



madison children's museum

2023-2024  
Annual Report  
Inside

# The Scribbler



## **Lunchbox Cafe**

A Pay-What-You-Can Success

## **MCM Roadshow**

Busiest Summer Yet

## **The Nice Age Trail**

Local Fruits of National Project

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 5 Questions with New MCM CEO Tom Linfield
- 4 Meet the Board of Directors
- 6 MCM Roadshow
- 8 Decision 2024
- 10 Xylophones & Chimes
- 11 Beyond Boo!
- 12 Fall & Winter Special Events
- 14 InterActivity 2024: Flourish!
- 16 MCM Lunchbox, Two Years In
- 18 Annual Report
- 20 Wander Down the Nice Age Trail
- 26 Caretakers of Wonder Leads on Climate Change
- 30 Partnering with Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.
- 32 Donors & Volunteers



Illustrations by Adeline Fox,  
Avy Zdrale, and Clover Zdrale



**Tom Linfield**  
President & CEO  
Madison Children's Museum

## 5 Questions with New MCM CEO Tom Linfield

*On July 1, 2024, Tom Linfield took the helm at Madison Children's Museum after serving as vice president of community impact at the Madison Community Foundation for the last 20 years. Now that he's had a few months to settle in, we asked him to reflect.*



**What's been most surprising about your early days here?**

The staff is incredible. It's been amazing to see the interaction between staff and visitors, the care they take, the inclusive way in which they engage young people. I've also learned what a leader the museum is in the industry. We are leading major national projects, funded by multimillion-dollar federal grants, focusing on climate change and empathy. We are collaborating with other museums and creating models that will be shared with museums across the country. We really are a trailblazer in the children's museum world.



**You spent decades awarding grants in Madison. Now you're asking for grants and donations (among other responsibilities). How has it been to make that change?**

Having worked as a funder for so long, it is exciting to be on the side that cooks up ideas and implements great projects. It is always a joy to engage with people who believe in the work we're doing. Philanthropy is about storytelling, engagement, and passion—on both sides of the relationship. I've often said, I don't know who is happier once a gift has been given, the donor or the recipient. They both are trying to make the world a better place.



**Q | What have you learned here that you wish others in the community knew more about?**

The variety of programs. Babies—if you have a first baby, our membership is free until the child is 18 months! Adults—Adult Swim evenings invite grownups to rediscover the joy of play. Music lovers—our Live from the Wonderground events feature live music, great food and drink, and fun for the whole family. Community outreach—we bring out what is special about the museum and visit about 80 locations around the area a year. We engage people of all ages in hands-on learning, joy, and whimsy, whoever and wherever they may be.

**Q | You were a “fly on the wall” at the international children’s museum conference held in Madison last May. (No one knew you’d accepted the position yet.) What did you observe?**

We hosted 1,100 visitors at the conference and put on a party at the museum for 900. Wow, was it invigorating! Visitors were amazed by our ingenuity and our “upcycling,” particularly our commitment to sustainability. They were astonished to learn that we build all our own exhibits (rare in the field) and engage local artists in everything we do. Over 30 artists were involved in the creation of our new exhibition, the Nice Age Trail.

**Q | Do you have a favorite chicken yet?**

Well, I did have Sweet Cheeks on my shoulder for five minutes the other day. And I got to feed watermelon rind to Laser Eyes. I had never held a chicken before! I’m telling myself that Sweet Cheeks and I have a very special bond.

**OUR MISSION**

Madison Children’s Museum connects children with their families, their communities, and the world beyond through discovery learning and creative play.

**CORE VALUES**

Our values reflect what we believe is in the best interest of children—always.

We believe in: Play, Integrity, Creativity, Collaboration, Risk, Inclusiveness, Learning, and Sustainability.

## **MCM BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **OFFICERS**

**Matt Premo**  
Chair

**Joel Martin**  
Vice Chair & Treasurer

**Sarah Condella**  
Officer at Large

**Matt Cornwell**  
Officer at Large

**Sydney VanBerg**  
Secretary

### **MEMBERS**

**Asya Alexandrovich**

**Bryan Chan**

**Michelle Chang-Der  
Bedrosian, PhD**

**Cristina Choi**

**Marta Gialamas**

**Jennifer Johnson**

**Kristin Shutts**

**Maria Sobrido**

**Jane Villa**

## **FOUNDATION BOARD**

**Nick Jackson**

**Dan Millmann**

**Peggy Pyle**

**Tom Linfield**  
President & CEO

## **Meet the Board of Directors**

Get to know a few of our committed board members



**Maria Sobrido**  
Immediate Past Chair,  
Search Committee Lead

Maria Sobrido, a dedicated family law attorney, has established herself both professionally and within her community over the past 17 years. Maria finds profound fulfillment in her work, despite its challenges, driven by a passion for assisting families in need.

Maria is deeply involved in community service and advocacy. She serves on the Friends of the Madison Arts Commission board, where she contributes to enriching cultural initiatives in the city. She recently completed a term as vice chair of the Lake Monona Waterfront Ad-Hoc Committee that spearheaded the successful design competition for the downtown Lake Monona Waterfront.

Maria's motivation to join the MCM board in 2023 and work hard on the museum's behalf is driven by her experience as a child, a mother, and an attorney. Reflecting on her own childhood, Maria recalls a transformative field trip to a children's museum in Milwaukee. With a lifelong appreciation for the power of children's museums, she is particularly taken with MCM's exhibits and educational programs. And having raised three children, whom she brought to MCM often, she values the museum's role in community outreach and education.

For Maria and her blended family, MCM holds a special place in her heart, as it is where she and her husband introduced their children to each other when they first started dating.

Her favorite part of the museum is the rooftop, where she always enjoys visiting the animals. Maria is constantly impressed by the innovation of museum staff and looks forward to being part of the next wave of growth.



**Kristin Shutts**

Board Member, Former Campaign  
Chair for Our Future in Play

Dr. Kristin Shutts' journey toward becoming a developmental psychologist began shortly after graduating from Smith College in 1999. She worked as a research technician in a developmental cognitive neuroscience lab near Boston, sparking an enduring interest in understanding how children grow and learn. She received her doctorate at Harvard in 2006 and joined the UW-Madison faculty in 2009.

She runs a lab at UW-Madison's Waisman Center studying children's social cognitive development. Each year, hundreds of children participate in research studies focused on how children develop social groups and intergroup biases—and what strategies might reduce those biases.

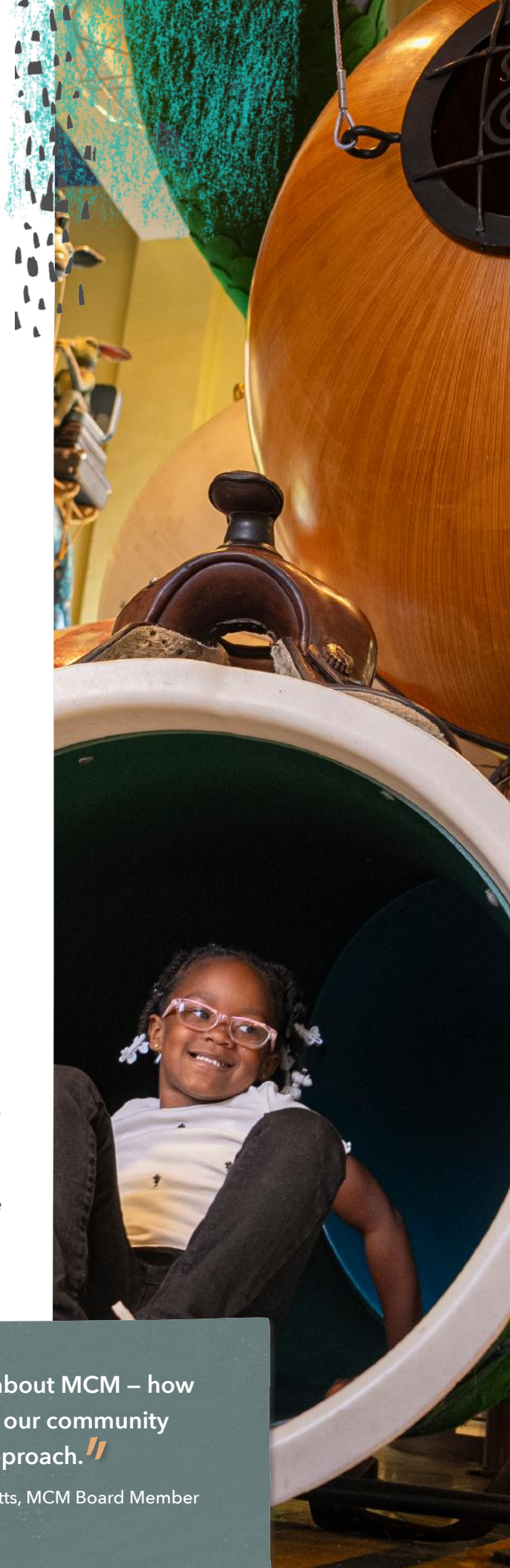
Kristin joined the board of directors in 2023, the culmination of a steadily growing relationship with the museum. She was the first faculty partner for MCM's Living Lab initiative in 2011 and has since carried out research studies in partnership with MCM. She recently served on the advisory council for the development of MCM's new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail.

