



MEDIA CONTACT
Mary Meluso
201.253.1335 | mmeluso@lsc.org

LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER RECEIVES \$5 MILLION BEQUEST FROM BETTY WOLD JOHNSON TO RENOVATE ITS 163-FOOT-TALL PYRAMIDAL TOWER

Gift From Late Johnson & Johnson Matriarch Will Create One Of The Most Spectacular Learning and Event Spaces in Metropolitan Area

JERSEY CITY, N.J., Sept. 22, 2020 – People who know the name Betty Wold Johnson would likely describe her as an extraordinary philanthropist, humanitarian and patron of the arts, the matriarch of the Johnson & Johnson multinational medical device and healthcare products company family, and the mother of the owners of the New York Jets football team.

But Mrs. Johnson also maintained an interest in astronomy, said Paul Hoffman, President and CEO of Liberty Science Center. “She followed developments in modern cosmology. Everything about black holes, I learned, delighted her. I fondly remember her asking me to read aloud a passage from one of Carl Sagan’s books. She greatly admired Sagan but never met him, and she enjoyed my telling her stories about what he was like in person.”

Mr. Hoffman offered this recollection in announcing that Mrs. Johnson, who died in May at age 99, had bequeathed \$5 million to the Center. He made the announcement last night at LSC’s Annual Genius Gala, held virtually this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bequest from Mrs. Johnson is earmarked for the renovation of LSC’s 163-foot-tall pyramidal tower. Upon completion in 2022, the structure, which is being renamed after her husband as the Robert Wood Johnson III Tower, will be one of the most dramatic learning and event spaces in the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut region, with its stunning 360-degree views of Jersey City, lower Manhattan, Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and the Verrazano Bridge. It will become a place where K-12 students make atmospheric and solar observations by day and track the moon, bright stars, and planets by night. Biology classes may observe the flight patterns of migratory birds from this perch, and New Jersey families might use telescopes to learn about the night sky together.

“Mrs. Johnson was an extraordinary woman whom I was fortunate to spend time with,” said Paul Hoffman, LSC’s president and CEO. “She visited LSC for the first time when she was in her mid-90s, after she heard that LSC was building the largest planetarium in the Western Hemisphere. Her assistant advised us that the visit would be strictly limited to an hour and would be confined to my office because she did not have the strength to walk around the Center.”

After a series of scheduling issues, she finally made it to LSC and that one hour morphed into a second hour and a tour of the entire Center. “She loved our naked mole rats and cotton-top tamarins. Later she told me that while she had always expected LSC to be a great place for children, she was pleasantly surprised to discover that it was also a great place for adults,” Mr. Hoffman recalled, adding that as part of LSC’s 25th anniversary campaign, she made her first \$5 million gift (in 2018) and “asked that it be used for non-glamorous facility needs like refurbishing bathrooms and plugging leaking roofs. Amazing!”

About Liberty Science Center

Liberty Science Center (LSC.org) is a 300,000-square-foot, not-for-profit learning center located in Liberty State Park on the Jersey City bank of the Hudson near the Statue of Liberty. Dedicated to inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers and bringing the power, promise, and pure fun of science and technology to learners of all ages, Liberty Science Center houses the largest planetarium in the Western Hemisphere, 12 museum exhibition halls, a live animal collection with 110 species, giant aquariums, a 3D theater, live simulcast surgeries, a tornado-force wind simulator, K-12 classrooms and labs, and teacher-development programs. More than 250,000 students visit the Science Center each year, and tens of thousands more participate in the Center's off-site and online programs. Welcoming more than 750,000 visitors annually, LSC is the largest interactive science center in the NYC-N.J. metropolitan area.