A New Era of Leadership: Get to Know Steve Dubnik

What can you tell us about your first days in your new role?

My wife, Claire, and I have a college-aged son and daughter, who have both been coming to the museum since they were children. We became members of the museum in the late 1990s, and I have fond memories of my daughter dressing up in the One History Place exhibit. I brought my children back recently to see all the changes at the museum, and they enjoyed it just as much now as they did then—if not more! I couldn’t pry them away from the pinball machines in Pinball Playland!

Do you have a favorite exhibit?

I particularly like Reading Adventur.land I grew up being a reading enthusiast as a child. I love the idea of our children daily in their younger years. The classic books represented in the exhibit played such a big role in our lives, and in the lives of so many other children. Plus, it’s such a creative space, and there’s something wondrous in its design. The story really comes alive around you. There are so many activities tucked away in the nooks and crannies, and its two-levels, so it’s almost endless amounts of learning and fun.

While on a recent walk through the museum, I stopped to watch a group of teenagers play a serious game of over-sized chess in Reading Adventur.land, and I enjoyed seeing that age-group interacting with the exhibit. I also happen to be a chess player.

How else do you like to play?

I enjoy playing golf socially, but I really love to fly. I grew up in north Georgia watching military planes return to their base and always dreamed of being a pilot. While I never made it into a fighter jet, I did earn my pilot’s license several years ago, and I now fly single-engine planes for enjoyment. They’re a toy to me. While I don’t fly them to get anywhere in particular, just for sight-seeing and to enjoy the view, I find myself almost completely focused on the here and the now. There’s something relaxing about that—constantly movement, the scenery is phenomenal.

Dubnik can often be found within the museum’s exhibit spaces where he enjoys interacting with guests of all ages. Says the next time you see him.

Raceway Arcade Now Open

Play your way through the history of electronic driving games at Raceway Arcade, now open in the museum’s Central Gallery, and learn about America’s long fascination with the need for speed. Start your engine, zip through the evolution of driving games, and see rare artifacts from The Strong’s unparalleled collections.

“Since the birth of the automobile at the end of the 19th century, Americans have been fascinated by the mystique of car racing. Driving games provided players with a way to imagine themselves speeding through treacherous cross-country tours and winding race tracks in the safety of the home.”

Jeremy Saucier, assistant director of The Strong’s International Center for the History of Electronic Games.

View pioneering games, such as the first electromagnetic arcade driving game, Drive Master (1969), and discover how the precursors to modern video games operated by examining the components and inner-workings of Chicago Coin’s Drive Master (1969). Explore the first racing arcade video game, Atari’s Gran Turismo (1974), and the rare and once controversial Death Race (1976)—inspired by the 1975 satirical cult film Death Race 2000—and criticized at the time for its depictions of violence.


Mark Your Calendar for June 24

Have a Ball Arcade

Bounce through the history of the ball and learn about the importance of ball play as a universal social, cultural, and human experience. Explore the history and form of ball games in ancient and contemporary cultures. Learn about the development of ball and bocce to ball-themed board games and video games—from Ancient Rome to the world today.

Have a Ball Arcade

Test your skills at a variety of redemption-style games such as Skeeball, Hoop Fever, Fish Bowl and Hungry, Hungry Hippos to collect tickets for prizes.

Bounce

Step into the ball lab and explore how balls travel, float, and bounce through pipes with the power of air. Challenge friends to a ball race!

Kick

Explore the world-wide popularity of soccer. Test your accuracy in a soccer cage and try to hit targets with a swift kick of the ball. A case of historic soccer balls and women’s soccer uniforms explores gender inequality in sports and the tension between organized sport and free play.

Roll

Examine the evolution of rolling games—from bocce to bowling—and see artifacts ranging from marbles to vintage pool cues. Playable machines in Raceway Arcade are ready for use with purchased tokens. Money collected from the sale of tokens helps maintain these original artifacts.
The museum’s year-round Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden has been transformed in recent months—and there are even more changes for 2017 on the way. Craig Sherwood, manager of grounds and live collections at The Strong, leads the team responsible for the garden and weighs in on these exciting new developments.