Kristin's favorite spot at the museum is the rooftop, particularly during summer. She describes it as "an outdoor oasis in the middle of downtown, with something for everyone—including animal lovers, plant enthusiasts, crawlers, walkers, and those who love a good view."

Driven by a belief in MCM's unique role in fostering learning and creativity, she is excited to be part of the continued growth of the museum and our community.

**"I take every opportunity to brag about MCM – how important it is for stakeholders in our community and how very special it is in its approach."**

– Kristin Shutts, MCM Board Member



## MCM Roadshow

Two years in, outreach program continues to grow

We planted this museum in the center of the city to welcome all communities, to be every neighborhood's museum. And we are. But we also take the MCM experience out into communities—to the parks, neighborhood centers, and festivals of communities all around the Madison area and farther out.

In 2022, Madison Children's Museum launched MCM Roadshow: program activities, dynamic staff who know how to export the MCM playful learning experience, and a new vehicle to get everywhere.

MCM Roadshow was an instant hit and continues to be immensely popular. In summer 2022, the Roadshow visited 35 community events all around the county. The next year, that number ballooned to 49 and now stands at over 80 for the current year. To meet the growing demand, Roadshow now operates year-round.

It's important to meet people where they are. Even with our Access for Everyone programs, many families still face barriers to visiting. It could be lack of transportation or time. Some families just aren't familiar with the museum. Roadshow prioritizes historically underserved communities with engaging activities, encouraging all to come downtown to get the full MCM experience. Roadshow staff gave out over 1,200 free admission passes over the last year.

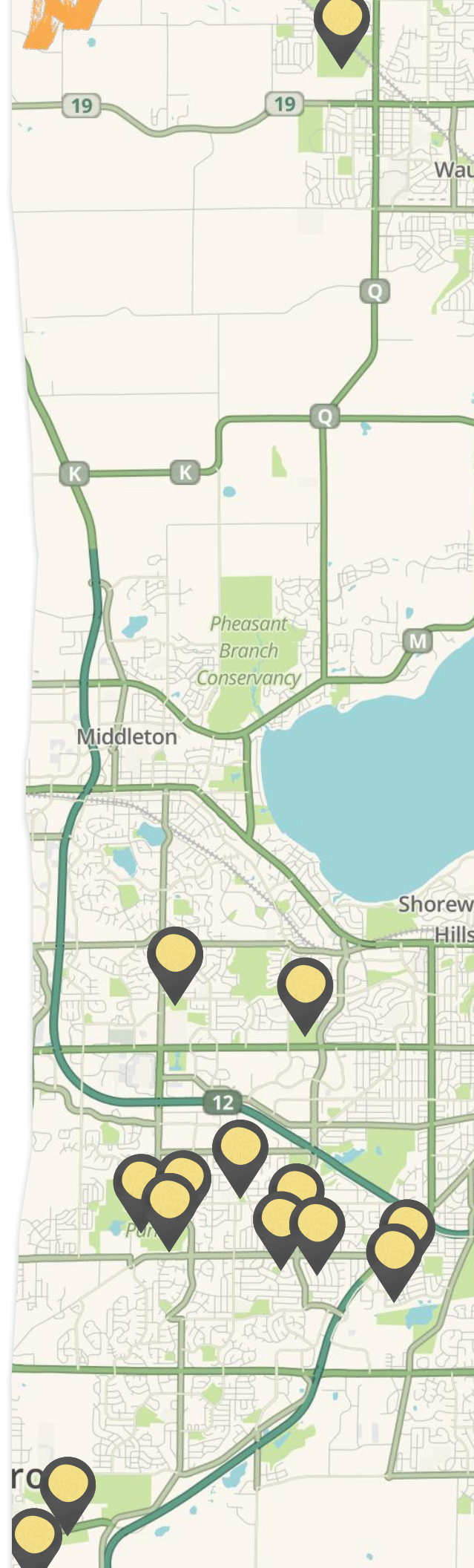
Whether it's using imagination and gross motor skills to build a fort or practicing fine motor skills while making art, MCM Roadshow encourages kids to engage in creative, open-ended play wherever they are.

Next up, Roadshow will bring the Nice Age Trail out into the community. Its themes of kindness and empathy for all living things are universal. Look for those new MCM Roadshow activities by fall 2025.

Find the complete list of upcoming MCM Roadshow events at [www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/roadshow](http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/roadshow)

**Major support provided by**  
Jessica & Jim Yehle

**Additional support provided by**  
Veridian Homes  
Wisconsin Arts Board  
Dane Arts  
Madison Arts Commission  
Madison South Rotary Foundation



