



**Thanksgiving Point** Annual Report

**2023**





# From the **PRESIDENT AND CEO**

Dear Friends,

Fiscal year 2023 was another productive year for Thanksgiving Point as we took significant steps towards the vision of our future. Our contribution to Utah and our surrounding communities remains strong. In 2023, 1.3 million unique visitors attended an event, after-school program, science center, or learning opportunity at Thanksgiving Point. We are one of the most frequently visited places in Utah.

"We love helping community members find a place where they can **serve, grow, and learn.**"

—*McKay Christensen*

Research continues to show that children decide early in life, many by the fifth grade, whether they are good at STEM. This confidence in STEM is one of the strongest predictors of whether children will go on to work in STEM fields as adults. Research also shows that children from low-income households are significantly less likely to gain early confidence in STEM or go on to work in STEM. Why? Because they lack access to STEM enrichment programs and experiences both inside and outside of their home.

In Utah, 31 percent of children from high-income homes will go on to work in STEM because of their opportunities to gain confidence in STEM at a young age. However, only 7 percent of children from low-income homes will go on to work in STEM. And the unfortunate fact is this: STEM jobs pay 84 percent more on average than other jobs. So, children from low-income homes are less likely to earn a higher-than-average STEM wage in their working life.

Thanksgiving Point operates some of Utah's best children's science centers, including the Mountain America Museum of Ancient Life, Curiosity Farms, Butterfly Biosphere, Ashton Gardens, and the Museum of Natural Curiosity. We conduct thousands of learning sessions and programs with kids each year. As a result, we are well-equipped to bring confidence and joy in STEM to Utah's kids.

Our Every Kid Counts initiative is reaching kids from low-income households. Every child whose parents are on WIC or SNAP benefits attends Thanksgiving Point venues and programs for free. The attendance of these kids grew by 25 percent over last year. We also grew our outreach centers, targeting low-income locations in Utah, to 12 centers where we take STEM learning to kids who can't travel to Thanksgiving Point. We continue to partner with 30 key non-profit organizations in Utah that are also focused on the well-being of Utah's kids.

In 2023, we launched a strategic effort to enhance our programs, exhibits, and focus to help kids who participate in our programs and visit our science centers to gain confidence in STEM. We now conduct over one hundred STEM group programs each week at Thanksgiving Point.

In 2023, we invested significantly in transforming Farm Country, a long-time family venue, into Curiosity Farms, a new science center that helps children learn about the latest tech and science used in farming and food production. Children will interact with key technologies of indoor farming, water conservation, breeding, livestock tracking, GPS-led driverless vehicles, and more. Multiple daily programs give kids hands-on opportunities to get familiar with and confident in agricultural STEM.

We recently announced the approval by the Thanksgiving Point Board of Trustees to open a new Science and Technology Center to help kids learn the technology used in some of Utah's major industries, including: energy, biotech, aerospace, financial technology, and more. Coding and AI labs will help every child gain confidence in technology. We anticipate launching fund-raising efforts in 2024.

In 2023, we opened The Carousel at Thanksgiving Point. The Carousel has been the long-term vision of Barbara Barrington Jones, a long-time donor and partner of Thanksgiving Point. The Carousel is a fitting tribute to Barbara's desire to bring joy and happiness to kids. We invested in the remodeling and improvement of our meeting and wedding venues, paths, and other key infrastructure in Ashton Gardens. We also opened key learning galleries in the Mountain American Museum of Ancient Life and other areas across property.

This year, Thanksgiving Point once again received five Utah Best of State awards including Best Entertainment Venue, Best Event/Performance Venue, Best Festival, Best Museum, and Best Dining in Harvest Restaurant.

Our donor partnerships continue to grow as part of our Curiosity Club program. We are extremely grateful for the support of our private donors and corporate partners who are essential to our vision of helping Utah's kids. We are grateful to Lehi City and the State of Utah for their ongoing support as well. We are thrilled with the enthusiasm we see in our partners for helping us fulfill our mission.