What’s ahead for Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden?
We’re rolling out some special themes and programs, and I’m happy to announce the first one, Orchids in Bloom, from April 14 to May 14. This program will add more than 150 orchids of all shapes and colors to the garden. The tropical environment provides the perfect conditions for these exotic plants to bloom. Many species of butterflies love to perch on orchids, as well, which will offer great photo opportunities. The orchids will be placed throughout the garden and blend with the unique architecture of the space.

Why orchids?
Orchids have long been popular in botanical circles, and they are one of the largest and most diverse of the plant families. There are more than 28,000 species and over 100,000 cultivated hybrids, and they inhabit nearly every continent. Many of the orchids you will see in Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden during Orchids in Bloom will be hybrids that originated from Central and South America, Asia, and Africa—much like the butterflies. They’re truly some of the most unique and beautiful flowers in the world!

What else is planned for this year?
To time with Halloween, we’re going to present a Dracula plant—named after the infamous carnivorous plants and butterflies that look like owls and beautiful flowers in the world!

Why butterflies?
Butterflies are some of the most beautiful winged creatures on the planet. Their wings are works of art, and they are a perfect example of evolution at its best. The butterflies in Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden are native to various parts of the world, from Asia to South America, and they are one of the largest and most diverse groups of insects. Some guests might not know but the garden is also home to moths. The Atlas Moth (Attacus Atlas), which is from Southeast Asia, is one of the largest moths in the world. Its wings can grow up to a foot across. Some guests might not know, but the garden is also home to moths. The Atlas Moth (Attacus Atlas), which is from Southeast Asia, is one of the largest moths in the world. Its wings can grow up to a foot across.

What are some of the new animals in the garden?
In addition to Ruby the red-footed tortoise, Socrates the green anole (smallest member of the green anole family), and all of the other wildlife in Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden, we’ve added a few new friends in the past year. Watson—a Panther chameleon—has quickly become a guest favorite. He’s very colorful, and depending on his mood, can turn shades of blue, green, red, and orange. Watson sometimes adopts this stunning shade of turquoise that you have to see to believe. We’ve also had some tiny additions to the garden in the past few months with hatchings of baby Chinese Button Quail. They’ve grown up quickly and can already be seen running around on the garden paths.

What’s your favorite part of working with the Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden team?
Every day is different in the garden. One day I might be working with the team to propagate plants, and another day we might be taking stock of a shipment of butterfly pupae. We also have a number of surprises—like when baby Chinese Button Quail hatch or an exotic plant blooms. Also, I’m a horticulturist in training, so being surrounded by so many unique, tropical plants every day makes me particularly happy. There’s something relaxing about the garden, and I enjoy seeing the looks on the faces of our guests who might be experiencing it for the first time or rediscovering its magic.

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Ready to Ride
School Break
Friday, April 14-Sunday, April 23
Gear up for spring break and celebrate the ultimate warm-weather mode of transportation, the bicycle (a 2000 inductee to the National Toy Hall of Fame). Create handlebar streamers and design a bicycle license plate. Craft a bike from pipe cleaners, test your knowledge of bicycle safety, and more. And visit the Hands-On Harley-Davidson™ exhibit to discover how bicycles evolved into fast-racing motorcycles.

Media sponsor: digital

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Over the Rainbow Weekend
Saturday & Sunday, April 29 & 30
There’s no place like...The Strong! Follow the Yellow Brick Road to meet Dorothy, Glinda, and the Wicked Witch of the West. Craft a magic wand, add a personalized “brick” and colorful paper flower to the 3-D Munchkinland mural, visit Pinball Playfields to defeat the Wicked Witch on the Emerald City Limited Edition Wizard of Oz pinball machine, and more!

Elvis All Shook Up!
Friday, April 28, 7 p.m.
Shake your hips at an all-ages, interactive performance featuring renowned Elvis Presley impersonator Patrick Johnson. Johnson gets the audience involved as he recreates the King’s concert years. Sing along with favorites such as “Suspicious Minds,” “Burning Love,” “Can’t Help Falling in Love” and other hits. Johnson is known for his high-energy show on stages across western New York, Canada, and Ireland.

Tickets are $15 and may be purchased at museumofplay.org. Performance made possible through the support of Mary Valentine, longtime friend of The Strong.