## 2024 ROADSHOW EVENTS

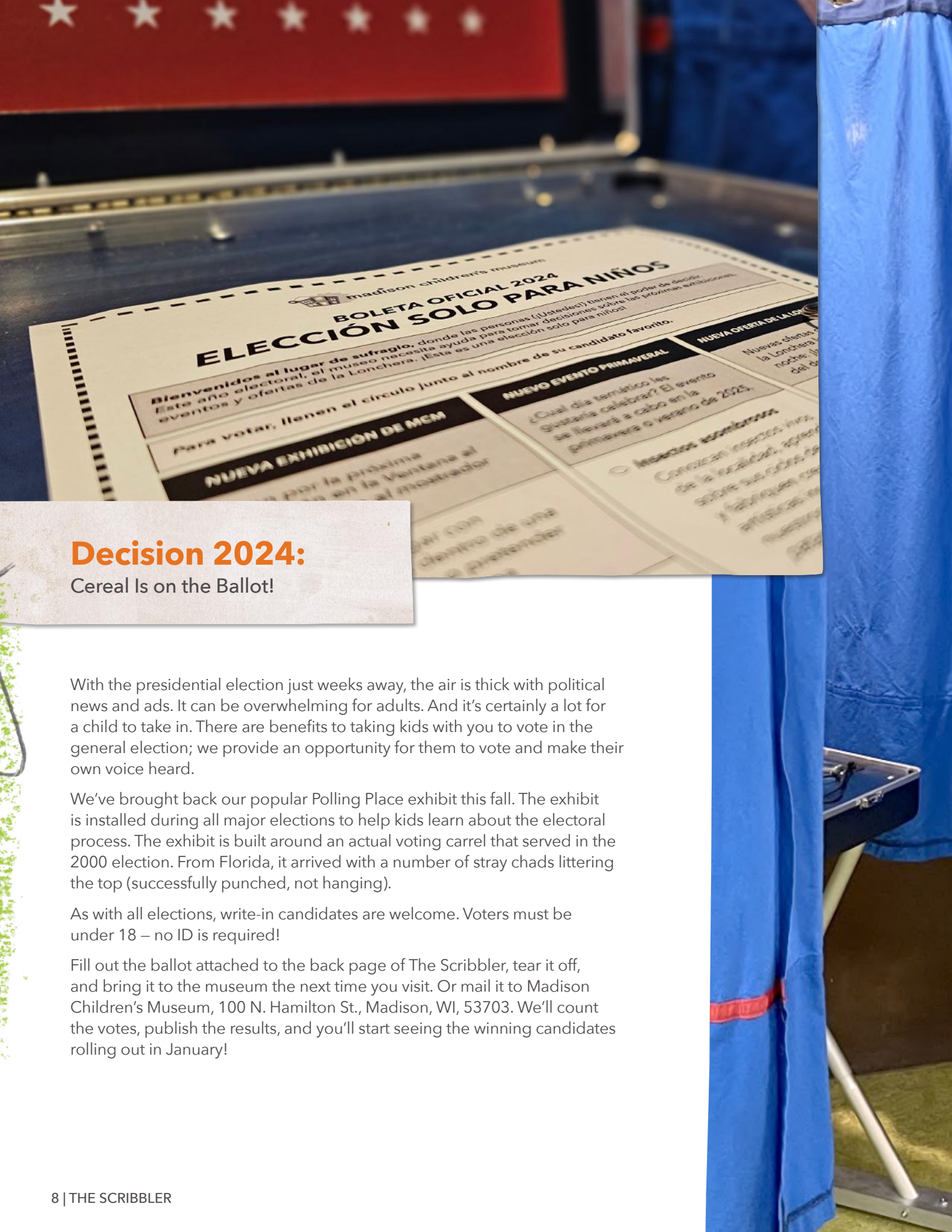
Placement on map is approximate

9in|9out  
Africa Fest  
BMC Youth Baseball  
Opening Day  
Community Dinner  
Connecting Families  
Día de los Niños (2)  
Disability Pride  
Earth Day  
Sustainability Fair  
Earth Day Extravaganza  
Environmental Fun Fair  
Foundation for Black  
Women's Wellness  
Block Party  
Forever in Our Heart  
Good Neighbor  
Gathering  
Harmony Apartments (3)  
Harry Whitehorse  
Woodcarving Festival  
Hmong New Year  
Jump Into Literacy  
Juneteenth  
Juneteenth  
Community Dinner  
Juvenile Diabetes  
Research Foundation  
Walk  
Kennedy Elementary  
Family Arts Night  
Kennedy Heights  
Block Party  
Literacy and  
Activities Fair  
LOV Inc.  
Lussier Community  
Dinner  
Madison College  
Early Learning  
Madison Good  
Neighbor Gathering  
Madison Korean  
American Day  
Madison Reading  
Project Bus Launch  
Magic Pride  
McFarland Pride  
in the Park

Meadowood  
Health Partnership  
Community Supper  
Mobile Madison  
Brittingham Park  
Mobile Madison  
Elver Park  
Mobile Madison  
Galaxy Park  
Monroe Street  
Farmers' Market (2)  
Nature Everywhere Day  
Neurodiversity  
Resource Fair  
Northside  
Farmers' Market  
Open Doors  
for Refugees  
Orton Park Festival  
Parks Alive: Elver (2)  
Parks Alive: Allied (2)  
Parks Alive: Darbo-  
Worthington (2)  
Parks Alive:  
Hammersley (3)  
Parks Alive: Aldo-  
Leopold (2)  
Parks Alive: Meadowood  
Parks Alive: Owl Creek (2)  
Parks Alive: Penn (2)  
Parks Alive: Warner (2)  
Play and Learn  
Southwest Family  
Resource Fair  
Sugar Maple  
Music Festival  
Trucks and Treasures  
United Cerebral Palsy  
Fall Family Frolic  
Urban Triage  
Harvest Festival  
Urban Triage  
Summer Kickback  
Veridian Parade  
of Homes  
Verona Hometown Days  
Virginia Henderson  
Elementary School  
YWCA Block Party

Roadshow brings smiles, laughter, and joy as we work collaboratively to strengthen Madison's diversity and family connections."

– Open Doors for Refugees



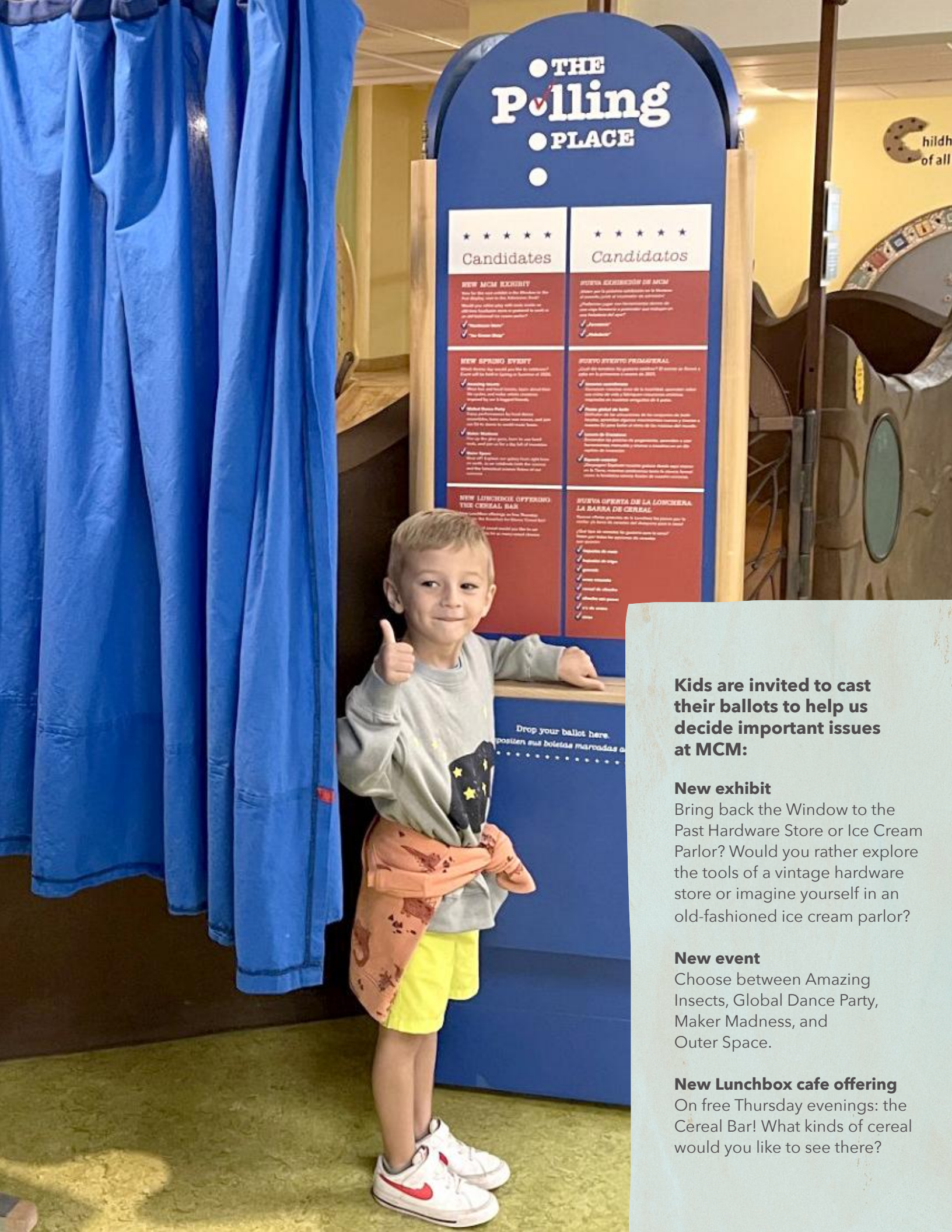
## Decision 2024: Cereal Is on the Ballot!

With the presidential election just weeks away, the air is thick with political news and ads. It can be overwhelming for adults. And it's certainly a lot for a child to take in. There are benefits to taking kids with you to vote in the general election; we provide an opportunity for them to vote and make their own voice heard.

We've brought back our popular Polling Place exhibit this fall. The exhibit is installed during all major elections to help kids learn about the electoral process. The exhibit is built around an actual voting carrel that served in the 2000 election. From Florida, it arrived with a number of stray chads littering the top (successfully punched, not hanging).

As with all elections, write-in candidates are welcome. Voters must be under 18 – no ID is required!