We are grateful for your continued support of our efforts and look forward to welcoming you soon to Thanksgiving Point.

Sincerely  
McKay Christensen  
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "McKay Christensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the printed name above it.

# Stories from **THANKSGIVING POINT**

**In 2023**, nearly two million guests visited Thanksgiving Point to experience the wonders of the natural world together. Whether guests were smelling the flowers at the Tulip Festival, fluttering with the butterflies in the Entomology Lab, or warming up by a firepit in Luminaria, they joined in on some of the best and most enriching experiences in Utah.

Thanksgiving Point's Every Kid Counts initiative grew immensely. This three-pillar service-focused aspect of the organization includes:

- **Admission:** Children of families on SNAP or WIC benefits visit Thanksgiving Point for free and adults visit for a discounted price. Nearly 100,000 guests utilized this program from March 2023 – February 2024.
- **Outreach Programs:** Hands-on science learning teams visit economically disadvantaged schools and community centers throughout Utah to provide STEM instruction.
- **Nonprofit Partnerships:** 30 nonprofits with kid-centric missions have partnered with Thanksgiving Point. These partners are able to host events at Thanksgiving Point free of charge to help fundraise, create awareness, or support their members.

*Each year, Thanksgiving Point grows its programs and offers new opportunities for kids and families to explore the natural world. It is a place for families to grow, visit, dine, and play together. Thanksgiving Point is grateful to be a part of this incredible community.*



# 2023 KEY NUMBERS

# 2,049,646

## TOTAL GUEST VISITS

(based on tickets purchased — not tickets scanned)

534,289  
MUSEUM OF NATURAL CURIOSITY

362,083  
MOUNTAIN AMERICA  
MUSEUM OF ANCIENT LIFE

597,277  
ASHTON GARDENS

172,948  
FARM COUNTRY

384,049  
BUTTERFLY BIOSPHERE

625,919 GUESTS  
LARRY H MILLER MEGAPLEX

408,844 SERVED  
FOOD SERVICES

38,552 ROUNDS  
THANKSGIVING POINT GOLF COURSE

4,586 GUESTS  
ART INSTITUTE

354,094  
SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ATTENDEES

**Tulip Festival:**  
171,984

**Dinosaur Island:**  
190,265

**Luminaria:**  
178,712

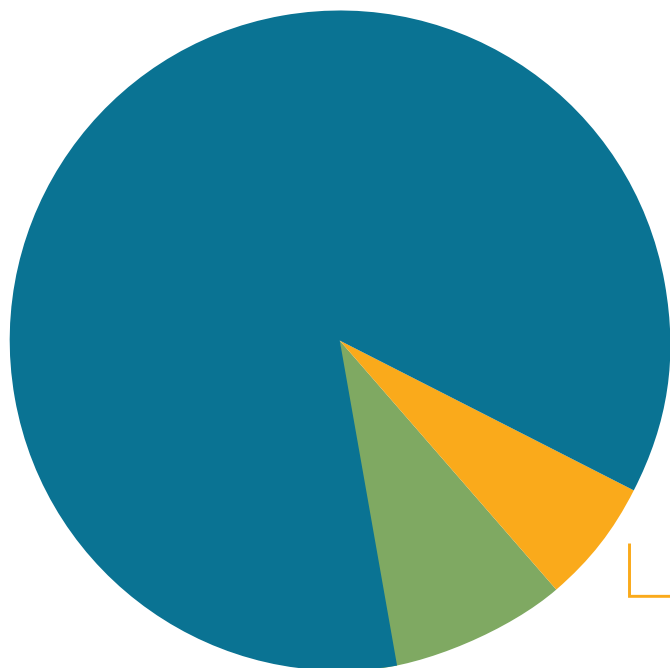
\*HIGHEST ATTENDED EVENTS

# By the numbers: **FINANCIALS**

## \$39,202,431

### REVENUE

(Less Capital Campaign)