Fairy House Magic
Saturday, May 13
Flutter in for an enchanting, magical day. Meet Leafy the Fairy and get a sprinkle of fairy dust for good luck. Transform into a fairy, woodland sprite, or magical creature with delightful fairy wings. Play with whimsical building blocks and woodland animal and fairy puppets. Visit the Discovery Garden and view colorful fairy houses donated by artist Chris Palace. Enjoy story readings at 1 and 2:30 p.m. with Tracy Kane, award-winning author of the Fairy Houses book series. Be delighted by fairy-inspired music by Lyric Arts Academy at 2 p.m.

Enjoy inspiration from this enchanting day to build your own fairy house and submit it to the 2017 Corn Hill Arts Festival Fairy House Tour. Learn more about the Fairy House Tour at cornhillartsfestival.com.

Storytime Club
Celebrate the joy of reading. Hear children’s stories on select Mondays at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. Have your Storytime Club passport punched once during each visit. Collect five punches and receive a free children’s book.

Mondays, April 10 & 24
Shower and Flowers: learn about the changing seasons.

Mondays, May 8, 15 & 22
Animal Pals: go on the prowl for tales about wild animals and favorite pets.

Monday, June 5
Fun in the Sun: bask in summer-themed stories about seasonal activities and outdoor fun.

See programming details online at museumofplay.org.

Sponsored by Parent

Princess Palooza
Saturday & Sunday, April 1 & 2
Join beloved princesses as they use the principles of STEM—science, technology, engineering, and math—to solve puzzles, build contraptions, explore the principles of geometry, and more.

Join Snow White to uncover which princesses are with the best recipes. Once upon a time, the seven dwarfs built Snow White’s cottage. Which dwarf partner with Rapunzel to learn how to build her tower? Join Snow White to uncover which princesses are with the best recipes. Once upon a time, the seven dwarfs built Snow White’s cottage. Which dwarf partner with Rapunzel to learn how to build her tower?

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Pr
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school purchase contract for personal computers. timeshare computer for classroom use and later initiated the first statewide consortium of educational systems for providing computing to classrooms and MECC, including iconic games, such as The Oregon Trail, Storybook Weaver, and Word Muncher and internal pictures and press clippings describing the company and its impact on games and education. Started in 1973 as a consortium of educational systems for providing computing to classrooms throughout Minnesota, MECC operated the first statewide mainframe timeshare computer for classroom use and later initiated the first statewide school purchase contract for personal computers.

The Strong recently acquired a rare Magnavox Mini-Theater, the first promotional display unit used to introduce home video games to the American public. The Strong also acquired a Magnavox Odyssey and materials related to early home video games. The Magnavox Mini-Theater will be on display in The Strong's eGameRevolution exhibit beginning in summer 2017.

 Acquisition Reveals History of Early Video Game Merchandising The Strong recently acquired a rare Magnavox Mini-Theater, the first promotional display unit used to introduce home video games to the American public. Magnavox dealers and salespeople used the Magnavox Mini-Theater to promote and explain legendary video game inventor Ralph Baer’s 1972 Magnavox Odyssey, the first commercial home video game console.

“It’s remarkable that this unit survived,” says Jeremy Saucier, assistant director of the International Center for the History of Electronic Games (ICHEG). “This is the only working Magnavox Mini-Theater with the original Odyssey promotional film known to exist.”

The promotional display unit includes the original 8mm film (digitized by the museum) that features a five-minute presentation about the Magnavox Odyssey, including how to hook up the Odyssey to a television set and what types of games came with the console. The accompanying film portrays the transformation of a middle-class American family’s television watching from a passive experience to an interactive family activity. By the 1980s, Atari, Nintendo, and other video game manufacturers relied on similar interactive merchandising display units to introduce new products and provide consumers the opportunity to play and preview some of their best games before purchasing them.

This rare artifact represents the first example of interactive video game merchandising and complements The Strong's unsurpassed collection of artifacts and materials related to early home video games. The Magnavox Mini-Theater will be on display in The Strong's eGameRevolution exhibit beginning in summer 2017.
The Strong to Host Second Annual Education Conference

The Strong is set to host its second annual education conference with keynote speaker Steven Levy.

Levy, an award-winning teacher and educational consultant for Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education—a nationally known not-for-profit organization serving students and teachers—will present “Playful Learning in the Primary Classroom” alongside The Strong’s Assistant Vice President for Education, Debbie McCoy. The one-day conference, taking place at the museum on Friday, May 5, will help educators and school administrators explore the role of play and its potential to support the learning and development of students in kindergarten through second grade.