Fill out the ballot attached to the back page of The Scribbler, tear it off, and bring it to the museum the next time you visit. Or mail it to Madison Children's Museum, 100 N. Hamilton St., Madison, WI, 53703. We'll count the votes, publish the results, and you'll start seeing the winning candidates rolling out in January!



● THE  
Polling  
● PLACE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
Candidates

**NEW! MCM BOOKS**

✓ "Whisperer (Blue)"  
✓ "The Green (Blue)"

## NEW SPENDING REPORTS

What's the best way to avoid getting hit by a car? Don't get hit by a car. Ever. With the Freedom Springs in Summer of 2009.

**Accounting Income**  
What does your financial income, begin about the  
the capital, and make within income  
around the use of financial income.

✓ **Michael Moore Party**  
 Three performances by local dance  
 ensembles, some using new music, and one

**✓ Make Mistakes**  
 Throw up the glass pane, from its own hard  
 inside, and pour out for a day full of invention.

**✓ Home Space**  
 There will be a lot of things going on, right there in the middle. So we introduced back the center and the Schenckel center there as well.

**NEW LUNCHEON OFFERING  
THE CEREAL BAR**

...and the...  
...the...  
...the...  
...the...



★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
*Candidatos*

#### INTERVIEW BEWERTUNG DER ANFANGS

✓ **Primo**  
✓ **Primo**

**NUOVO ARRETRATO PRELIMINARE**

*Journal des Économistes*, by Georges Bonnet, 1914, 274 pages, in 8°, 10 francs.

**✓ Semestre científico**  
El presente curso forma parte de la licenciatura de Ingeniería en Física y Matemáticas, correspondiente al primer semestre de la carrera.

**➤ Thema gelöst als Text**  
Berechnen Sie die Ableitung der Funktion  
bezüglich  $x$  und  $y$  für  $x = 1$  und  $y = 2$ .

**Answer D is correct.** The correct answer is the one that is not a function of the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve is responsible for the following:

**✓ Esperto consiglia**  
 «Preferisco i sistemi a incasso perché sono più discreti e non si vede nulla. Per quanto riguarda i colori, io preferisco i colori scuri, come il grigio scuro o il nero, perché sono più resistenti e non si scoloriscono facilmente».

**NUOVA OFFERTA DE LA LON  
LA BARRA DE CEREAL**

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- ✓ **Proprietà di massa**
- ✓ **Proprietà di volume**

- ✓ **growth**
- ✓ **new models**

- ✓ correct the situation
- ✓ influence the person
- ✓ do the work

7

**Kids are invited to cast their ballots to help us decide important issues at MCM:**

## New exhibit

Bring back the Window to the Past Hardware Store or Ice Cream Parlor? Would you rather explore the tools of a vintage hardware store or imagine yourself in an old-fashioned ice cream parlor?

## New event

Choose between Amazing Insects, Global Dance Party, Maker Madness, and Outer Space.

## New Lunchbox cafe offering

On free Thursday evenings: the Cereal Bar! What kinds of cereal would you like to see there?



## Xylophones & Chimes

### And Other Musical Improvements

One of the requests we hear most often is... more music! We hear you. Enjoy these recent additions.

#### More Instruments

A new quartet of musical instruments now graces the rooftop and Wonderground. Created by Percussion Play, a UK-based company with strong ties to Wisconsin, these pentatonic percussion instruments encourage playful explorations of rhythm and melody. The xylophones and chimes allow two children to play them at the same time. They are also accessible to visitors in wheelchairs.

Special thanks to Percussion Play for being a Presenting Sponsor at the 2024 Association of Children's Museums' InterActivity conference and for partnering with Madison Children's Museum to install the instruments.



#### More Music Programming

We've added programs hosted by talented staff members Junko Yamauchi, early learning program specialist, and Tim Gruber, volunteer coordinator. They share their love of music with thousands of MCM visitors every year, leading drop-in music programs full of sing-alongs, ukulele playing, flute playing, and drumming for kids of all ages. You can often find Junko and Tim surrounded by large groups of families on the rooftop and in the Wildernest.

#### More Music in the Giant Bucket!

Have you noticed it's been a little too quiet in the Wonderground's Giant Bucket lately? Well, make some noise, the Kiacophony is back! This large groaning wheel of sound made of welded found objects was created by Mount Horeb-based artist John Pahlas of Center Ground Studios, who recently made some repairs and upgrades to the instrument. Look also for an ongoing series of musical features called "A Drop in the Bucket," taking advantage of the great acoustics inside the sculpture.

Children are naturally uninhibited about making music with the Percussion Play instruments we have. Adults tend to think they can't make music unless they have had formal musical training, but kids explore the instruments much like they will explore a playground. Because the instruments are tuned to a pentatonic (5 note) scale, the sounds are naturally pleasing no matter what kids play. They can easily experience the joy and creativity of making music with these new instruments."

— Tim Gruber, MCM Volunteer Coordinator & Musician

## Beyond Boo!



### A Rich Experience for Kids

Madison Children's Museum loves Halloween. Our Halloween programs—just like all our other activities—are designed with healthy child development in mind. Halloween touches on two concepts that are particularly important for healthy growth and development: playing pretend and confronting fear.

### More Than Just a Costume

Wearing a costume is more than a fashion choice for kids; it's part of the serious work of playing pretend.

Pretending to be someone else reinforces the critical lesson that there are other people in the world with different perspectives, different ways of acting, and different lives than the child's own. Playing pretend helps develop a child's empathy, which is crucial for every aspect of social interaction.

Imaginary play also lets a child try on different personas and learn more about themselves in the process. What would it be like if I were braver? Sillier? More outgoing? Quieter? Costumes allow kids to safely transgress social boundaries: bad guys are allowed to break rules, dinosaurs are allowed to be intimidating. Becoming a different character temporarily helps children develop their enduring sense of self.

## Halloween at MCM

### ALL OCTOBER

In addition to Halloween decorations, Halloween crafts and colors are available in the Art Studio. Costumes are encouraged, making the museum the perfect place to take a child who obsessively insists on wearing their new costume at all times.

### Baby's First Halloween

Oct. 29, 9 am–12 pm

### Downtown Madison Family Halloween

Oct. 30, 3–6 pm

### Sensory Friendly Halloween

Nov. 1, 4:30–7 pm



### Risky Business

The scary side of Halloween allows kids to practice assessing risk. Children must learn what parts of their world are frightening for good reason and which fears they can work to overcome. The same child might run screaming from the vacuum cleaner but think nothing of climbing perilously up a bookshelf.

At Madison Children's Museum, many of our exhibits are built to give children the feeling of doing something risky, like crossing the bridge in the Wilderdest, which wobbles when you walk on it. Most kids are intimidated at first, but gradually learn to walk across without fear. Halloween provides a wonderful opportunity for that same kind of "risky" play.

## Fall & Winter Special Events

As the days grow shorter and the weather grows crisper, look to MCM for seasonal family fun, including more evening events for families looking for options for after-work activities during the week.

We are hooked on Halloween! Join us for many ways to celebrate the holiday during the second half of October. And as we head into winter, join us for seasonal and cultural celebrations to lead us into the new year.

Watch the website for dates and details for additional fall 2024 events.

### SPECIAL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

#### October

- **Monster Mash**  
Oct. 18
- **Adult Swim**  
Oct. 25
- **Baby's First Halloween**  
Oct. 29
- **Downtown Family Halloween**  
Oct. 30

#### November

- **Sensory Friendly Halloween**  
Nov. 1
- **LGBTQ+ Family Night**  
Nov. 15
- **Girl Scout Night at the Museum**  
Nov. 22

#### December

- **Princesses & Dinosaurs**  
Dec. 6
- **Photos with Santa**  
Dec. 8
- **Adult Swim**  
Dec. 13
- **Winter Wonder Weeks**  
Dec. 26-Jan. 5
- **New Year's Eve celebration**  
Dec. 31

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Thanks to Perkins Coie LLP for their sponsorship of the fall season.





**Gloria Ladson-Billings**  
Former MCM Board Member

## A Great Friend to Kids Award Recipient

*ACM selected Dr. Ladson-Billings for her outstanding contributions to educational pedagogy and anthropology as it relates to diversity, accessibility, inclusion, and equity. The conference program lauded her with the introduction below.*

An esteemed educator and scholar, Ladson-Billings has held various academic positions, including serving as a faculty member at Santa Clara University, Stanford University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she became a distinguished professor and held the Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education. Her research focuses on the educational achievement gap, culturally relevant teaching practices, critical race theory in education, and the experiences of African American students in schools.