### 83.57%

#### EARNED REVENUE

(Memberships, Restaurants, Catering, Retail, Rentals, Events, and Admission Fees)

### 5.34%

#### GOVERNMENT

(Grants)

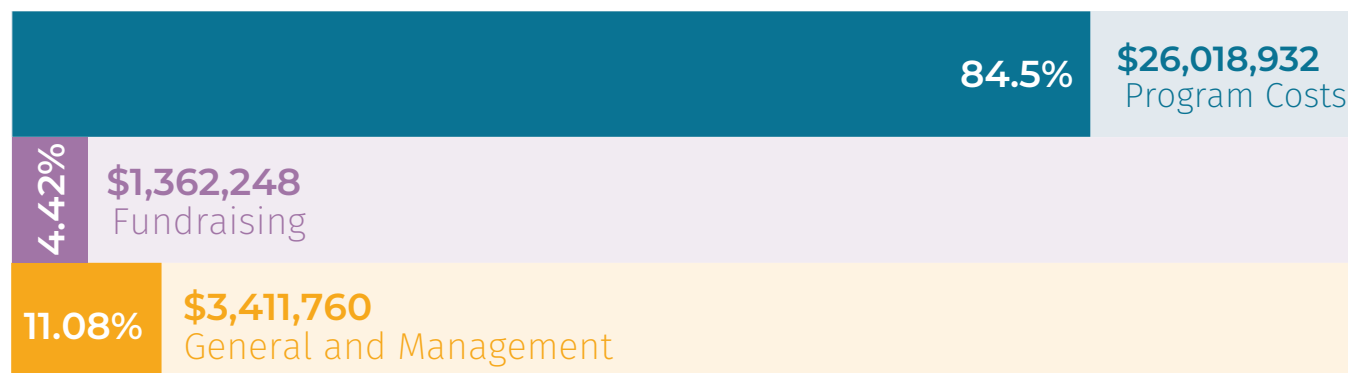
### 11.09%

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

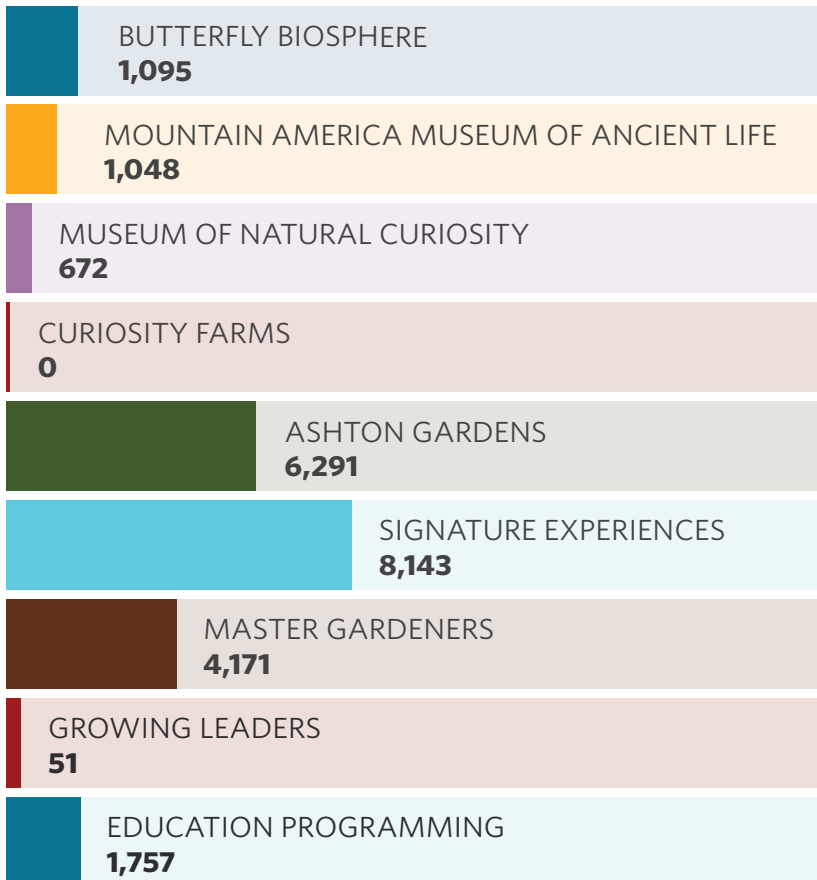
(Sponsorships, and Corporate, Individual, and Foundation Support)

