

Science Center gets \$10M in donations

Lauder, Koch group gifts add to \$62M total so far

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The Cox Science Center & Aquarium's efforts to fund a large-scale expansion have gotten a big boost from a pair of gifts totaling \$10 million.

Following a pre-holiday gift of \$8 million from Citadel founder and CEO Ken Griffin, Cox leadership announced on Monday two additional \$5 million gifts from resident Leonard Lauder and the David H. Koch Foundation.

The gifts bring the total raised for the center's newly expanded capital campaign to \$62 million, center representa-

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An interactive foundation is planned at the new Cox Science Center & Aquarium. COURTESY OF COX SCIENCE CENTER & AQUARIUM]

Center

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tives said Tuesday.

The Cox Science Center & Aquarium launched a \$40 million capital campaign in November 2021 and announced last month that it planned to double that goal following Griffin's gift and a \$10 million donation last summer from the state of Florida.

As part of the campaign's launch, the center changed its name to reflect a \$20 million lead gift from residents Wendy and Howard Cox.

"Just one year ago we launched a hugely significant campaign for the Science Center," said Lew Crampton, Cox Science Center & Aquarium board chairman and capital campaign chairman. "Thanks to tremendous support, we are confident in expanding our original plans with a new goal of \$85 million. We know Palm Beach County deserves a new, cutting-edge science center, and our supporters agree."

The \$5 million gift from Lauder, chairman emeritus of The Estée Lauder Companies, will support the coral reefs exhibit in the new aquarium.

The exhibit will showcase the colorful beauty of reef fish alongside propagated coral "frags," which will tell the story of avant-garde coral research happening in Palm Beach County.

"When I was a young boy, I went to museums after school," Lauder said. "Stepping into a museum was like entering another world, and I just loved it. I learned so much about art and history from those afternoons. When I look at the creative ways the Cox Science Center engages young people, I'm absolutely thrilled."

The \$5 million donation from the David H. Koch Foundation, a Wichita, Kansas-based nonprofit organization that strives to enrich the lives of individuals around the world through science and medical research, education, public policy and the arts, will be used to build an interactive fountain at the entrance to the science center.

The fountain will be an artistic representation of "STEAM" – science, technology, engineering, arts and math, the center said.

Koch, an industrialist, arts patron, political activist and longtime resident, died in 2019 at age 79.

"As a trained chemical engineer, David



The new Cox Science Center & Aquarium will feature a 200,000-gallon aquarium, as shown in this rendering. [COURTESY OF COX SCIENCE CENTER AND AQUARIUM]

was passionate about enhancing research and education in science," said Julia Koch, his widow. "I can think of no better way to honor his memory in this community than with this new fountain bearing his name. Its double-helix design accentuates the importance of the arts in STEAM education to the Cox Science Center's nearly 1 million annual visitors."

Expansion plans for the Cox Science Center & Aquarium include a new 68,000-square-foot science pavilion, a 6,000-square-foot digital exhibit gallery, 12,000 square feet of permanent exhibition galleries, a 7,500-square-foot temporary exhibition gallery, and a 5,000-square-foot grand entrance lobby.

Other additions include a Future Florida Exhibit focused on science, technology and innovation, as well as an extensive traveling exhibit gallery designed to host more popular exhibitions.

Other features of the new Cox Science Center and Aquarium are:

- A Digital Arts Studio, which will expand to provide more skill set training such as software programming that aligns with high-demand jobs. An outreach program in partnership with Florida Atlantic University will digitize and nationally distribute the center's current video programs.
- An indoor/outdoor exhibit area designed for early learners ages 6 and younger.
- Expanded programming in the DeKelboudi Planetarium and Observatory.
- An immersive learning lab that will serve as home base for First LEGO League teams and competitions.
- An expanded biology lab that con-

solidates the center's preferred provider status to all medical magnet schools in Palm Beach County.

- Expansion of the existing STEM Education Center that houses a state-of-the-art 3D printing program, coding instruction, and the Palm Beach Florida Chess Club.

- Expansion of the GEMS (Girls Excelling in Math and Science) program and other distance learning programs.

- An expansion of the center's educational partnership with the Palm Beach County School District.

A groundbreaking is expected in late spring, with a new targeted completion set for early 2026, the center said.

The Cox Science Center and Aquarium's current indoor/outdoor venue features more than 100 hands-on educational exhibits, a 10,000-gallon fresh and saltwater aquarium, digital planetarium, pre-K-focused "Discovery Center," 18-hole conservation-themed mini-golf course and quarter mile-long outdoor science trail. The Cox Amphitheater hosts daily live science shows, seasonal laser shows and special event programming.

For more information on the Cox Science Center's capital campaign, contact Melinda Grenz at 561-370-7723 or mgrenz@coxsciencecenter.org, or visit www.CoxScienceCenter.org/Support-us.

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