Her publications, including books "The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children" and "Critical Race Theory in Education," have had a profound impact on educators and policymakers seeking to create more culturally responsive and equitable learning environments.

Dr. Ladson-Billings continues to be a leading voice in the field of education, inspiring educators worldwide to embrace culturally relevant pedagogy and work toward creating more inclusive and empowering educational experiences for all students.



## InterActivity 2024: Flourish!

**Madison took center stage in the children's museum world**

Last May, Madison Children's Museum and the Association of Children's Museums welcomed almost 1,100 children's museum professionals to InterActivity 2024: Flourish!, the association's annual conference and largest gathering of children's museum professionals in the world. Professionals from 16 countries joined us for three days of learning presented through almost 70 sessions and five study tours in the community.

The conference featured speakers with Madison connections: Lynda Barry, writer, cartoonist, and UW-Madison art professor; Dr. Richard J. Davidson of the UW-Madison Center for Healthy Minds; and Charles Hua, senior adviser at the U.S. Department of Energy Loan Programs Office and founder and executive director at PowerLines. Madison youth poet laureate, Maliha Nu'Man, delivered a poem written for the occasion and received a standing ovation.



As part of the conference, Madison Children's Museum hosted an evening celebration for over 900 guests. They explored the museum, including the new Nice Age Trail, and enjoyed food, drink, and activities from nearly 20 local businesses.

The celebration was sustainably produced, featuring an all-vegetarian menu and compostable materials. (Insect treats were an exception to the vegetarian fare—they provide a sustainable source of protein!) Over \$1,000 was raised from donations for upcycled T-shirts and donated to the National Indian Carbon Coalition to offset over 16,500 pounds of carbon emissions, double the amount generated by the event!

Thank you to everyone who helped support such a successful conference.

## IA24 SPONSORS

Thank you to the following donors for their support of the Momentum! campaign, which helped fund the museum's contributions to the conference.

### LEAD SPONSOR

**nickelodeon**

### PATRON SPONSOR

**blackbaud**  
power your passion

**Process Curiosity**

**Findorff**

**FISKARS**

### SPONSORS

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CambridgeSeven

Chocolate Shoppe  
Ice Cream Company

Feathr

Future Foam

Great Dane Pub  
& Brewing Co.

Green Box Compost

Haizlip Studio

Hands On! Studio

Hausmann Group

Hooper Foundation

Imagination  
Playground, LLC

Karben4 Brewing

Kodo Kids

Kollath & Associates  
CPA LLC

Lake Ridge Bank

Lord Cultural Resources

Minnesota Children's  
Museum

MPI Protective

Penzeys Spices

Percussion Play

PNW Children's Museum  
Collaborative

POW! (Paul Orselli  
Workshop, Inc.)

Roto

SafeSpace Concepts

Speak Creative

SVA Certified Public  
Accountants, S.C.

Tandem HR

The Kubala Washatko  
Architects, Inc.

The Madison  
Concourse Hotel

### SIGNAGE PARTNER

**HEARTLAND**  
SCENIC • STUDIO

The Interactivity conference generated over \$800,000 of economic activity for the area, showcased Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, demonstrated how local organizations can partner with our team in hosting events in Madison, and redefined the possibilities for sustainable events."

— Destination Madison (greater Madison-area destination marketing)



“What an awesome idea! We were able to pay and did, and the kids munched on apples and popcorn. I love knowing that anyone can get a meal, even if they cannot pay.”

— Visitor

## MCM Lunchbox, Two Years In

Innovative Lunchbox cafe succeeding with pay-what-you-can model

This past July marked the two-year anniversary of the Lunchbox. The pay-what-you-can cafe—the only such restaurant inside a U.S. museum—ensures that no one need play on an empty stomach. That said, the cafe is for EVERYBODY. Eating together is a powerful shared experience.

Madison Children’s Museum owns and operates this fully licensed cafe. There are no posted prices; diners choose what they’ll pay. It’s OK to pay a little, a lot, or nothing at all.

The Lunchbox offers quick snacks—like fruit or granola bars—and freshly prepared meals from local partners Willy Street Co-op and Ugly Apple Cafe. Both organizations share our values and priorities: providing access to healthy food, addressing food insecurity, and operating sustainably. The museum buys at preferred pricing; these partners are invested in the success of the Lunchbox.

### Willy Street Co-op

Willy Street Co-op has been a Madison institution since 1974. The Lunchbox received a grant from the Willy Street Co-op’s Community Reinvestment Fund in 2023. This past May, the co-op’s kitchen started weekly deliveries of fresh food to the Lunchbox. Their deli foods include a variety of co-op favorites like fresh salads and prepared dishes.

### Ugly Apple Cafe

Ugly Apple Cafe has been a partner with the Lunchbox since fall 2023. Every Friday, Ugly Apple provides fresh baked scones and muffins for visitors. They are housed in the Dane County Courthouse building, only a few blocks from the museum. On Friday mornings, staff from the museum walk over and pick up bakery goods that are seasonal, fresh, delicious, and baked in kid-friendly sizes.



Ugly Apple also provides for many special events at MCM, including Member Mornings, member parties, and Live from the Wonderground. They use produce and other food products that might otherwise be thrown out based on appearance or other superficial factors.

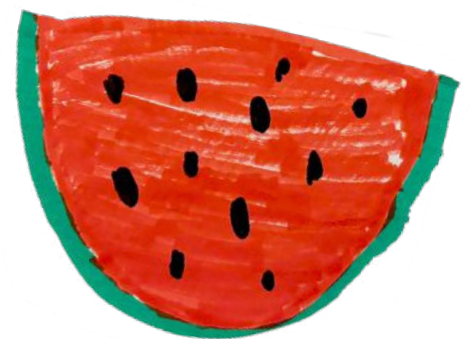
The Lunchbox cafe opened in July 2022 as a partnership between Madison Children's Museum and Little John's Kitchens. We thank Chef Dave for his vision and passion in helping to create the cafe.

**Major support provided by**  
Jane Villa in honor of Deb Gilpin

**Additional support provided by**  
The Tamara D. Grigsby Office for  
Equity and Inclusion

I can't even explain how much this means to our family. To not even have to pack lunch or snacks because we know there will be some provided makes the entire experience of preparing to come to the museum (which is quite the trek) so amazing. Thank you for eliminating that barrier. And providing it as a pay-what-you-can is awesome. We have been really struggling financially and started going to food pantries because the cost of groceries is so high. To be able to eat delicious food from an amazing store that we can't normally afford (the co-op) felt like such a special and indulgent gift. I felt grateful all day. My children were happy, nourished and fed with high-quality and delicious ingredients. Thank you, thank you, thank you. It really does make a difference."

— Visitor



# 2023-2024 Annual Report

**186,985**

Total visitors

**77,596**

Member visits

**8,550**

Facilitated animal encounters on the rooftop

**1,100**

Children's museum professionals who visited from around the world

**31%**

Percentage of visitors who used our Access for Everyone programs to visit

**7,000**

Band-Aids distributed

**12,888**

Juice boxes enjoyed in the Lunchbox cafe

## A Year of Growth & Achievement

Over the past year, we hosted the largest-ever conference for children's museum professionals, opened a major new exhibit, engaged 10,000 people in neighborhoods across the community with MCM Roadshow programs, and increased visitation by 10%.

Hosting the 2024 InterActivity conference with the Association of Children's Museums was an honor. We welcomed over 1,100 professional colleagues from around the world and shared the museum's whimsical ingenuity with them.

Our new exhibit, The Nice Age Trail, encourages children to engage with nature, to experience the interconnectedness of all living things, and to practice kindness—to animals, nature, other people, and themselves. After more than three years of research, planning, design, and construction, we couldn't be prouder to share it with our visitors.

The joy of these achievements is tempered by the retirement of the museum's long-time President & CEO, Deb Gilpin. Deb devoted 11 years to Madison Children's Museum. Her legacy is one of access, innovation, passion, and joy. We wish her all the best as she enjoys an active retirement.

