

The Scribbler

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

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G A I N I N G

MOMENTUM!

Update on the campaign

In 2023, Madison Children's Museum launched Momentum!—a \$3 million campaign to refresh, reinvigorate, revitalize, and say “yes!” The campaign supports investments in our facility and staff; funds the creation of the Nice Age Trail; underwrites our leadership of Caretakers of Wonder, a national initiative on climate change; and helps us get ready to host our colleagues at the Association of Children's Museums' international conference this May.

The most visible element of the campaign is the Nice Age Trail. This new, custom exhibit was conceived and designed by our expert in-house exhibits team—a rarity in the children's museum field—and employs over 30 other local artists and artisans. Read more on page 6.

Frequent visitors often get to know and treasure individual staff members. That's because we hire great people and they tend to stay with us: We reached an 84% staff retention rate in 2023—unusually high for any organization in this economy—meaning smoother operations for us and a better experience for you! This is the result of sustained investments in pay, training, and support.

We invite our entire community to say “yes!” to the Momentum! campaign. We're raising funds through 2024 and it will take gifts of every amount to help us reach our \$3 million goal. Your support today builds upon everything you love about Madison Children's Museum, helps us continue to learn and improve how we serve our community, and prepares us to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

■ 60%
COMMITTED
\$1,800,000



■ 40%
REMAINING
\$1,200,000

\$3,000,000

Momentum! campaign goal

CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS

Madison Children's Museum gratefully acknowledges the following donors for their support of the Momentum! campaign.



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Use the enclosed envelope or go to
MadisonChildrensMuseum.org/Momentum
to participate in the Momentum! campaign.





Thank you for 11 transformative years, Deb!

After more than a decade at the helm of Madison Children's Museum and 36 years in the field, Deb Gilpin, MCM's president and CEO, will retire this summer

Born and raised in the Madison area, Deb's museum career began in 1987, taking her from the Discovery Museum in Acton, Massachusetts, to the Arizona Science Center, and then the Children's Museum of Phoenix—growing it from infancy to a top children's museum.

"I see every child who comes through the front door like a glowing ball of potential—it's those kids with their nearly limitless potential who I'll miss most."

—Deb Gilpin, MCM President & CEO

Deb started here in 2013, three years after the move to Capitol Square. Under her leadership the museum thrived: MCM built several new exhibits, improved its financial position, increased employee pay and retention, grew community partnerships, and continued its innovation and leadership in the children's museum field.

Deb oversaw the launch of several innovative programs, including the Teen Workforce program, the free First-Time Parent Membership, and Little John's Lunchbox, the first pay-what-you-can restaurant in a museum in the country. Under her leadership, Access for Everyone usage increased from 17% to 30%, a healthy indication that MCM is serving families with need.

She led through 15 months of pandemic-forced closure and the long, slow recovery process. Within months of unshuttering, the Wonderground opened. The 10,000-square-foot, sustainably built playground for active, imaginative play was built on the museum's unusable and decaying parking lot just as families were cautiously venturing back out.

Deb will go out on a high note: Early this summer, MCM opens a major new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail, and will host the international children's museum conference in May. She has made a lasting mark, leaving programs, exhibits, and ideas that will benefit children for years to come.

The board is conducting a national search for her replacement, assisted by the Arts Consulting Group.

To make a gift honoring Deb's leadership and legacy, use the enclosed envelope or visit **MadisonChildrensMuseum.org/Tribute**. Deb is most proud of the museum's innovative Access for Everyone program, which has dramatically increased MCM's reach and impact within our community. Gifts made in her honor will support our access programs.

Deb leaves the museum in great shape. We're in the admirable position of looking for a leader who can continue to make great things happen."

—Matt Premo, MCM Board President

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DEB'S TIME AT MCM

- **2013**
Joins MCM as President & CEO
- **2014**
In response to the Madison Race to Equity report, museum launches Teen Workforce program
- **2017**
New exhibit opens, *From Coops to Cathedrals: Nature, Childhood, and the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*
- Free First-Time Parent Membership program brings thousands of babies and new families to MCM
- **2018**
Receives Women of Industry Award from *In Business Madison* magazine
- **2019**
Planning and fundraising begin for major expansion of outdoor spaces
- **2020**
Pandemic hits; MCM closes its doors, future uncertain. Deb works to secure funding, stays afloat with limited staffing
- **2021**
Museum reopens; Wonderground opens, adding 10,000 square feet of open-air play space
- **2022**
Little John's Lunchbox opens, first pay-what-you-can restaurant in a museum in the country
- **2023**
MCM leads Caretakers of Wonder initiative, funded through a national leadership grant from Institute of Museum and Library Services
- **2024**
Construction begins on the Nice Age Trail, informed by Caretakers of Wonder work, opening June 2024

