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OMSI and the Portland Garment Factory Unveil Science-informed Lab Coats for OMSI Science Educators

Collaboration led to innovative lab attire that meets the unique needs of a science educator

[PORTLAND, OR – June 14, 2023] – Soap bubbles, sticky slime, fire, foam, toddler-treaded floors, and all the fun and mess that goes along with hands-on science, educators at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry’s (OMSI) face a barrage of challenges in their day-to-day work that can take a toll on attire. A recent collaboration between OMSI and local Portland design and fabrication studio, the Portland Garment Factory (PGF), has resulted in innovative and ingenious lab coats that offer solutions to the various needs of science museum educators.

A recent brand refresh at OMSI that incorporates more color sparked an opportunity to restock old, monochromatic lab coats with an upgraded design that better suits the varied needs of staff. From deeper pockets to increased ventilation, places for pens, supplies, a walkie talkie as well as room to add personal flair, the new lab coats are unique, easily identifiable, and highly effective. The new lab coats were designed with many body types in mind; they are gender-neutral, unique, easily identifiable, and highly effective.

“PGF’s product development had a great time ideating to prototyping a garment that met the specifications of a science educator,” said Britt Howard, Portland Garment Factory’s Owner/Founder and Creative Director. “From sourcing materials, trims, and print vendors to fabricating a jacket that’s stylish, durable, sustainable, and properly functional to meet OMSI’s needs. It was the type of challenge our team loves to tackle.”

The creation of the lab coats is a full circle career moment for Howard. As a teenager Howard herself worked for OMSI, giving her a keen understanding of the day-to-day life of a science museum employee. Portland Garment Factory put sustainability, quality, longevity of products, and ethical manufacturing processes at the forefront of its decision making, a process that aligned with OMSI’s values and resonated with the educators for whom the lab coats were designed.

“PGF’s values and approach to innovation really spoke to our team,” said Andrew Haight, Director of Guest Engagement and Programs at OMSI. “We truly enjoyed partnering with such a collaborative and industrious community partner. In fact, we’re featuring an exhibit about the lab coats’ manufacturing process on display in OMSI’s Theory restaurant.”



The exhibit, designed by PGF, will go on display June 26th. It will give audiences a peek behind the scenes of PGF's concept-to-market process in an easily digestible format for all ages.

A big part of PGF's sustainability initiative is being a zero-waste, soft-goods manufacturing facility. PGF upcycles all its scraps into new products and pulverizes the smallest scraps into fill for various items such as soft sculptures, pillows, and seating cushions. Upon delivery of OMSI's new lab coats, PGF will collect OMSI's old lab coats and aprons and create playful upcycled seating poufs that museum visitors will be able to interact with and enjoy sitting on.

"I can't wait to see our old lab coats reprocessed into poufs," said Elizabeth Andanen, Learning Strategist - Programs and Experiences at OMSI. "While our new jackets will help us activate the guest experience, our old lab coats will give them a place to rest."

"Britt leads an innovative team looking to support museums and educators across the country," said Patricia Brooke, Senior Development Director at OMSI. "Our partnership was a terrific example of working together to find creative solutions specific to a science center. Since Britt was an "OMSI-kid" she knows how important the work we all do is!"

OMSI educators will start receiving lab coats immediately. The upcycled seating will be completed and delivered by the end of summer 2023.

About Portland Garment Factory

Portland Garment Factory is a full-service creative design and fabrication studio led by PGF founder Britt Howard. The zero-waste facility works with brands, agencies, artists, and designers to create incredible soft goods for commercial, experiential retail, hospitality, and high-fashion environments. PGF is women-owned and B Corp certified. Portland Garment Factory is located at 311 SE 97th Ave, Portland, OR 67216. To learn more about them you can visit portlandgarmentfactory.com and connect with them on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

About OMSI

Founded in 1944, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) is one of the nation's leading science museums and a trusted educational resource for communities throughout Oregon and the region. Through museum exhibitions, public programs, outdoor programs, traveling exhibitions, digital learning, and learning research and design, OMSI nourishes a lifelong love of science, curiosity and learning among its diverse audiences. The upcoming [OMSI District](#) - a collaboration of local, Tribal and regional government entities, nonprofits and businesses - will be a one-of-a-kind neighborhood with innovation, culture and science learning at its heart. OMSI is located at 1945 S.E. Water Avenue, Portland, OR, 97214. For general information, call 503.797.4000 or visit omsi.edu. Connect with the museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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