I would like to thank everyone who visited the museum, volunteered, made a gift of support, participated in a listening session, served on a committee or on our board of directors, or showed your enthusiasm for the museum in another way. The achievements of this past year could not have happened without you.

With gratitude,



Matt Premo  
Board Chair

# Financial Overview

Fiscal Year 2024: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

## A Strong Year of Visitation & Fundraising

During our 2024 fiscal year, we exceeded both our fundraising and visitation goals by almost 10%. We opened a new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail, largely funded by our ongoing Momentum! capital campaign. The museum also received prestigious national grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Lilly Endowment, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Our fiscal year ended on a high note as we fostered new relationships with multiple local businesses to sponsor the Association of Children’s Museums’ international conference, InterActivity 2024.

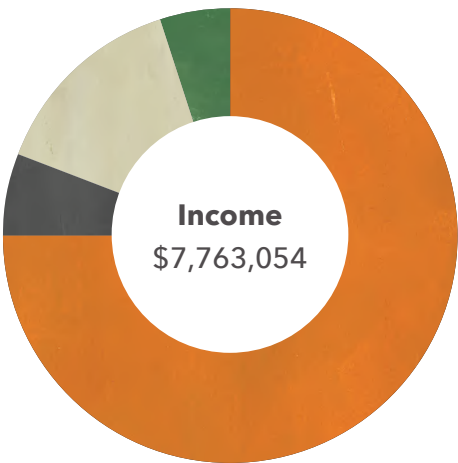
## 2023-2024 FINANCIALS

### Momentum!

In 2023, Madison Children’s Museum launched Momentum!, a \$3 million campaign to refresh, reinvigorate, revitalize, and say “yes!”

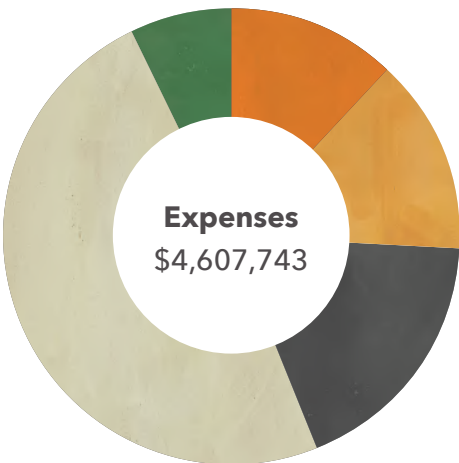


### Annual Fund



- 75% Contributions - \$5,848,877
- 6% Government Grants - \$435,831
- 14% Admissions & Membership - \$1,112,061
- 5% Other - \$366,286

\$2.21M this year raised for the Momentum! campaign; earmarked for special projects and commitments through FY25/26




- 12% Education - \$547,090
- 14% Exhibits - \$658,066
- 18% Visitor Services - \$813,161
- 49% Operations & Admin - \$2,273,150
- 7% Fundraising - \$316,277




## Wander Down the Nice Age Trail

At the top of MCM's central stairs, a magical stand of wintry birches and a watchful fox invite you into the Nice Age Trail. Follow animal prints on the floor and you'll emerge into a landscape full of the sights and sounds of nature—and so many kids! Kids snuggling into the plush cushions of the cranes' nest and crawling below a canopy of lily pads; clambering through honeycomb cells and giggling their way down the beaver lodge slide; borrowing woolen badger stripes; brandishing felt bear claws; and intensely focusing on a tank to find daphnia, the tiniest of MCM's creatures. In the Nice Age Trail, kids find their place in nature, and practice the skills they need to become empathetic, eco-aware, and kind. We could tell you why we think this exhibit is so special, but our visitors say it best.



My son and I have hiked a bunch on the Ice Age Trail. We have been excited to finally get to see [the exhibit] for the first time today. It was awesome! We spent our entire visit in this space. "

– Visitor




Love it! The fiber art animals, flowers, and seating were wonderfully made. It's so refreshing that the large space is being used for active play. "

– Visitor



Myself and my children (ages 8, 5, 3) all love it. It's so creative and the details are amazing. "

– Visitor

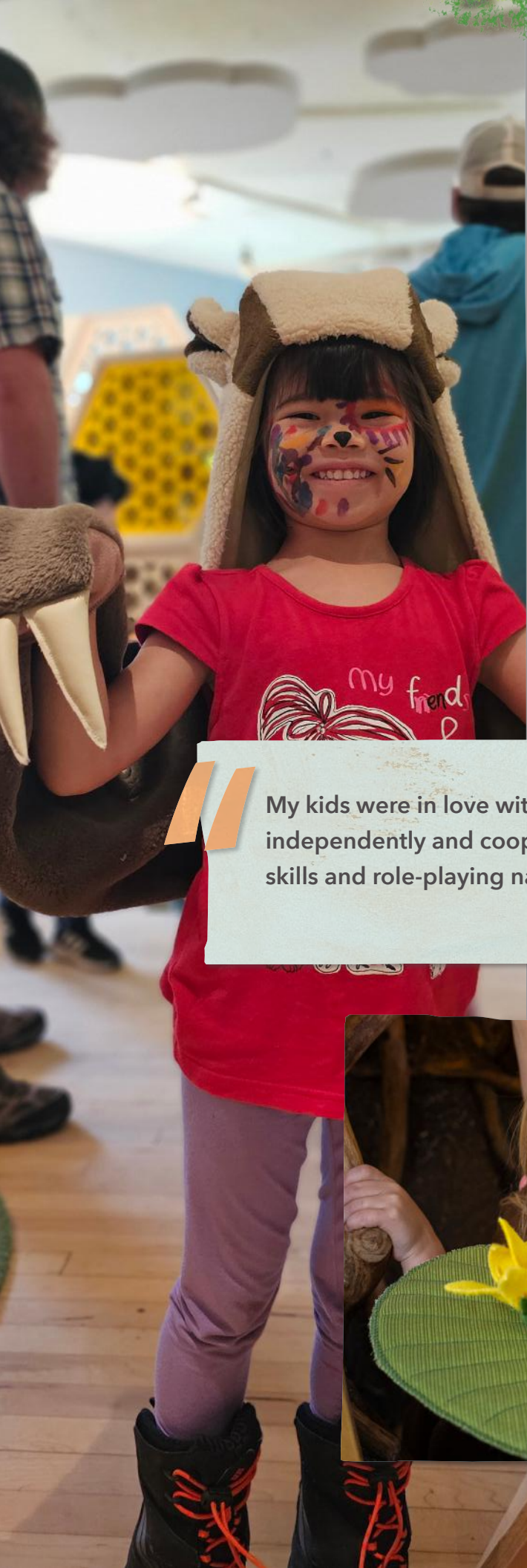
A young child with dark hair and a green shirt is reaching out to touch a colorful, textured object made of recycled materials. The object has a green base and a purple and blue top. The background shows a wooden structure with yellow hexagonal cutouts.

The exhibit continues Madison Children's Museum's longtime tradition of using recycled and repurposed materials in wildly imaginative ways."

– Gayle Worland, Wisconsin State Journal

"We loved it! It's beautiful and creative and has activities for a wide range of ages. My daughter loved snuggling the black bear toys, looking at Speedy the Turtle and going down the slide."

– Visitor



### A Local Exhibit with a Worldwide Impact

The innovative construction materials, nature-focused content, and deep roots in pedagogical research of the Nice Age Trail make it a model exhibit for museums. As part of the Caretakers of Wonder national leadership project (more on page 26), MCM built the exhibit to test a “developmental framework,” which was created with eight other museums and a team of experts over the last two years. That framework will fill a gap in resources to support young children in a warming world. Nearly 1,000 museum professionals from around the world visited the exhibit during the InterActivity conference in May (more on page 14).

We are evaluating how visitors are interacting with the exhibit, with that research informing the ongoing work of Caretakers of Wonder. Of course, kids playing in the exhibit don’t need to know any of this to engage in joyful, nature-based play.

