

PLAY BOOK

2024



**CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM**

of Southern
Minnesota

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



A note from **Parker Skophammer**

Board Chair | Director of Finance and Administrative Services, City of Mankato

This year has marked tremendous growth at the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota, further establishing us as a key regional asset. We're proud that over 40% of our visitors travel from more than 75 miles away, demonstrating the wide-reaching impact of our Museum. With our interactive, hands-on exhibits and programming, we continue to provide enriching experiences for children and families across the region.

Your support makes all the difference, and together, we are igniting curiosity and a love of learning in every child who walks through our doors.

Thank you for being part of this important journey.



Shane Van Engen, Vice Chair
President,
Frandsen Bank



Mohamed Ibrahim
Lead Internal Consultant,
WellShare International



Sheri Sander-Silva
Executive Director, Feeding Our
Communities Partners



Paul Shneider, Exec. Committee
Shareholder,
Fafinski Mark & Johnson, P.A.



Kaite Keepers, M.D.
OB/GYN,
Mankato Clinic



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Retired Technology Director,
Le Sueur/Henderson School District



Tara Torseth, Treasurer
CPA, MBT, Partner,
Abdo



Linda Leiding
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Professor, College of Business,
Minnesota State University, Mankato



Heather Von Bank, PhD., Secretary
Chair, Dept. of Family and Consumer
Science, Minnesota State University, Mankato



Mollie Meyer
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Schools



Chastity Valvick
Communications Consultant,
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Rick Halbur
Partner, Gislason & Hunter LLP,
New Ulm



Nate Mullikin
Enterprise Leader,
Taylor Corporation



Gwen Westerman, PhD.
Professor, College of Arts and Humanities,
Minnesota State University, Mankato



Katie Heintz
Director, Culture, Recreation &
Quality of Life, City of North Mankato



Trevor Park
Assistant Vice President,
United Prairie Bank, New Ulm



Christy Wilking
Community Relations Officer,
Mayo Clinic Health System



From the CEO

This year has been rewarding in so many ways. We are on par to welcome a total of 110,000 visitors. That is a 8% increase over last year!

We worked with ISG to revise building designs for the expansion project. Their final product is perfect and will serve our visitors, staff and community in new impactful ways once it is built out.

We engaged deeply with Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds out of Toronto, Canada to create an amazing nature play scape that transforms our 3.5 acre site into an incredible play experience. We are honored to be working directly with Adam Bienenstock, owner and founder of Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds. He is convinced our project will have a significant impact in the region and beyond. More will be shared publicly on these designs in the coming months.

Thank you all for the support of the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota! I am grateful for all of the support we enjoy from members, guests, Board of Directors, donors, volunteers, and our phenomenal staff.



Louise C. Dickmeyer

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Ellie Aita
FRONT DESK

Donna Bengtson
PLAYWORKER

Sarah Bjorklund
GUEST EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

Cathy Brown
PLAYWORKER

Kathleen Burns
DIRECTOR OF MUSEUM
EXPERIENCE

Rachel Compart-Gemlo
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING

Louise Dickmeyer
CEO

Ron Evan
FACILITIES SUPPORT

Sarah Hamilton
GUEST EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR
& FRONT DESK

Alyssa Hadler
PLAYWORKER

Isabel Julian
PLAYWORKER

Cheri Klecker
GUEST EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

Kim Kleven
VP OF PLAY AND LEARNING

Annika Lowrey
PLAYWORKER

Kim Luiken
OPERATIONS MANAGER

Mike McDougall
FACILITIES MANAGER

Hallie O'Connor
EXHIBITS MANAGER

Tasha Oliver
BUTTERFLY HOUSE COORDINATOR
& PROGRAM FACILITATOR

Crystal Olson
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Heather Otto
VP OF OPERATIONS

Samantha Seifert
PLAYWORKER

Jaci Sprague
VP OF DEVELOPMENT

Sadie Williams
PLAYWORKER



2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

2,900

Total active memberships in 2024.

103,592

Visitors to CMSM so far this year, including members, guests, and group visitors.

38

Visitors have come from 38 other states.