Sneak Peek into the Nice Age Trail

New nature exhibit opening in June

Following a trail through a series of interactive features based on iconic Wisconsin animals, the museum's next big new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail, encourages imagination, exploration, and practicing kindness—to animals, to nature, to people, and to yourself. Construction is ongoing. Here's a quick peek at a few features under construction.



Black Bear Cave

The same local artisans who helped build parts of other beloved exhibits (like the reading pods in the Wildernest) are creating a winter landscape with a 20-by-8-foot bear cave. Kids clamber through the cave, snuggle up to a sleeping bear—carved from walnut wood by artist Djam Vivie (more on page 9)—and listen to them breathe while slowing their own breathing to match the sleepy rhythm. They can bed down with the baby bears and read a storybook by Duachaka Her (detail shown here, more about her work on page 9) about a rowdy bear who doesn't want to go to sleep. Other activities encourage kids to pause, center themselves, and find calm.



Beaver Lodge

Active play challenges kids to explore with all their senses. Creative play/pretend play engages their imaginations. Our recreation of a wetland and beaver lodge offers both kinds of play. Don't worry about wet clothes; we're using sculpture to create the feeling of going in and out of water—while staying dry. The kid-sized beaver lodge has a cozy interior chamber and a slide from the top back into the "pond." Large logs made of fabric by another of our favorite local artists encourage kids to collaborate and build.

The Nice Age Trail is made possible by



Anonymous



Darcy Kind
& Marc Vitale

Matt & Katie
Premo



Honeybee Hive

Inspired by the Kindness Curriculum from UW-Madison's Center for Healthy Minds (more on page 10), our honeybee hive buzzes with possibilities for collaboration as well as individual reflection. Kids clamber in and through oversized cells (made from wood, not wax) and collect puffballs representing pollen from nearby flowers. Instead of honey, some of the cells contain immersive activities: Use your imagination to let your mind wander and "see" imaginary shapes in the passing clouds, hear a story about the difficult concept of forgiveness, or listen to a range of sounds to experience the calming effects of nature.

The Nice Age Trail will open in June. Subscribe to our email list for updates, including an invite for museum members to an exclusive preview party. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram for more peeks behind the scenes.

THE ICE AGE TRAIL

Our new exhibit title plays off the name of Wisconsin's iconic Ice Age Trail, a 1,200-mile footpath that wiggles and wends across Wisconsin. We hope the Nice Age Trail will inspire families to explore nature, including visiting its namesake, forming connections that will last a lifetime.

One of 11 National Scenic Trails, the Ice Age Trail was added as a unit of the National Park Service this past December. More than 2.3 million people use the trail each year. Some are hardcore hikers; others might not realize they're walking on a trail segment unless they see the distinctive yellow blazes on posts or trees. While some segments go through urban areas (the Dane County segment runs through Verona), the trail also traverses some of Wisconsin's most wild and beautiful landscapes.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance—which works to expand and connect trail segments and coordinates volunteers—encourages kids and families to explore the trail. They can do so through events featuring the alliance's mascot, Monty the Mammoth, and partnerships with organizations such as Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Badgerland and Madison Children's Museum.

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ENDOWMENT **for the ARTS**
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DANE ARTS

Jessica & Jim
Yehle

Anne Forbes
& James Lorman



Celebrating Art and Culture in the Nice Age Trail

Four Wisconsin artists, four mediums, four cultural backgrounds, four extraordinary creations—one grant making it all possible

The Nice Age Trail features the work of dozens of artists and artisans, including four Wisconsin-based artists whose work for this exhibit is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Their creative contributions make MCM more diverse and inclusive in recognizing the many cultures in our community.



Angelica Contreras is a Latinx painter who explores the multi-layered relationships between identity, tradition, and popular culture. Angelica seeks to create work that bridges between various communities and cultures while reflecting on her own. Based in Madison, her artwork has been

featured in exhibitions in Mexico and across the U.S.