My kids were in love with the new area. They found tons of ways to play independently and cooperatively. They were using scientific observation skills and role-playing natural systems. //

– Visitor



Nice Age Trail, amazing details that engage kids in experience and exploration. //

– Visitor

“ Nice Age Trail is amazing!!  
So beautiful, creative, and  
accessible to all ages.”

– Visitor

“ Lots of things to discover, both with  
body and mind. My kids really liked the  
opportunities for climbing and physical  
exploration and the information provided  
about local flora and fauna.”

– Visitor



### Walk in Their Paws! The Summer Ad Campaign

Our approach to marketing is generally low cost and high impact: email marketing, media coverage, and social media posts. For the Nice Age Trail, we wanted to make a splash and spread the word far and wide. It was the most ambitious advertising campaign in a decade for the museum.

Advertising helps us reach larger numbers of people, but it also helps get the word out into Madison's diverse communities. We placed ads in UMOJA and on the Madison 365 website. Radio ads aired on La Movidia in Spanish. Some radio underwriting ran in English, Spanish, and Hmong!

With a spotlight on the Nice Age Trail, it was a blockbuster summer with a 16% increase in visitation over the previous season.

“ The hands-on exhibit goes far beyond a conventional play area  
and could serve as a national model of how museums can connect  
with children and families on issues ranging from kindness and  
mindfulness to climate change and stewardship of the Earth. Those  
goals might sound lofty, but, for a 5-year-old, the Nice Age Trail is a  
place to climb, explore, and have fun.”

– Gayle Worland, Wisconsin State Journal

My children loved exploring the Nice Age Trail today. I (the parent) was blown away by the creativity of the animal costumes and other textile creations in the Nice Age Trail. "

– Visitor

Beautiful! Neat connections to the local area. Educational and hands-on fun for kids. "

– Visitor

Attention to detail—from the light-up stove in the Wilderndest play hut to the cardinals above the birch trees in the new exhibit, there was so much wonder for my kid to enjoy! "

– Visitor



### Cardinals

Did you notice the bright pops of red in the magical birch forest at the start of the Nice Age Trail? This "radiance" of over 30 cardinals suspended from the ceiling is our creative take on funding acknowledgements. Each bird celebrates one of our generous donors to the exhibit. Thank you to each of them!

We were very impressed with the exhibit. We all loved the handmade elements and different use of materials throughout! It felt like every detail was fully thought through and executed incredibly. I did notice Teddy gravitated towards the leaf blowing station and the Beaver den the most and could tell he loved spending his time touching, climbing and chasing the items within those stations. The space was beautiful and your team should be proud! "

– Corporate Donor



## The Gratitude Tree

The Gratitude Tree in the Nice Age Trail exhibit has become both a favorite feature for guests and an ongoing experiment for MCM's in-house exhibits team. Kids feed lightweight fabric leaves into a large knothole on the tree's base and watch them flutter out of another knothole near the top. The nearby signpost prompts, "Find a leaf that says what you are grateful for and send it out into the world. It feels nice to let others know what you appreciate." Each leaf bears a word such as "family" or "sunshine," naming things for which kids and their caregivers might feel grateful.

As part of the exhibit's mission to demonstrate innovative uses of common materials, the tree trunk is made of many layers of repurposed cardboard supported over a wood frame. In addition to being sustainable and a fun story for kids, the cardboard surface is easy to repair and to source replacement material. And for the interior wind tunnel, the MCM exhibits team ingeniously repurposed a bathroom vent fan—durable, designed to run for hours, and, best of all, quiet!

One of the advantages of having an in-house exhibits team is that we continue to observe, learn, and adjust even after the exhibit is open. With all the love and attention that the tree is getting, it's been a challenge to find a material for the leaves that catches the air but is also durable. The team has gone through several iterations and is still experimenting with new materials.

The Nice Age Trail exhibit is **INCREDIBLE!** We spent so much time there. We spent 4.5 hours at the museum today and that's our longest trip ever. Half of our time, I think, was on the second floor.

— Visitor



## Caretakers of Wonder Leads on Climate Change

How can we help young children cope with the threat of climate change—without instilling fear? That is the question at the heart of Caretakers of Wonder, a groundbreaking national initiative led by Madison Children's Museum, in which a cohort of museums, science centers, and advisors are collaborating on innovative resources to support young children in a warming world.

### **Learning to Love Nature (and Yourself)**

Climate change can be scary, no matter how old you are. Research shows that children eight years old and younger are particularly vulnerable to physical and mental health risks associated with climate change, which can magnify challenges they already face. Developmentally inappropriate discussion of climate change with this age group can be counterproductive or even harmful. Instead of addressing climate change with adult-sized anxieties, Caretakers of Wonder seeks to help young children build empathy, compassion, and a deep sense of connection to the natural world—as well as a sense of agency and hopefulness that will serve them in the future.



If this sounds a bit abstract, you may want to visit the Nice Age Trail, MCM's newest exhibit, which puts Caretakers of Wonder's ideas into practice (see page 20 to learn more). In this interactive exhibit featuring Wisconsin animals and habitats throughout the seasons, children are invited to learn about kindness, empathy, and self-care from our wild neighbors.

### What's Next?

In April, MCM received one of only five Climate Smart grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This award, a \$268,202 match, will help to fund the second phase of Caretakers of Wonder, during which seven museums and organizations across the U.S. will develop climate action plans with the help of national consulting firm Verdis Group.

Planning will yield adaptation and mitigation methods for each partner museum, while identifying broader regional strategies that will aid other organizations as they undertake their own climate planning in the future. This is one of the first cohorts of its kind and will establish a baseline for other children's museums.

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Phase I of Caretakers of Wonder was made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services MG-252083-OMS-22. Support was also provided by Nimick Forbesway Foundation, Virent, and the Huffman Family.



Huffman Family

Phase II of Caretakers of Wonder is made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Support is also provided by Bill & Jan DeAtley and Virent.



Bill & Jan DeAtley

**"The consortium recognizes that the current climate crisis will not be solved with science alone, but through cooperation, communication, and collective action. By recognizing humanity's interconnectedness and interdependency, we can harness our collective power to bring about lasting and transformative change."**

— Brenda Baker, MCM Vice President of Exhibits, Facilities, & Strategic Initiatives;  
Caretakers of Wonder Project Lead



**Brenda Baker**

Vice President of Exhibits,  
Facilities, & Strategic Initiatives;  
Caretakers of Wonder Project Lead

## **Brenda Baker: Creator & Leader of Caretakers of Wonder**

*Brenda Baker serves as vice president of exhibits, facilities, & strategic initiatives at Madison Children's Museum. Her thirty-four-year tenure at MCM includes national leadership in fostering environmental sustainability. She leads the Caretakers of Wonder initiative.*

Nearly three decades ago, Brenda Baker got sick. The culprit: off-gassing from a new carpet installed in her home. This experience made her think about the materials that museums use in constructing exhibits and environments. If something as common as a carpet could make her sick, even briefly, what could it do to a child?

Realizing that children are more adversely affected by many of the dangerous chemicals found in plastics and other common building materials, Brenda focused on creating healthier, safer spaces for children to grow. The landmark exhibit and early childhood space called First Feats: Celebrating the Early Years (1999) was designed and developed using almost entirely nontoxic, non-synthetic materials. This ecologically minded and health-conscious approach set a standard for all future exhibits and projects at MCM.

The museum's 2010 move provided new opportunities to implement sustainable design. Brenda led the effort to reuse existing materials in creative ways throughout. Perhaps most transformative, she oversaw the creation of our green rooftop, which offers natural, calming beauty and serves as an organic insulator.

Brenda's long commitment to sustainability and health—both planetary and personal—led her to envision the Caretakers of Wonder project. MCM's new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail, is the local flower of this work.

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**Camille Knudson**

Director of Business Operations,  
Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.

## Partnering with Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.

Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co. is one of our longest-standing community partners, supporting Madison Children's Museum's Adult Swim and Live from the Wonderground series. We recently interviewed Camille Knudson, director of business operations.

### Q | What is your role with Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.?

I started in 2014 in a part-time role managing our beer sales outside of the pubs. Although it was a new field for me, it turned out to be a great fit. Over the years, my role has expanded significantly. We transitioned from self-distribution to using a distributor, which increased our sales volume and transitioned my role to full time. Currently, I oversee our company's finances and manage overall operations with the rest of our executive team.