336

CMSM has welcomed visitors from 336 cities throughout Minnesota.

gateway to **PLAY**

opening the door for ALL children to experience the joy of learning through the Power of Play at the Children's Museum

1,020
SCHOLARSHIP
MEMBERSHIPS

Scholarship memberships provided to families that experience barriers to the Museum. Qualifiers include EBT, Medical Assistance, Free/Reduced School Meals, WIC, Foster Care, IEP, and more.

Total Value: \$158,100

835
MUSEUMS
FOR ALL

Museums for All is a nationwide program that offers discounted admission to those who qualify for public income-related assistance.

Total Value: \$8,350 In discounts

4
SAAP
EVENTS

Sensory Awareness and Accessibility Playtimes allow children and families with sensory challenges to experience the Museum when there are a limited number of visitors present.

Total Value: \$2,000

494
BLUE STAR
MUSEUMS

Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families offering free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families.

Total Value: \$6,422

4,927
SCHOOL
ADMISSIONS

School Group Visits receive a 10% discount per student and 50% discount for chaperones and staff accompanying the experience.

Total Value: \$18,872.50

118
PARTNER
ADMISSIONS

CMSM collaborates with many organizations throughout the community to offer free and discounted admission for children and families. *More info on these partners on the following page.*

Total Value: \$7,670

gateway to play

IMPACT PARTNERS

collaborative partnerships with child and family service organizations extend the Museum's impact throughout southern Minnesota

2024 KEY EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS:

- 1000 play passes for **Feeding Our Community Partners**
- Free admission for **YMCA** Brother/Sister mentors
- Engaging with **Teenage Parent Program (TAPP)**
- Supporting local high school Child Development classes
- Participating in the **Greater Mankato Area United Way** Reading Festival
- **COPAL** backpack distribution site
- **Lake Crystal Lions Club** KidsSight Vision Clinic
- Hosted "Single Caregiver of Children Resource Fair" with **LifeWorks Planning Center**
- Oral Health Care Screening events
- Hosting Mankato **YWCA** New Families advisory group and programs
- Drop-off site for **Feeding Every Baby, Inc**
- Support Professional Memberships for **Fernbrook Family Center Inc, Blue Earth County Human Services, MAPS Futures School, and MVAC Head Start Home Visitors**



gateway to play

CASE STUDY

The Olilo Family



Faith and Franck Olilo and their two-year-old daughter Maylie.

In April of 2022, the Olilo family welcomed daughter Maylie into the world. Her arrival coincided with Franck's pursuit of a master's in statistical analysis at Minnesota State University, Mankato, while Faith was working as a pharmacy technician. Franck, originally from Ivory Coast in Western Africa, encountered employment barriers with his student visa. Faith, a Mankato native, highlighted the financial challenges during Franck's student years, including living costs, childcare, and the delicate juggling act of balancing schedules.

Faith learned about the Gateway to Play Scholarship through her mother, who shared the opportunity as the weather turned colder and Maylie became more mobile. Initially hesitant, Faith felt encouraged by the chance to give her five-month-old Maylie an outlet for her energy. Though she worried about taking a spot from a family in greater need, she recognized the program as a valuable step toward stability for her own family.

The Gateway to Play Scholarship brought immediate relief, eliminating the financial worry that often accompanies outings with a young child. The program offered more than just access to the Museum; it became a sanctuary for play, fostering peace of mind for the Olilo family. Through Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) playdates, the Olilos connected with other families, establishing a sense of community that extended beyond the Museum walls.

Maylie's formative years unfolded in the Infant and Toddler Play Porch, where she not only developed motor skills

but also gained confidence. It was within the welcoming confines of this exhibit that Maylie achieved a significant milestone—learning to navigate up and down stairs (which their family apartment did not offer), a feat celebrated by her family. The Infant and Toddler Play Porch quickly became the Olilo family's favored destination, playing an instrumental role in fostering Maylie's cognitive and emotional growth.

As Maylie continues to embark on her journey of growth, she has graduated to scaling the heights of the Mankato Clinic Tree of Forts and exploring the Dotson Back 40 and the H2OGO Water Gallery. These diverse experiences, marked by occasional wardrobe changes after spirited adventures, contribute significantly to Maylie's confidence, adventurous spirit, and natural curiosity.

Faith highlighted the peace of mind that the Gateway to Play Scholarship brought to their family, providing a safe and affordable space for Maylie to play. The program's reliability and affordability ensured that the Olilos could always count on a safe and engaging environment.

