



***My Fantastical Backyard* Opens at the Mississippi Children's Museum – Meridian**

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MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM - MERIDIAN

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Meridian, Miss. – The Mississippi Children's Museum – Meridian's 25,000 square foot outdoor experience opened to the public this morning after a festive ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Representatives from the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM), MCM-Meridian, Mississippi Museum of Art, and local children gathered to cut the ribbon and welcome museum guests to explore the new *My Fantastical Backyard* outdoor exhibit gallery.

My Fantastical Backyard is a fenced-in, open-air gallery designed for children to unleash their imagination and experience the physical benefits of playing outdoors. From the exhibit floor, guests follow the colorful acrylic butterflies suspended from the museum's ceiling to access the outdoor experience.

"The 'backyard' is a transformational part of childhood where adventure is sought, forts built, the elements navigated, and new worlds discovered," said Liz Wilson, Executive Director of MCM-Meridian. "With over half an acre in *My Fantastical Backyard*, children can set out upon their own quest, just like Edgar Parker's fantastical characters who, along their journey, forged new friendships, conquered fears, and discovered new talents."

Children and families spent the day splashing in the Wily Waters stream, engaging their senses in the Enchanted Garden, traveling through the tunnels and trellises of the Wondering Woods, building sandcastles on the Secret Seashore, and playing games on the Lazy Lawn. The whimsical illustrated characters from the late children's book author, Edgar Parker, welcome you into each space of *My Fantastical Backyard* to prompt and inspire imaginative play and exploration.

"Meridian native, Edgar Parker, began his creative journey in childhood, exploring nature and sketching the world around him," said Betsy Bradley, Director of the Mississippi Museum of Art. "The artistic detail of his whimsical and fantastical characters is not only evidenced by his meticulous illustrations but also in the beautiful prose that weaves the vivid story of each personality. We are honored to partner with the Mississippi Children's Museum to share Parker's story and cultivate a deep joy of the beauty of the world around us."

MCM-Meridian opened to the public on March 27, 2021. The new museum features 9,500 square feet of indoor exhibits and 25,000 square feet of outdoor exhibits. Hours of operations are Tuesday - Saturday from 9 am - 5 pm and Sunday from 1 pm - 6 pm. General admission is \$10 per person. Annual museum memberships are available starting at \$100 for a family of three and can be purchased online at mcmmeridian.org. For families without young children, the MCM-Meridian Partners volunteer organization is a great way to support the museum.

About the Mississippi Children’s Museum - Meridian

The Mississippi Children’s Museum - Meridian (MCM - Meridian) is the East Mississippi satellite campus of the statewide Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM)—a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that creates unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning. MCM-Meridian is a 25,000-square-foot facility with exhibit space designed around three primary initiatives: Literacy and Arts; STEAM; and Health and Nutrition with Cultural Arts and Mississippi History woven throughout all galleries. Outdoors is a 25,000-square-foot exhibit gallery that allows children a safe and magical space to explore and enrich the learning experience. The museum’s exhibits, programs, and outreach opportunities will provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages. MCM - Meridian is a strategic part of the statewide Mississippi Children’s Museum which is dedicated to inspiring ALL of Mississippi’s children from ALL backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. To learn more about MCM – Meridian, visit www.mcmmeridian.org.

About the Mississippi Children’s Museum

The Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering in its visitors a passion for lifelong learning, improving the health and well-being of Mississippi children, and instilling a sense of state pride in all Mississippi residents. The mission of MCM is to create unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning. The goal of MCM is to inspire Mississippi’s children from all backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. The 40,000-square foot museum is designed around five primary initiatives, with correlating exhibits, programs and outreach efforts. These initiatives include: Literacy, STEAM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts and Mississippi Heritage—the keys to helping our children mature into healthy and productive adult learners. Museum exhibits provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages. To learn more about MCM, visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.

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