## \$30,792,940

### EXPENSES (Does not include depreciation)



# By the numbers: **VOLUNTEERS**



**917**  
ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

GROWING LEADERS  
**10**  
CORE VOLUNTEERS  
**480**  
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS  
**283**

**144**  
NEW VOLUNTEERS

**23,227** VOLUNTEER HOURS

"I love Thanksgiving Point's emphasis on *wholesome family activities* that encourage the entire family to interact together and build *wonderful memories*."

—Anonymous, 2023



# By the numbers:

## LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

### CURIOSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

IN-PERSON STUDENTS **9,290** IN-PERSON SCHOOLS **197**

IN-PERSON STUDENTS **15,432** VIRTUAL STUDENTS **10,775**  
IN-PERSON SCHOOLS **197** VIRTUAL SCHOOLS **131**

### EXPLORING LIFECYCLES

### FIELD TRIPS (2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR)

IN-PERSON STUDENTS **34,090** VIRTUAL STUDENTS **11,371**  
IN-PERSON SCHOOLS **459** VIRTUAL SCHOOLS **263**  
EVERY KID COUNTS SPONSORED FIELD TRIPS  
(COMMUNITY GROUPS, NOT TITLE 1 SCHOOLS) **293**

TITLE I STUDENTS ON  
**SCHOLARSHIP** **5,797** STUDENTS

SUMMER CAMP PARTICIPANTS **1,458** COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENT PARTICIPANTS **24,490**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASS PARTICIPANTS **322** COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES **5,754**  
GIRLS IN STEM **1,204**

### COMMUNITY CLASSES



# What to Expect: UTAH CHILDREN'S SCIENCE AND TECH CENTER

**In October 2023**, Thanksgiving Point announced that it is planning to build the Utah Children's Science and Tech Center. Offering hands-on learning for a variety of STEM topics, the new science center will inspire curiosity and foster a deeper understanding of our world. It will help prepare our children to enter STEM and become leaders and innovators.

Thanksgiving Point is uniquely suited to host Utah's premier STEM learning center. Known as Silicon Slopes, Utah is now a hub for tech and science, with the tech sector growing every year. A driving force locally and nationally, Utah's tech industry grew nearly five percent each year from 2008 to 2018, more than doubling the growth rate of the rest of Utah's economy. Among all states, Utah had the second-highest tech job growth rate (Kem C. Gardner Institute).

In order to stay at the top of the tech industry, Utah is presented with a need to expand science and tech learning, in the classroom and in the home. Children's interest and beliefs about their own capacities for success in science begin declining by middle school if they're not presented with opportunities to develop curiosity by age 7-9. Moreover, this decline is most evident in underrepresented groups, including girls, minorities, and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (National Library of Medicine).

This new science and tech learning center will create thousands of opportunities for kids to become curious and confident about various science and tech principles. They can explore beyond our planet with interesting astronomy exhibits. They'll study robotics, mechanical engineering, and information technology, being better prepared for an ever-evolving technological future. These are just some of the exhibits they will discover.

Through the Utah Children's Science and Tech Center, Thanksgiving Point will create pivotal passions in STEM. We will inspire our children to evolve with tech, to solve the challenges of the future, and to contribute to Utah's economy and workforce in a positive, influential way.

We are thrilled to host this new science center, and cannot wait to see the impact we have in Utah's future.