Maylie's experiences at the Museum extended beyond play—they enhanced her patience and understanding of other children, fostering social awareness and development. The Museum's sense of community became their place for playdates, offering routine and a chance for the Olilos to connect with other parents. The community at the Museum provided emotional support and a platform for shared parenting experiences.

The Olilo family's story serves as a testament to the transformative power of inclusive play and community building. Living in a small apartment, the Museum became an ideal location for playdates, fostering connections and joy. Looking ahead, Faith eagerly anticipates the opportunity to give back and support families like hers through the Gateway to Play Scholarship.





Brennan Companies
Judges' Choice 1



Schwicker's
Judges' Choice 2



Kiwanis Holiday Lights
Judges' Choice 3



Exclusively Diamonds
Top Fundraiser



Kiwanis Holiday Lights
People's Choice



The Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota recently invited the community to join the fun of its awe-inspiring fundraising event: Ignite the Night.

Presented by **TAYLOR**

Teams of six adults came together to unleash their imagination and craftsmanship through PLAY! Sparking their inner child, teams had 60 minutes to use an array of loose parts to design and build extraordinary creations. Judges awarded exceptional achievements, including People's Choice, Judges' Choice, and Top Fundraiser.

Spectators witnessed the teams craft their sculptures firsthand, cheering them on as they brought their visions to life. "Ignite the Night combined creativity with a great cause," said Jamie Jacobs, Ignite the Night committee chair. "We were thrilled to see

teams transform loose parts into extraordinary exhibits. Knowing it was all in support of the Museum made the experience even more special."

THE TEAMS:

- APX
- Brennan Companies
- Exclusively Diamonds
- First National Bank
- Kitchen, Baths, and More
- Kiwanis Holiday Lights
- Mankato Clinic
- Schwicker's



180 GUESTS



\$51,206 RAISED



8 TEAMS



Ignite the Night Committee: Jamie Jacobs (chair), Christi Wilking, Jenna Worrell, Jessica Wolfe, Carrie Kijenski, Josh Mazur, Becky Wagner, Sue Schwickert, Nicole Bardon, Jenny Benzel.



Ignite the Night judges: Charlie Liftridge, Heidi Boyum, Sarah Richards, Sue Schwickert, Paul Peterson

“

“We were excited to offer sponsorship opportunities for *Ignite the Night*, allowing businesses like our presenting sponsor Taylor Corporation to be part of this exciting initiative, gaining visibility while helping us achieve our fundraising goals. As a regional community asset, CMSM values all of our strong community partnerships that support our mission to ignite the natural curiosity of every child through the power of play in a dynamic, awe-inspiring environment.”

—Jaci Sprague, Vice President of Development

CURIOSITY CAMPS

25**CAMPS**

including single day, three day, and early out days

238**CAMPERS served****44****SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED**
totalling \$3,745

Engaging young minds through play

Whenever a new program is piloted, there are many moving parts to consider. Just getting all those moving parts to launch successfully can be a feat in itself. When our Education & Programming team started to develop a camp concept the name Curiosity Camps was an easy decision. The definition for *curiosity* is a “quality related to inquisitive thinking such as exploration, investigation, and learning.” Our desire was to create a program that would meet these qualities for the children. Our second goal was to provide additional options for high-quality experiences when school is not in session and families are looking for care.

As we wrap up our “pilot” year of Curiosity Camps we reflect on the many successes and joys that came out of the year. We welcomed 238 campers to join us for different experiences such as: “Innovations in Action”, “Solve

It”, and “Tech Tinkerers”. We collaborated with community partners, volunteers, and worked hard to create fun and engaging experiences for children to engage in. 3M employees from New Ulm’s plant brought in a “rocket launch” experience, our OKIES sewing volunteers helped campers sew projects, and a favorite day was spent playing with slime... lots of slime!

Led by highly qualified Museum staff who are Minnesota Licensed Educators, each camp ensured a high-quality experience for all participants, combining developmentally appropriate content with an emphasis on creativity and enjoyment. Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, with parents praising the camps as valuable experiences that allowed children to return home full of stories, new knowledge, and friendships.





