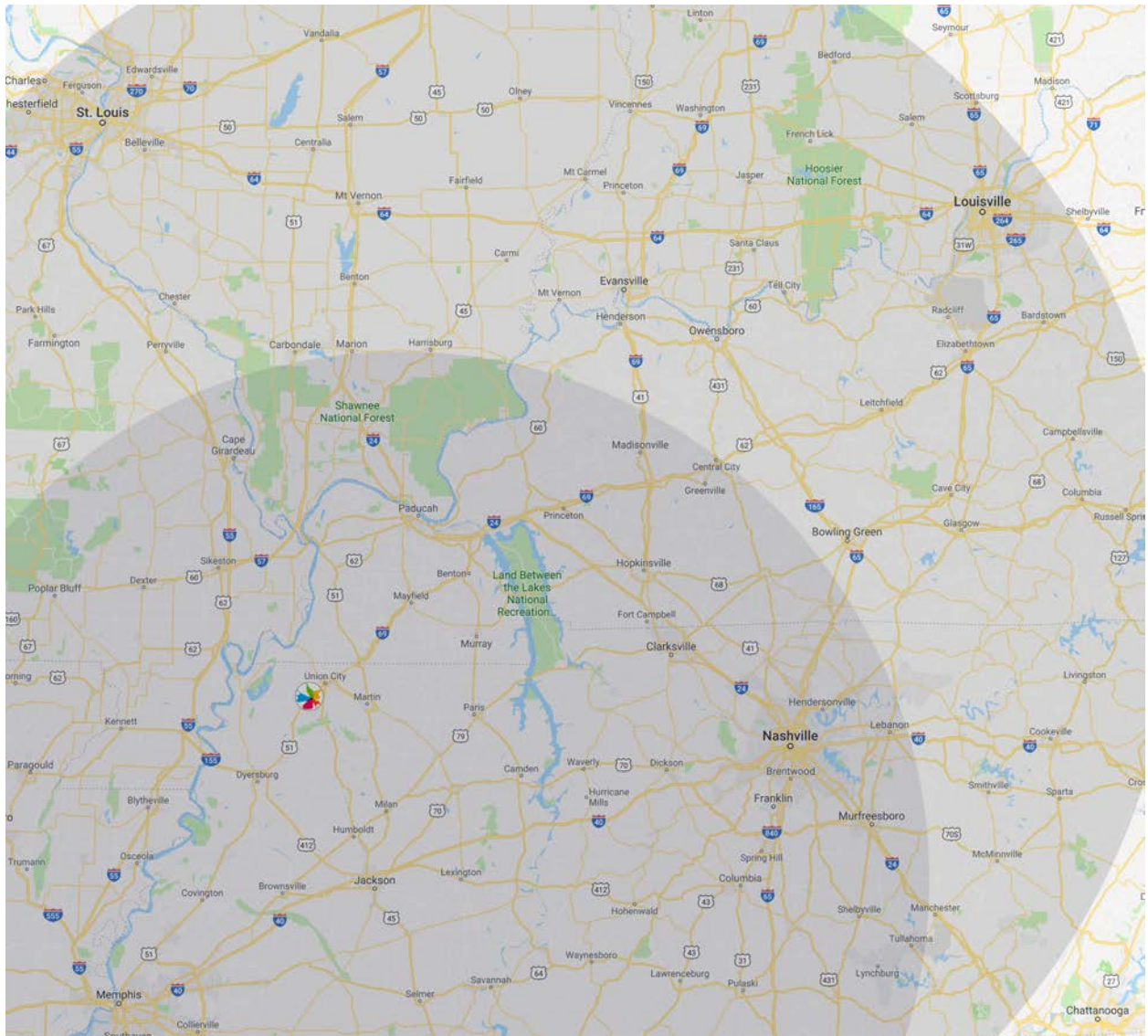
The 50-acre outdoor heritage park includes a man-made river flowing through the extensively landscaped property, along with waterfalls, bridges and other water features. Guests experience:

- Reproduction of an early 19th Century town with a working gristmill, windmill, one-room schoolhouse and more
- Japanese, European and American gardens
- Reproduction of an entire mid-19th Century frontier settlement
- 120-year-old church moved from a cotton field and restored to its original glory at Discovery Park
- Turn-of-the-century train station and depot with locomotive, cars and caboose to explore inside and out
- Liberty Hall including a replica of the Liberty Bell and exhibit on American freedom
- One-of-a-kind nature-inspired playground experience featuring a PlayOdyssey Tower, log steppers, log balance beams, hillside climbers, slides and a mini zip line
- Simmons Bank Ag Center showcasing "AgriCulture: Innovating for Our Survival"
- Pollinator gardens, row crops and a working vineyard

## VISITOR PROFILE

Each year since opening, Discovery Park has welcomed an average of 250,000 visitors with a slight decrease in 2020 due to Covid-19. Although Discovery Park has visitors from all over the world, the primary feeder markets are from the areas surrounding Paducah, Kentucky and Memphis, Jackson and Nashville, Tennessee. Secondary feeder markets are from the communities around St. Louis, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky.

With education being one of the primary goals the organization, students in groups are a significant part of the marketing and outreach each year.



## GROWTH

Several factors are currently underway that will lead to explosive growth in the next few years:



- Three new hotels have been added right next door to the park
- Tennessee governor Bill Lee and tourism commissioner Mark Ezell have included “rural tourism” as an important part of the future economic health of the state, and Discovery Park leadership serves on multiple tour and travel committees
- Discovery Park has committed resources to increasing exposure to the group sales business both in the education and tour and travel categories, and is working that category like never before in the organization’s history
- When completed, the extension of I-69 from Indianapolis, Indiana, to Memphis, Tennessee, via Evansville, Indiana will send travelers right to Discovery Park’s front door.



*The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 included two high-priority corridors that would later become parts of I-69. Corridor 18 from Indianapolis, Indiana, to Memphis, Tennessee, via Evansville, Indiana runs behind Discovery Park of America in Union City, Tenn. As you can see, much of the work has been completed, including exit ramps on each side of the park. The section you see here that runs alongside Discovery Park from a little northwest of the former Wingfoot Golf Course to Reelfoot Avenue was the first of three projects (the middle project) that encompass the I-69 loop around Union City. The section to the southwest down to US 51 was the second section. Both segments have been completed up to final grading (ready for paving). Currently in the construction phase is the section a little northwest of the former Wingfoot Golf Course to US-45 & US 51 about halfway to Fulton. All three segments will be completed and paved by fall of 2023. This will open the entire Union City loop. The remainder of the project including the exchange in Fulton, Kentucky and the section south of Union City all the way to Dyersburg is currently in various phases of development.*

## LEADERSHIP



Scott Williams has been the president and CEO of Discovery Park of America since Jan. 2019.

Previously, he served as president and COO of the Newseum in Washington, D.C. where he managed many of the activities taking place in a seven-story museum on Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol.

Williams earned his degree in journalism from the University of Memphis. He then held positions at several advertising agencies and other organizations, including ServiceMaster, Inc., Baptist Memorial Health Care and Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc.

While taking care of business for the king for twelve years, he managed annual events like Elvis Week, the Elvis birthday celebration and the Graceland Christmas lighting, while contributing to initiatives like the Elvis Cruise, the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest, the Elvis Cirque du Soleil show, Viva Elvis and the Elvis Broadway play.

Williams has worked extensively on partnerships with many companies in multiple industries including journalism, music, tourism and entertainment.

He has served on the board of the D.C. chapter of the American Advertising Federation and on the board of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. He is currently on the Tennessee Tourism Committee of the Department of Tourist Development for the State of Tennessee, the board of the Obion County Chamber of Commerce, the advisory board of the UTM College of Business and Global Affairs, the Northwest Tennessee Arts Center Advisory Board and the board of the American Advertising Federation West Tennessee.