### Q | Tell us about the history of Great Dane.

In 1994, the two co-founders, Eliot Butler and Rob LoBreglio, opened the first Great Dane location in downtown Madison. They were originally from New York and wanted to open a brew pub, something Madison didn't have in the '90s. After about 10 years, they started opening more locations, becoming one of the first breweries in the area since Prohibition.

### Q | Why is supporting the community so important to Great Dane?

Supporting the community has been a core part of the company's mission and values since the very beginning. The co-founders wanted Great Dane to be deeply involved in the Madison community, particularly in supporting the arts, children's organizations, and animal welfare. Since we have been around for 30 years, we feel ingrained in the community and want to help it thrive.

### Q | Why does Great Dane support MCM?

MCM and Great Dane's values align in a lot of ways by providing creative opportunities for kids of all different backgrounds. Great Dane likes to support the Adult Swim programs specifically because it is important to provide opportunities for adults to play and engage in creative activities, just as it is for children. Programs like Live from the Wonderground exemplify the enriching experiences MCM offers for all ages, reinforcing our dedication to supporting such strong programs for the community.

### Q | Tell us about Great Dane's sustainability efforts.

When brewing beer, grains are mixed with hot water to extract their sugars, after which the grains are typically discarded. Great Dane has partnered with local farmers to repurpose this spent grain as animal feed, reducing waste and supporting the community. Additionally, we prioritize working with local vendors to minimize shipping and transportation, further contributing to sustainability.

### Celebrating 30 Years

This November, Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co. is celebrating its 30th anniversary! To mark this milestone, they'll be offering a special "vault" stock ale and bringing back some beloved menu items. Additionally, you can look forward to limited edition merchandise featuring their original logo. Stay tuned to Great Dane's locations and social media for exciting announcements and updates.



## Fiscal Year 2024 Donors

Madison Children's Museum relies on gifts and sponsorships from our generous donors. Those gifts supported another year of playing, laughing, and learning. Donors are listed according to their total monetary and in-kind donations received between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of these lists. If you believe an error has been made, please contact our development team at (608) 354-0537 or at [bmattingly@madisonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:bmattingly@madisonchildrensmuseum.org).

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Thank you to our volunteers! Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting museum operations. From welcoming visitors to watering and weeding our gardens, and everything in between, they contribute to making Madison Children's Museum a wonderful place for children and families. Individuals listed volunteered between August 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024.

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Emma Hansen  
Andrea Harris  
Ebba Harrison

James Hassell  
Steve Hoang  
Benji Hodges  
Larissa Hoffarth  
Emily Hokanson  
Christine Holm  
Molly Horowitz  
Erin Hughes  
Aisha Hussein  
Eisa Hussein  
Sadiah Hussein  
Sophia Hussein  
Jacob Hutchinson  
Valentin Iaquina  
Ibuki Iwasaki  
Madison Jagemann  
Zackary James  
Sophie Jankowski  
Amelia Jayara  
Israt Jemim  
Gina Jezuit  
Rose Jezuit  
Zoey Jiang  
Sydney Juntunen  
Amudha Varshini Kamaraj  
Priya Kanuru  
Tandeep Kaur  
Sofia Kedros  
Mia Kelly  
William Kelly  
Vang Khang  
SeEun Kim  
Jennifer King  
Maggie King  
Neha Kohli  
Katherine Konyar  
Alexander Korth  
Christy Krueger  
Gitika Kumar  
Ava Lanczy  
Crystal Lan  
Katherine Langis  
Taylor Lauzon  
Emilia Lechmaier  
Mia Iwata Lentz  
Rae Li  
Ellie Lieberman  
Ethan Lin  
Ali Loker  
Sarah Lorge  
Maxine Loritz  
Isabella Lozano

Adham Mahmoud  
Lydia Malen  
Jayne Mapstone  
Rebecca Marrah  
Emma Marshall  
Yusuf Masood  
Peyton McConley  
Hailey Mehta  
Evan Mello  
Clara Merkel  
Daniel Merkwitz-Bustos  
Emma Meyer  
Camila Mierkiewicz  
Olivia Miller  
Jakob Mills  
Sonja Minge  
Ian/Donnie Mirabella  
Lillian Mitchell  
Alexandria Moews  
Ava Moore  
Oscar Mullikin  
Mathena Neely  
Zenon Neta  
Megan Nevin  
Erika Nielson  
Celia Olson  
Dylan Ong  
Clara Padgham  
Samantha Perez  
Lily Peter  
Faith Petersen  
Taylor Peterson  
Nina Petrosino  
Thi Phuong Anh Pham  
Kari Poppen  
Tessa Poppen  
Dylan Powers  
Ana Quintana Bernal  
Yusra Rakhangi  
Camille Relford  
Natalia Reyes  
Jacquelyn Rich  
Grace Ringsmuth  
Raymond L. Roberts  
Mia Rodriguez  
Kailee Rosen  
Paola Rueda  
Anna Rusk  
Muaz Salem  
Carmen Ann Sanchez  
Shandra Schibbelhut  
Anna Schwantes

Lily Shayegan  
Sofia Shepley  
Deirdre Shore  
Shirene Singh  
Ethan Slafsky  
Haley Slate  
Tyler Sloan  
Julia Slotnick  
Ida Sobotik  
Emma Speck-Wayne  
Bailey Spencer  
Chantell Stahel  
Imogen Steele  
Sharon Stern  
Eleanor Stoa  
Aeryn Streiffer  
Marta Swanson  
Sam Syta  
Amari Talluri-Boye  
Jennifer Taufan  
Faith Taylor  
Kalee Thao  
Lauryn Thomas  
Molly Torinus  
Rohshonda Nichole Tyson  
Maxwell Underhill  
Andrea Van Nest  
Zoe Van Nest  
Charlotte Vanden Heuvel  
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Zselyke Vinkler-Hannagan  
Addalie Viscarra  
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Shuhan Wang  
Grace Weber  
Holly West  
Aleksia White  
Trystan Widjaja  
Janiya Williams  
Claire Wisniewski  
Natalie Wolkoff  
Chushan Wu  
Laura Yip  
Addy Ystenes  
Kyle Yumal  
Lorenza Zebell  
Fatima Zeeshan  
Derek Zhang



madison children's museum

## OFFICIAL BALLOT 2024 KID-ONLY ELECTION

### NEW SPRING EVENT

Which theme day would you like to celebrate? Event will be held in spring or summer of 2025.

☐ **Amazing Insects**

Meet live and local insects, learn about their life cycles, and make artistic creations inspired by our 6-legged friends.

☐ **Global Dance Party**

Enjoy performances by local dance ensembles, learn some new moves, and join our DJ to dance to world music beats.

☐ **Maker Madness**

Fire up the glue guns, learn to use hand tools, and join us for a day full of invention.

☐ **Outer Space**

Blast off! Explore our galaxy from right here on Earth as we celebrate both the science and the fantastical science fiction of our universe.

**Return your completed ballot in the envelope provided.**



# OFFICIAL BALLOT 2024 KID-ONLY ELECTION

**Welcome to the Polling Place,** where the people (that's you!) have the power to decide. This election year, the museum needs your help to make decisions about upcoming exhibits, events, and Lunchbox offerings. This is a kid-only election! Cast your vote and make a difference!

**To vote, fill in the circle next to your favorite candidate's name.**

## NEW MCM EXHIBIT

**Vote for the next exhibit in the Window to the Past display, next to the admission desk!**

Would you rather play with tools inside an old-time hardware store or pretend to work in an old-fashioned ice cream parlor?

- ☐ Hardware Store
- ☐ Ice Cream Parlor

## NEW LUNCHBOX OFFERING

**New Lunchbox offering on free Thursday evenings: the Breakfast-for-Dinner Cereal Bar!**

What kinds of cereal would you like to eat for dinner? Vote for as many cereal choices as you'd like:

- ☐ corn flakes
- ☐ wheat flakes
- ☐ granola
- ☐ crispy rice
- ☐ bran cereal
- ☐ raisin bran
- ☐ oat o's
- ☐ write-in: \_\_\_\_\_



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