# Board of **TRUSTEES**

**Alan and Karen Ashton**

*Founders*

**McKay Christensen**

*CEO of Thanksgiving Point*

**Spencer Ashton**

*System Engineer, Harman-Management Corporation*

**Stephen Ashton, PhD.**

*Senior Director of Farm Country and Butterfly Biosphere*

**Scott Anderson**

*Chairman, Zions Bank*

**Mark Wolfort**

*Founding Executive, General Counsel for doTERRA*

**Jeanette Bennett**

*Executive Managing Director, President of Colliers*

**Ruth Todd**

*Executive Vice President, Bonneville Communications*

**Diane Acevedo**

*Senior Vice President of Operations, Gabb Wireless*



# Thank you to our **CURIOSITY CLUB MEMBERS**

Partners of Thanksgiving Point give generously to support our mission. We call this the Curiosity Club, because here at Thanksgiving Point, we help curious kids grow.

## **Platinum**

Mountain America Credit Union  
Child Family Foundation  
George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation  
Gardner Institute

Barbara Barrington Jones Family Foundation  
Ashton Family Foundation  
Deseret First Credit Union

## **Gold**

Dancing Moose Montessori School  
dōTERRA  
Adobe

Lehi City PARC  
Union Pacific  
Jack & Mary Lois Wheatley Family

## **Silver**

Joseph & Kathleen Sorenson Legacy Foundation  
NuSkin  
Silicon Slopes  
WCF Insurance  
The Pestana Family  
Williamson Family Foundation  
Big-D Construction  
Brad & Jenny Parker  
Brent & Cheri Andrus  
The Kahlert Foundation

KLAS Research  
Kem & Carolyn Gardner  
DMC  
Central Bank  
Built  
Oakdell Egg Farms  
US Synthetic  
Coca-Cola  
Sam & Mary Dunn  
UBB

## **Bronze**

Brandon & Kristen Fugal  
Digicert  
John & Lisa Van Wagoner  
UCCU  
Union Pacific  
Zions Bank  
Larson CPA  
Little Fiant Ladder Systems  
The Miner Foundation  
Sorenson Legacy Foundation  
Kellogg Family Foundation  
97th Floor  
Dan & Sarah Burton  
Cliff & Lila Lillywhite

Brady & Kristen Southwick  
ERA Brokers Consolidated  
Dusty & Crystal Pyne  
1800 Contacts  
Ellen & John Sperry  
Gallagher  
Kathie & Chuch Horman  
Jeff & Sandee Smith  
Lennar  
Love Communications  
The Lightweaver Foundation  
Molly & Mike Moesel  
Mike & Lori Peterson  
Morgan Stanley

Namify  
Okland Construcion  
Point of the Mountain Chamber  
Sales Rabbit  
Salt Lake Chamber  
Sheldon & Nicole Richards  
Sysco  
Ted & Stephanie Broman  
Texas Instruments  
SIRQ Construction  
Scheels  
Tracy & Mindy Anderson  
Yesco  
Visit Salt Lake

# Thank you to our **MEMBERS**

Thanksgiving Point is where curious kids grow. Thanksgiving Point members contribute annually through the purchase of annual property memberships for families, grandparents, individuals, and more.

## **A Thanksgiving Point membership supports:**

- New and improved venues that highlight STEM learning
- The Every Kid Counts initiative
- Scholarships for underprivileged kids
- After-school programs, homeschool groups, field trips, and more

The generosity of our members helps Thanksgiving Point bring the joy of learning and wonders of the natural world to life.









Thanksgiving  
Point

BUTTERFLY  
BIOSPHERE

IN PART A DONATION FROM THE JONES FAMILY FOUNDATION  
IN MEMORY OF MELBA RUTH HARRIS



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Lehi, UT 84043

801.768.2300

[ThanksgivingPoint.org](http://ThanksgivingPoint.org)

Our mission is to bring to life the joy of learning and wonders of the natural world through world-class experiences that engage, delight, and inspire.  
We welcome all to visit, dine, play, and explore together.