Scholarship Initiative

In a notable effort to make Curiosity Camps accessible to all children, CMSM partnered with the Xcel Energy Foundation to offer scholarships. This initiative aligned with CMSM's mission to ensure that all families, regardless of income, language, ability, or special needs, have the opportunity to experience the joy of learning through play.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Xcel Energy Foundation for their generous support," said Kim Kleven, Vice President of Play & Learning at CMSM. "These scholarships provide opportunities for children who may not otherwise be able to participate in our Curiosity Camps, igniting a love for learning and exploration."



"By supporting scholarships for Curiosity Camps, we hope to inspire the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and leaders in our community."



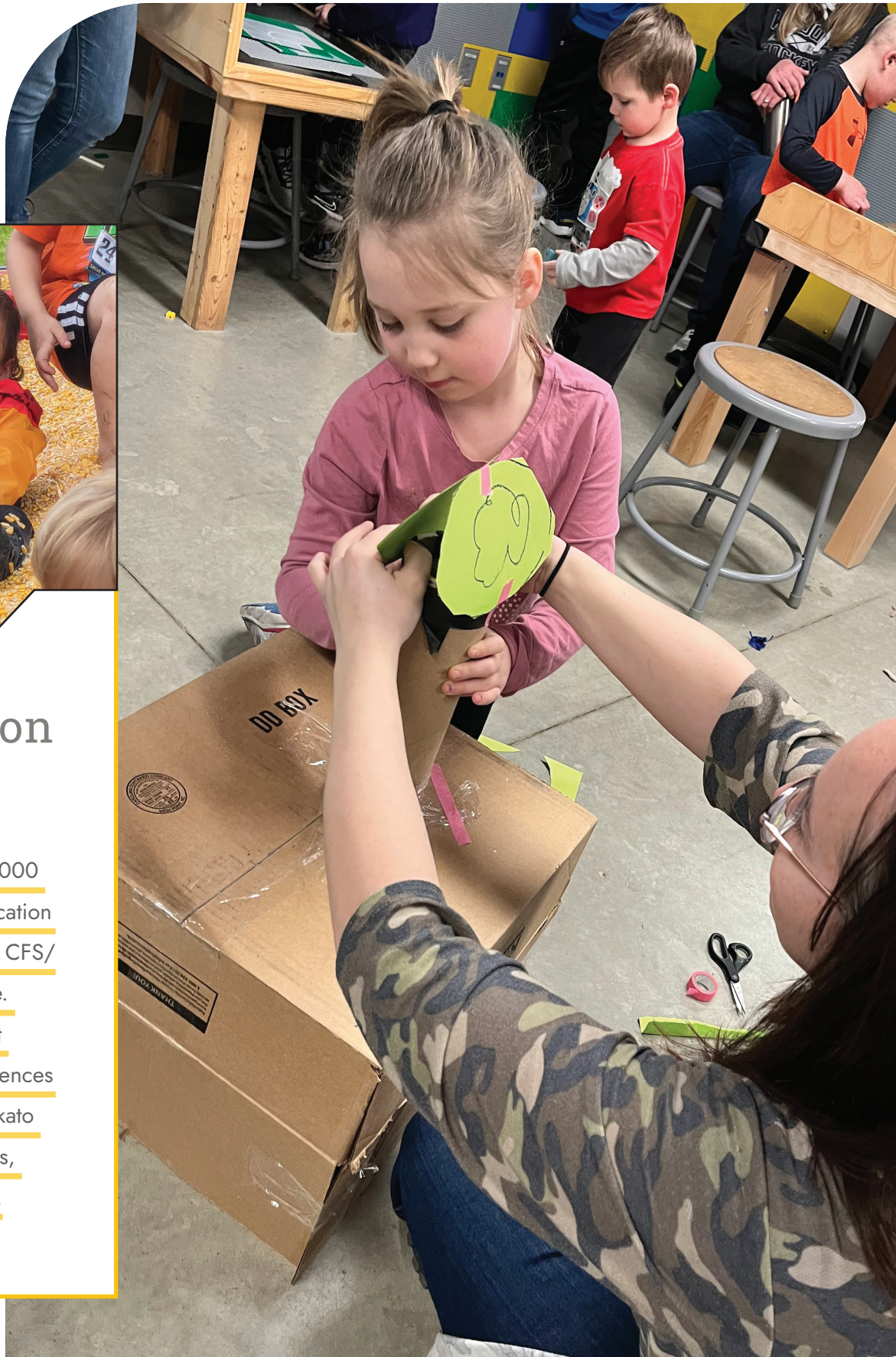
—Sam Holsen, Social Investments Manager at Xcel Energy Foundation



Ag Education Day

On June 1, we welcomed over 2,000 visitors to Ag Education Day, presented by CFS/Central Advantage. This event brought agricultural experiences to downtown Mankato with semis, tractors, drones, and more.

