



## Nora Thompson: American Graduate Champion

Get to know a fascinating and dedicated educator! Nora is enriching the lives of children and families for the highly-regarded **Port Discovery Children's Museum** located in Baltimore, Maryland. We are proud to call Nora an [American Graduate Champion](#).

### About Nora

Nora has been promoting educational community outreach programs for children in Maryland since 1998 in her role as *Director of Education and Community Enrichment* at [Port Discovery](#). She has advocated with many state and national organizations to bring unique and cutting edge offerings to children in Maryland. She has created meaningful and impactful programming, from a mini exhibition on Nano Technology which can travel to libraries and community organizations, to special STEM afterschool programs. Nora has also been instrumental in organizing the annual *Countdown to Kindergarten* event at the Museum which promotes early Kindergarten registration.



### Motivation and Dedication

**MPT** asked Nora to share her experiences, and give us a closer look into the important work that she does to support and empower children.

**Maryland Public Television:** *Please tell us how you got started in this field and let us know what motivates you to work with children and families?*

**Nora:** As a child in the 60's I went to the Boston Children's Museum. It was magical and fed into my curious nature. To this day I can remember the exhibits and experiences. As I grew up, I always wanted to create magic like I experienced as a child. When I became a classroom teacher I would start the week off with a field trip and work with the children to identify curriculum areas they were interested in.

If we were studying the farm I would transform the classroom into a farm and prepare activities to support kids' interests. **I always wanted kids to LOVE learning!** I dreamed of working in a place like the museum and after spending 17 years working in disadvantaged neighborhoods, my chance to create a new kind of magic surfaced. I have been at Port Discovery for 21 years and will probably retire from here someday, but not until lots more FUN and JOY has been spread! **Hey, how often can one say that their dreams made MAGICAL moments for zillions of kids and families!**

**Maryland Public Television:** *You obviously have a passion for what you do. Can you share a story about how you made a positive difference for kids in Maryland?*

**Nora:** When I first began working at Port Discovery I designed and ran the flagship afterschool program. I would go to the neighborhoods in the city and work on site with the kids. This was all before the museum was built. I always told the children- this is going to be YOUR museum. I included them in discussions about what they wanted to see in a children's museum in addition to our usual afterschool program curriculum.



I explained that they were helping to design something special that would be there for children for years to come and it was IMPORTANT! The kids were open and honest and lots of good ideas and discussions came. When the BIG opening day came, one of my students showed up with her little brother dressed in their Sunday best. No parent, and 3 buses later, they were at the Museum. I greeted the little girl and asked where her adults were and she said they were working. I told her that this was HER museum and she was there with her little brother to check out what she helped to make.

**Empowerment is a beautiful thing!** I believe this is the role of places like children's museums.

Thank you Nora for being an  
**American Graduate Champion.**