“By incorporating playful learning strategies into the classroom, teachers can tap into young children’s natural love of stories, imagination, and movement,” says McCoy. “These strategies help prepare students for success in school and in life.”

The conference features a keynote address by Levy, interactive workshops, and thought-provoking panel discussions, as well as the opportunity for school administrators to bring these educational concepts to life.

To learn more or to register, visit museumofplay.org/play-conference.
Longtime Donor Creates Woodbury School Tuition Assistance Fund

The G. Rollie Adams Tuition Assistance Fund, recently established by The Mary Valentine and Andrew Cosman Trusts, will provide financial support to families whose children might otherwise not be able to attend The Strong’s Woodbury School. The fund is named in honor of The Strong’s former president and CEO, G. Rollie Adams, and will provide up to $5,000 each year for a five year period.

“The establishment of this fund is a meaningful tribute to Rollie Adams’ career, as well as our recognition of the educational impact of play—and at the same time it supports the goals that Mary and Andrew identified during Andrew’s lifetime to expose students to activities that promote creative thinking and the power of choice,” says Debbie McCoy, assistant vice president for education at The Strong.

Woodbury School is inspired by the Reggio Emilia teaching approach, which encourages teachers and students to work together to plan the curriculum and create projects. Set among the museum’s engaging, dynamic exhibits, the school fosters creativity and self-discovery through playful activities. Visit the education section of museumofplay.org to learn more about Woodbury School.

Former Strong President and CEO Honored

More than 200 dignitaries, community leaders, friends, and museum supporters gathered on January 26 for a retirement celebration in honor of The Strong’s former President and CEO G. Rollie Adams. Among the honors bestowed on Adams that evening was the key to the City of Rochester and the designation of G. Rolli Adams Day in Monroe County.

Also at the event, The Strong’s Board of Trustees announced that the museum’s Caterpillar Atrium would be renamed the G. Rolli Adams Atrium.

“The renaming of the atrium is especially appropriate in that the space bridges the old museum footprint to the portion opened 10 years ago, much like Rolli’s leadership bridged the change in museum missions, subsequently positioning the museum as the only collections-based museum in the world devoted to the study of play,” says Laura Saxby-Lynch, chair of The Strong’s Board of Trustees.

The event was generously sponsored by Nox Cocktail Lounge with additional support provided by Zimmet Group, Tucker Printers, Conolly Printing, and Nolan’s Rental.

Thank You Corporate Partners

Businesses that make a financial contribution to The Strong as corporate partners and sponsors provide meaningful support for the museum while receiving valuable benefits for their employees. To learn how your company can participate, contact Michalle Parnett-Dwyer at 585-410-6353 or mdwyer@museumofplay.org.

Thank you to these corporate partners and sponsors for renewing their commitment:

- GUND Division of Enesco, LLC
- Hammer Packaging
- KeyBank
- Mary Thureau-Friel
- Messenger Carpeting
- Monroe Veterinary Associates
- Nixon Peabody
- Spectrum Creative Arts
- Tasteful Connections
- Thomson Reuters
- Woods Oviatt Gilman

The Strong Awarded Major Funding to Promote Tourism

New York State’s Empire State Development Corporation and I LOVE NEW YORK under Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative recently awarded The Strong grant funds to help support a second year of a major tourism marketing program.

“The Strong is pleased to have Empire State Development renew its support of our program to grow tourism to The Strong and to New York’s Finger Lakes Region,” says Suzanne Seldes, The Strong’s executive vice president and chief marketing officer. “We expect to build on and expand on the strategic and wide-ranging efforts launched in 2016 to drive even more tour installation New York State from other parts of North America, and from several other countries that align with New York State Division of Tourism strategies to grow inbound tourism.”

The project is based on a strategic sales and marketing plan that includes participation in sales missions and travel trade shows, as well as connecting with group tour operators; a travel trade program, including participation in the “ultimate play destination for all ages” brand promise to consumer audiences residing outside the region; collaboration with I LOVE NEW YORK-sponsored programs in priority global markets; and further development of itineraries, mobile apps, and other experience aids, many available in multiple languages.

The Strong’s board also elected Michael J. Cicero as assistant treasurer and named Bernhard Blinkbaum and Aaron Newman as new members of its Executive Committee.