With paint and collage, Angelica is creating two landscape scenes combined into a lenticular display: Seen from one direction, the display depicts summer wildflowers; seen from the other, autumn leaves. Angelica's colors and style show the transition of seasons while demonstrating the power of perspective. Look for Angelica's work in the transition from summer to fall.

Artwork Photo: *Oaxaqueña*, 2020





Duachaka Her is a Hmong American cartoonist, illustrator, and artist based in Wausau. She is the author and illustrator of a mini comic, "Tradition," published by Uncivilized Books, as well as comic books "The Collection" and "Then and Now."

Most of her work focuses on aspects of her

Hmong American identity and experiences.

Duachaka is writing and illustrating a children's book about a rowdy bear who doesn't want to go to sleep. Reflecting Hmong respect for the interconnectedness of all life, Duachaka's illustrations evoke the universal needs we share with animals, such as sleep, play, and community. Look for Duachaka's book next to our winter bear cave.

Artwork Photo: *Tiger Girl and Sun*, 2022

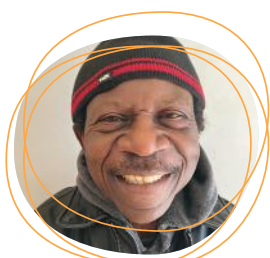


Tom Jones is an Indigenous photographer based in Prairie du Sac. His work has been showcased nationwide and included in museum collections such as the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Tom, a professor of photography at UW-Madison, describes his work as

an ongoing photographic essay on the contemporary life of his tribe, the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin.

Tom is creating a large-scale photographic mural of an outdoor night scene in a Wisconsin winter. His inspiration stems in part from outdoor fieldwork and conversations with Ho-Chunk elders. Look for Tom's work in our winter forest.

Artwork Photo: *Marker Tree Blue Mounds*, 2002



Djam Vivie is a master woodcarver from Ghana who lives in Madison, carving masks, figurines, and drums, among other objects. Djam teaches woodcarving to people of all ages and abilities. He is a frequent collaborator with MCM, recently hosting drumming workshops for our Summer

Arts Academy programming with Madison Metropolitan School District.

Djam is carving a life-size black bear made from a giant block of walnut wood. Solid and comforting, Djam's sleeping bear encourages children to develop an emotional connection to the natural world. Look for Djam's wood carvings in our winter bear cave.

Artwork Photo: *Eagle*, 2004



Kids, Kindness, and Climate Change

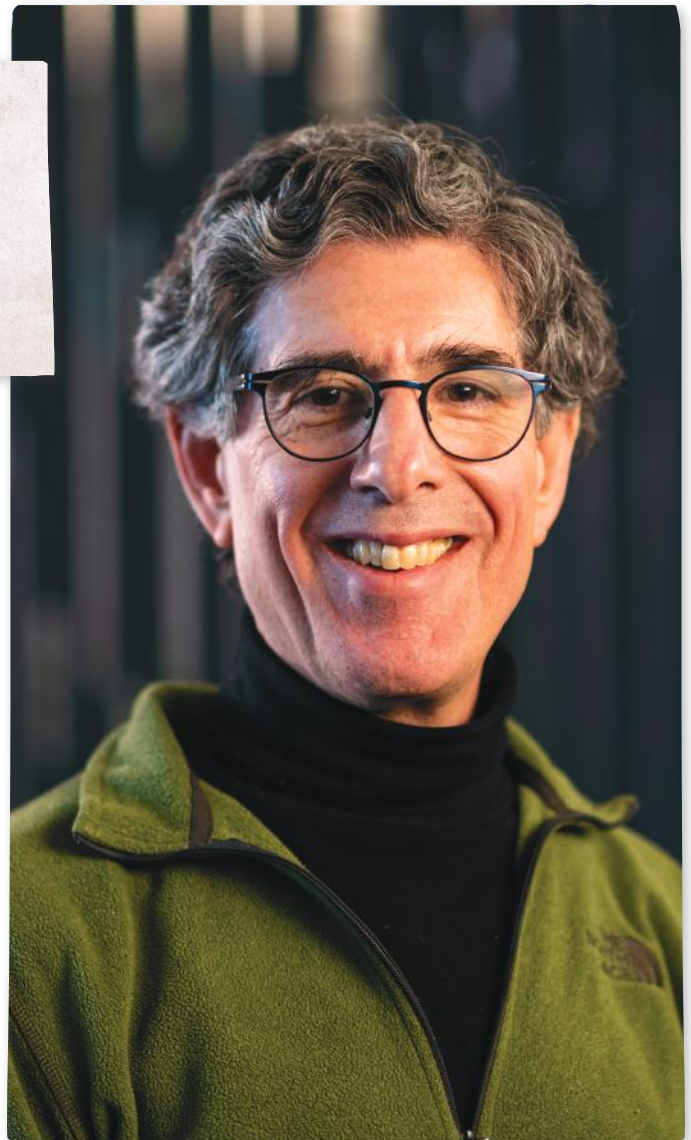
Professor Richard J. Davidson partners with MCM's national climate change project

