

WHERE SCIENCE HISTORY AND ART CONNECT

To: Raven Hill friends
From: Cheri
Date: May 17, 2025
Re: *Bridging the decades*

At Raven Hill, bridges are more than structures—they are symbols of connection. They link places, people, ideas, disciplines, generations **AND decades**.

More than 30 years ago, Raven Hill Discovery Center was founded on a simple but powerful belief: learning should be hands-on, minds-on, and deeply connected. In our first decade, we opened our doors to curious minds of all ages. With only a handful of exhibits and a big vision, we welcomed our first visitors and began laying the foundation for all that Raven Hill could become.

Boardwalks and pathways soon linked our growing collection of learning spaces, inviting movement, sparking exploration, and turning every walk into an adventure. At Raven Hill, each crossing became a discovery. Every step forward was a chance to learn something new.

Our second decade was marked by exciting growth and expansion. We added the Alternative Energy House and the Treehouse, as well as enlarging the main building to include the Art Corridor and Great

Room. Outdoors, we developed dynamic learning spaces like the Taxonomic (Taxi) Trail, the Earth Tones Music Garden, and Blurred Boundaries sculptures in the Ancient World. During this time, we also deepened our partnerships with schools and communities across the region. Bridges, both literally and symbolically, became powerful teaching tools. From the physics of tension and compression to the engineering behind stability and span, even a simple rope bridge became a hands-on lesson in design thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving. Thousands of students explored science, history, and the arts at Raven Hill during this time—making connections that extended far beyond the classroom.

Wetlands Boardwalk



Installed in 2003, the Wetlands Boardwalk is a modern Sweet Track, allowing visitors to cross the swamp and access Raven Hill's Ancient World exhibit.

Sweet Track



Named after Englishman Robert Sweet, a Sweet Track allowed ancient travelers to cross a bog or marsh rather than having to walk around it.

Rope Bridge



A bridge made from a single rope to walk on and another rope overhead to hold onto is a type of primitive suspension bridge often referred to as a monkey or Tibetan bridge.

Both challenges and milestones occurred during our third decade. We navigated the uncertainties of the COVID pandemic while continuing to grow in meaningful ways. The completion of the Evolving Technology Building and installation of the Connections Trail—including a wooden footbridge—expanded both our physical footprint and the visitor experience. The acquisition of land north of Deer Creek, at the junction of Fuller Road, Pearsall Road, and C-48, signaled a commitment to a more accessible and expansive future. During this time, Raven Hill also celebrated major partnerships with organizations like NASA and the Smithsonian Institution, allowing us to step confidently into a broader role as a trusted educational resource. Even in the face of adversity, our mission held strong—and our community grew deeper and more connected.

Now, as we begin our fourth decade, we are dreaming big. Building on a rich history, we are laying the groundwork for a more sustainable and far-reaching future. Plans are underway to expand staff, improve accessibility, enhance infrastructure, and launch new programs & exhibits—including our **Living STEM Lab at Deer Creek**. Raven Hill is evolving from a founder-led dream into a founder-inspired center—firmly anchored in this community and built to endure. Across time, Raven Hill has been a bridge: between science, history, and art; between formal and informal learning; and between generations of curious minds. Our programs and exhibits connect past knowledge to future discovery. Just as bridges bring people across rivers and ravines, Raven Hill brings families, teachers, students, and volunteers together, uniting them in the shared joy of learning.

We are grateful to everyone who has helped shape this journey. And as we move forward, we invite you to continue walking beside us. The best decades are yet to come, as Raven Hill grows into a place not only built to last but built to lead.

Spring is a wonderful time to visit the Center. Raven Hill is open weekends—noon to 4pm on Saturdays; 2pm to 4pm on Sundays, as well as holidays and other times by appointment. Beginning May 27, we will also be open weekdays from 10am to 4pm. Admission is \$10 per person. Please note that we often host field trip groups this time of year, but welcome families to come explore at the same time! The Center is also a perfect place for scout and 4H activities, birthday parties for youngsters & adults, retreats, weddings and other gatherings. For more information, email info@miravenhill.org or call Cheri at 231.536.3369.

Until next time, Cheri

Foot Bridge



Prehistoric people used fallen logs, stones and vines to cross streams and ravines. Early footbridges connected towns and were made of wood, stone or iron.

NEW Fuller Road Bridge



A newly installed steel/timber bridge connects the north and south sides of Fuller Road allowing for passage across Deer Creek and up to Raven Hill.