Presented by **CFS**



Programming & Events

Our programs are always morphing to engage visitors, whether they visit occasionally or nearly every day.

To kick off the start of summer, we hosted **ROCK N READ** with the Teddy Bear Band.

Next up was **NOT A BOX DAY**, where students used their imagination to make various creations out of cardboard boxes and other materials.

Art was a significant focus this year, with a **VISITING ARTISTS** and **PLAYING WITH ART** series. Six artists were selected to lead separate Saturday morning art-making sessions in Cecil's Imagineering Loft throughout June and July. The **KIDS ART SHOW** was the culminating event and showcased masterpieces from area children.

We also hosted several **THERAPY DOG** visits throughout the year.



Fire Safety Day

The annual Fire Safety Day was held in September to teach kids about fire prevention with fire trucks, Sparky the Fire Safety Dog, demonstrations and more! Over 1,000 visitors attended this free event.

Presented by  MINNVALLEY
REAL ESTATE COMPANY

POLLINATOR PROGRAM

In June, we started the pollinator season in the Butterfly House by ordering monarch larvae and watching them transform into butterflies. From that point on, the butterflies laid eggs and we raised monarchs throughout the summer. This year, we even added Painted Lady butterflies! July brought an abundance of monarchs leading to the rehoming of 385 caterpillars. Guests could also take caterpillars home or join our 3-day pollinator camp to learn about supporting pollinators. In August we tagged and released monarchs to track their migration to Mexico with guests and sponsors participating in the event.

>> JUNE

- Monarchs: 20
- Painted Ladies: 100

>> JULY

- Monarchs: 20
- Painted Ladies: 10
- Monarch Larve Rehomed: 385

>> AUGUST

- Monarchs: 60; 71 tagged and released
- Monarch Larve Rehomed: 300



IGNITE SOCIETY

122 MEMBERS

The Ignite Society was created to show our most invested donors the impact they provide through a variety of recognition and engagement opportunities. With special events and advanced notice about new exhibits, we hope the Ignite Society will deepen our donors' relationship with the Museum and encourage more support for the Museum in the future.



2024 Corporate Partners

Corporate Partners support the mission of the Museum and its community outreach programs that underwrite the cost of Gateway to Play Scholarships providing access to families facing a variety of barriers.

3M	Gislason & Hunter	Management
Abdo	ISG	Nidec - Kato Engineering
AGCO	Jones Metal, Inc.	Oak Terrace Senior Living
All American Foods, Inc.	Kato Moving and Storage	The Orthopaedic & Fracture Clinic
APX Construction Group	KNUJ Radio	Radio Mankato
Brennan Companies	KOWZ 100.9	Scheel's
Bolton & Menk, Inc.	Mankato Clinic	Schwickert's Tecta America
City of North Mankato	Mankato Motor Co.	SERVPRO of Mankato/ Owatonna
CLA	Mayo Clinic Health System	SignPro
Coughlan Companies	MEI Total Elevator Solutions	Taylor
Crystal Valley	Midwest IT Systems, Inc.	Web Construction
Dotson Iron Castings	Minnesota State University, Mankato	Widseth
Federated Insurance	Minnesota Valley Pet Hospital	Workspace on 3
Frandsen Bank and Trust	Monarch Healthcare	

2024 Grants Received

- Amcor Cares
- Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation
- Centerpoint Energy Foundation
- Central Farm Service/Central Advantage
- Consolidated Communications Community Fund
- Gillette Pepsi of Mankato
- Great River Energy
- Mankato Clinic Foundation
- Minnesota Corn Growers Association
- Minnesota Department of Education - Grants Services Division
- Minnesota Legacy Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund
- Olseth Family Foundation
- Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council
- Taylor Family Foundation
- The Mayo Foundation
- Union Pacific Railroad
- U.S. Bank Foundation
- Walmart Foundation
- Xcel Energy Foundation



Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota
224 Lamm St
Mankato, MN 56001

PLAY.
IT'S WHAT WE DO.



2024

PLAY BOOK

