**Beverly and Jon Thompson Discovery Zone**

**Opens July 17, 2017**

**Major Themes and Components**

**Early Childhood Learning**

The Florida Museum of Natural History has housed a popular temporary “Discovery Room” for years. After consideration about the room and its worth as a learning center to the audience, the Florida Museum created a permanent, more interactive-based and technologically savvy exhibit to engage children and their families and spark a sense of curiosity about the surrounding world. The new exhibit also introduces fundamental science and cultural heritage concepts.

**Interactives**

The “Beverly and Jon Thompson Discovery Zone” emphasizes learning through experience and helps engage children to age 8 and their families with hands-on interactives. A modern boat for navigation allows guests to explore the Gulf of Mexico and its native species of marine life. Other interactive technology activities include excavating an archaeological site and a “color your fish” activity on a large touch screen where participants can color and name an animated fish that swims with other gulf species.

**Biodiversity**

The exhibit introduces concepts such as the butterfly life cycle and the differences and similarities between a fossil and replica cast. Microscopes show a larger scale perspective of tiny objects, and touchable displays introduce more sensory forms of learning. Live bugs offer the opportunity to observe, and display cases of cultural collections show the cultural diversity of the world we live in. Themed areas, such as the marine and forest areas, capture the variety of ecosystems on Earth.

**Design**

The “Beverly and Jon Thompson Discovery Zone” is constructed to resemble the planet Earth’s spherical shape with surrounding decoration. The space includes large murals to help provide an immersive experience, while display cases with collections and video screens featuring additional photos are located throughout the exhibit to represent the diversity of life on Earth. Another design highlight is the large-scale centerpiece, which contains a large passionflower, the host plant for the Florida state butterfly, the Zebra Longwing.

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