



New Additions Opening at the LeFleur’s Bluff Education & Tourism Complex This Fall

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Jackson, Miss. – Spotter’s Adventure Trail (a museum walking trail) and The Den (an outdoor pavilion) at the LeFleur’s Bluff Education and Tourism Complex (LBC) will open to the public on October 1st.



Spotter’s Adventure Trail will connect Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (MMNS), the Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM), and the LeFleur’s Bluff Playground, a state-of-the-art playground that has welcomed 100,000 visitors since opening in December of 2021. The 8-foot-wide trail features a fun and interactive outdoor experience with Spotter the Otter and friends, designed and illustrated by MCM’s Senior Graphic Designer, Lori Nesbit. Characters were brought to life through stories and exhibit elements by MDWFP’s staff and MCM’s Education Team, which was led by William Moore, Assistant Director of Exhibits.



“We are excited for the completion of another phase at the LeFleur’s Bluff Education & Tourism Complex. The adventure trail and outdoor amphitheater will connect visitors to fun outdoor recreational experiences. We are proud of the progress at LeFleur’s Bluff State Park; the playground was awarded by the Jackson Free Press as the 2022 Best New Addition to Jackson,” said MDWFP Acting Executive Director Lynn Posey.



The Den, located west of the playground, includes tables and seating for up to fifty students. Both museums will use the facility for field trips, events, and programs, including the award-winning Mississippi Science Festival and Park After Dark. An adjacent sloped lawn allows the structure to be used as an open-air amphitheater for large assemblies.

Join us on Saturday, October 1 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the LeFleur’s Bluff Complex to celebrate the grand opening of Spotter’s Adventure Trail and The Den. Guests can design Spotter’s flag, create Spotter’s Friends themed crafts, play with bubbles, and participate in a scavenger hunt. Live animal encounters will be hosted at The Den at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

“The LeFleur’s Bluff Complex is transformational for our state. This partnership, between two award-winning museums, will provide state-of-the-art amenities and educational opportunities for everyone who visits. The strategic plan is innovative and sparks a vision for the future of Mississippi, and we are grateful for the vision and commitment of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation’s board of directors, and our state leaders and legislators. As this new phase opens, Spotter’s Adventure Trail is particularly meaningful because it not only physically connects two award winning museums for a better visitor experience, but also connects families to the missions of the institutions with activities around literacy and conservation while celebrating outdoor play and our unique sense of place. said Susan Garrard, President/CEO of the Mississippi Children’s Museum.

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation funded the LeFleur’s Bluff Playground, Outdoor Pavilion and Museum Trail. The Foundation’s generous \$3.86 million made this innovative project possible, and the Foundation’s leadership team played a visionary role in developing the state-of-the-art playground and complex.

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“The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is proud to provide a myriad of inclusive outdoor opportunities at the LeFleur’s Bluff Complex to encourage children, families and others to spend time outside engaging in fun activities while developing life-long positive attitudes about the importance of being healthy,” said Thomas C. Fenter, MD, Foundation Board Chairman and President. “This project is important to the Foundation as it aligns with our strategic focus to empower sustainable and lasting change that is evident in both the built environment and in the health and well-being of all Mississippians.”

The LeFleur’s Bluff Complex is open seven days a week (Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Saturday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sunday: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.). Parking is available in the park and at both museums. Admission to the park is free and open to the public. MCM and MMNS welcome you to visit both museums during your visit to the park.

About Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation has a vision for a healthy Mississippi and provides targeted grants to fund sustainable initiatives and programs to improve the health and well-being of Mississippians. Through its vision and mission, the Foundation is impacting Mississippi’s communities and taking a leadership role in setting the future course for healthy living among all Mississippians. Visit www.healthiermississippi.org to learn more about the Foundation or its initiatives and programs.

About Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Foundation

The mission of the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Foundation is to augment the state’s efforts to ensure the conservation and enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources so they survive and thrive for current and future generations.

About the MDWFP’s Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks’ Museum of Natural Science is located in Jackson, tucked within historic LeFleur’s Bluff State Park. The museum overlooks a 300-acre natural landscape, an open-air amphitheater, and 2.5 miles of nature trails. Inside, enjoy face to face encounters with more than 200 species of live fish, turtles, alligators, and other animals in a 100,000-gallon aquarium network of underwater habitats. Explore 73,000 square feet of exhibits featuring natural Mississippi settings filled with native plants and wildlife including deer, waterfowl, fossils, and Mississippi’s endangered species. For nearly 90 years, the museum has thrilled and entertained visitors while pursuing its mission to promote understanding and appreciation of Mississippi’s biological diversity through collections, research, scientific databases, education, and exhibits; and to inspire the people of our state to respect the environment and to preserve natural Mississippi. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a member of the Association of Science - Technology Centers. Please visit www.mdwfp.com/museum for more information.

About the Mississippi Children’s MuseumThe Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission of creating unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning in all children. The 53,000-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. In response to community needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MCM shifted operating and programming priorities to best serve Mississippi’s children and combat learning loss through facilitating virtual schooling and creating online educational enrichment – services that continue today through a robust, daily afterschool program and an online platform for teacher professional development.

In 2021, MCM celebrated a monumental year by receiving an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Medal, the nation’s highest honor for museums, and through opening its first satellite museum, MCM-Meridian, which received the 2021 Governor’s Award for Travel Attraction of the Year. To learn more about MCM visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.