His third book, "The Accidental Fame and Lack of Fortune of West Tennessee's David Crockett," was published in 2021. Williams is also the author of "An Odd Book, How the First Modern Pop Culture Reporter Conquered New York" and "The Forgotten Adventures of Richard Halliburton: A High-Flying Life from Tennessee to Timbuktu."

Williams was honored with the Charles E. Thornton Outstanding Alumni Award from the department of Journalism and Strategic Media at the University of Memphis in 2018.



Discovery Park of America

# 2022 Calendar of Events

## JANUARY

**Free general admission all month for children 17 and younger**

Sponsored by Magnolia Place Assisted Living

**"The Fascinating World of Murray Hudson's Globes and Maps"**

Dec. 2, 2021 - May 15, 2022

Sponsored by Conley and Conley Attorneys at Law

## MARCH

**5 Discovery Awards Gala**

**22 Greenhouse Groundbreaking**

Sponsored by Farm Credit

**31 "Southern Artist Showcase: Hattie Marshall-Duncan"**

March 31 - Oct. 24, 2022

## APRIL

**29 - 30 Military History and Armed Forces Symposium**

## MAY

**Rhythm on the Rails Summer Concert Series**  
Friday Evenings in May and June

**14 Cardboard Boat Regatta**

## June

**4 Cruise - In**

**18 "Discover Steampunk: A Fantastical Hands-On Adventure"**

June 18, 2022 - Jan. 8, 2023

## July

**2 Independence Day Celebration**

## August

**5 - 6 Antique Tractor Show**

**13 David Crockett Birthday**

## SEPTEMBER

**10 9/11 Stair Climb**

**17 Discovery Dash 5k/10k Pediatric Day**

Sponsored by Pediatric Place of Union City

**24 - 25 Southern Heritage Arts and Crafts Festival**

## OCTOBER

**Pumpkin Village**  
Throughout the month of October

## NOVEMBER

**11 Let It Glow Light Show Drive-Thru and Walk-Thru**  
Nov. 11 - Dec. 30, 2022



Discovery Park of America is a 501(c)(3) public charity funded by generous individuals, corporations and foundations including its principal funder, the Robert E. and Jenny D. Kirkland Foundation.



## Upcoming Exhibits



Dec. 2, 2021 – May 15, 2022

### **“The Fascinating World of Murray Hudson’s Globes and Maps”**

An exhibit that shines a spotlight on one of the most unique collections of globes and maps in the world and a collector who owns the largest private collection of for-sale antiquarian maps, globes, books and prints in existence today.



March 31 – Oct. 24, 2022

### **“Southern Artist Showcase: Hattie Marshall-Duncan”**

Self-taught sculptor, Hattie Marshall-Duncan of Jackson, Tenn., turns common household items and found objects that are often overlooked into distinguished masterpieces. Hattie’s work is reflective of her African American community and family. Recipient of the 2019 Tennessee Governor’s Arts Award, Marshall-Duncan’s art is displayed statewide in various galleries including Discovery Park’s partner in this exhibit, the [West Tennessee Regional Art Center](#).



March 22, 2022, 11 a.m.

### **The Farm Credit Mid-America Education Pavilion and Greenhouse Groundbreaking: National Ag Day at Discovery Park**

Discovery Park’s education department and others will be utilizing The Farm Credit Mid-America Education Pavilion to spotlight topics relating to the business of agriculture along with growing cycles, garden design, soil health and other topics relating to the basics of plant science.



June 18, 2022 – Jan. 8, 2023

### **“Discover Steampunk: A Fantastical Hands-On Adventure”**

The exhibit utilizes the stories of seven 19th-century visionaries and one-of-a-kind, hands-on interactive Steampunk sculptures to explore the power of imagination and creative problem solving. Visitors will also discover the important intersections of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), art, history and reading.



Opens March 23, 2023

### **“Duck, Duck, Goose: Waterfowl of the Mississippi Flyway”**

An interactive, permanent exhibit that will share the story of waterfowl hunting, conservation and the ecosystem of the Mississippi Flyway using stories, three-dimensional objects, interactive elements and hands-on experiences.