The Strong Welcomes Distinguished Guests

Video game historian Jeremy Halter from Denmark, author of The Digital Antiquarian blog, returns to The Strong to research computer game history. Halter first conducted research at the museum in 2016.

Representatives from LLCD, Travel Pack of Boston tour The Strong with Chinese journalists and museum staff.

The American Journal of Play Welcomes New Editor

The Strong recently named Jeremy Saucier, PhD, assistant director for its International Center for the History of Electronic Games, as editor of the American Journal of Play. Saucier previously served as book editor for the Journal. He holds an undergraduate degree in American studies and a doctorate in American history. Saucier is also the author of scholarly articles and essays on video game history and has taught in adjunct and visiting assistant professor capacities at the University of Rochester, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and St. Bonaventure University.
The Happiest Hour Returns April 26

Don your blue suede shoes and leather jacket and soak up the atmosphere at The Strong on Wednesday, April 26, from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. for the Happiest Hour—a RoC-themed evening, complete with an Elvis impersonator. Enjoy a sampling of snacks courtesy of Murdoch Street Bar and Grill and a cash bar featuring the local beers of Roc Brewing Co. while exploring two floors of hands-on, interactive exhibits, including Hands-On Harley-Davidson and Racetrack Arcade. The evening will also feature a dance party with music by DJ Naps from BreakThrough Entertainment, a grown-up obstacle course courtesy of Rochester Foam Dart League, and more.

The ticketed, after-hours fundraiser is for “big kids” age 21 and older and presented by Mary Valentine, longtime friend of The Strong. Proceeds from The Happiest Hour help to support The Strong’s overall educational mission and community outreach programs. Visit museumofplay.org/happiesthour to purchase tickets.

Initiative Encourages School Attendance

The Strong is partnering with Rochester City School District and Causewave Community Partners on the Cold Can? Stop Us Winter Attendance Challenge, to help combat chronic absenteeism at 14 area schools. The Strong will provide students in pre-K through grade three, who demonstrate excellent attendance, the opportunity to visit the museum with their family. The program is part of the Every Minute in School Matters initiative that aims to break the cycle of poverty by encouraging high levels of school attendance.

“Winter in Rochester usually makes it harder for families to get their young child to school every day,” said Todd Butler, Causewave president & CEO. “But so much of the foundation for success is laid in those early years, which makes attendance an urgent priority. The Strong really stepped up to reward those RCSD families who make excellent attendance happen for their student.”

Foundation Provides Museum Admission

In January, The Max and Marian Marsh Charitable Foundation provided funding for 100 students and their caregivers from School #45 in Rochester, New York, to experience Celebrating Diversity Day at The Strong. The day offered guests engaging opportunities to learn about cultural differences and racial equality. More than 3,000 guests attended the event, including those from the school.

Out and About

In February, President and CEO Steve Dubnik shared details about The Strong Neighborhood of Play project proposal in the Rochester Business Journal Downtown Development Power Breakfast.

Dubnik also represented The Strong alongside Chris Bench, vice president for corporations, at Toy Fair in New York City. In February, Bench also attended the Wonder Women dinner in New York City organized by Women in Toys.

In March, Assistant Vice President for Education Debbie McCoy led a workshop on storytelling and imaginative play for Victor Central School District teachers, as well as offered a presentation about how play supports learning and child development to students in Rochester Institute of Technology’s School of Design.

Tourism Sales Associate Karen Dodson represented The Strong at several travel trade shows during the first quarter of the year including the International Inbound Travel Association Showcase in Biloxi, Mississippi, and the National Tour Association Travel Exchange in St. Louis.

In March, Senior Director of Public Relations, Shane Rhoades, attended Tourism Action Day in Albany, New York.
Happy Pirates Embark on New Adventure

Saturday, April 22, 1 & 3 p.m.
Sunday, April 23, 1 & 3 p.m.

Sail into The Strong and join Rochester’s beloved Happy Pirates on their newest adventure. After more than 20 years of award-winning family entertainment, Gary the Happy Pirate has been promoted to admiral and is handing over his ship to a whole new crew. Jump on board and sing and dance to all the Happy Pirate favorites—and enjoy a few humourous surprises—during the new crew’s maiden voyage. Meet Captain Gully, the ukulele-playing, fun-loving leader; Scuttle, the prankster; and Sharkbait, the silly crewmate with a big heart.