World renowned scientist Professor Richard J. Davidson sees kindness, mindfulness, and the climate crisis as inextricably linked, and is using his extensive research to support MCM's groundbreaking new project, Caretakers of Wonder. MCM's national initiative brings together professionals from nine children's museums and science centers, along with Davidson and a cross-disciplinary team of advisors with expertise in child development, environmental education, climate science, and more.

The team will create new developmentally appropriate resources to support caregivers and young children growing up amidst a deepening climate crisis. MCM has been at the national forefront of museum sustainable design practices for three decades and is eager to lead the field by bridging the disciplines of early childhood education, well-being and human flourishing, climate science, and environmental resiliency.

The team will create new ... resources to support caregivers and young children growing up amidst a deepening climate crisis.

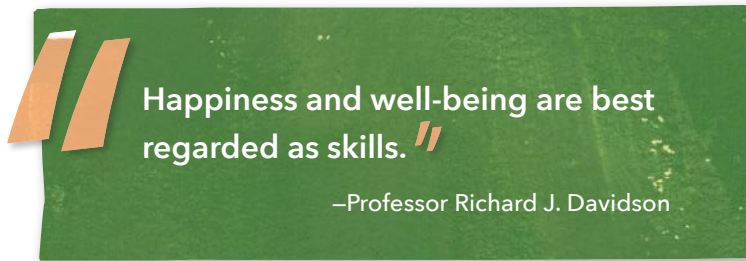
The UW-Madison professor and director of the Center for Healthy Minds believes—as we do—that helping young children build capacities for empathy, resiliency, and feelings of connection is critical as they face increasing climate challenges ahead.



"Mindfulness, well-being, flourishing, and climate action all not only go together but they need to go together in order for us to build a sustainable future," Davidson told Caretakers of Wonder partners during their kickoff meeting in Madison last year.

Davidson also points out that social isolation, anxiety, and depression are increasing and begin at younger ages.

"In addition to the climate crisis there is a parallel crisis occurring globally—a crisis of well-being, undermining our ability to act on the climate crisis among other things," said Davidson, noting the connections between his work and climate action.



Happiness and well-being are best regarded as skills. "

—Professor Richard J. Davidson

The course of Davidson's research was set more than 30 years ago during a conversation with the Dalai Lama. Davidson had already begun his groundbreaking work studying "the emotional life of the brain" with MRI machines and other medical imaging tools.

"When I first met the Dalai Lama in 1992," he says, "he asked me a very simple question: 'Why can't you use the same tools that you use to study stress, anxiety, and depression to study kindness and compassion?'"

Davidson made a commitment to take on that ambitious endeavor, leading to the creation of the Center for Healthy Minds, housed at UW-Madison. Its mission is "to cultivate well-being and relieve suffering through a scientific understanding of the mind."

Davidson's work and the Center for Healthy Minds' "Kindness Curriculum" geared to Pre-K children, have been cornerstone sources for the Caretakers

The Dalai Lama ... asked me a very simple question: 'Why can't you use the same tools that you use to study stress, anxiety, and depression to study kindness and compassion?'

of Wonder project's new Climate Action Playbook, created to support caregivers of children up to age 8. Davidson's research is also informing the museum's new exhibit, the Nice Age Trail, set to open in early June.



The ABCs of Kindness

Crossword Puzzle

DIFFICULTY: ●●●○○

In the Nice Age Trail, children will encounter 26 words from A to Z corresponding to concepts teaching empathy, mindfulness, and connection with nature. Our ABCs of Kindness is an expansion of the concept originally developed by Dr. Richard Davidson and the Center for Healthy Minds at UW-Madison (read more about his work and connection with the museum on page 10). His team developed a "Kindness Curriculum" incorporating kindness words beginning with A-G. Our exhibits team expanded on that work and completed the alphabet. In the Nice Age Trail, those words are accompanied by activities for kids and contextual information for adults.

We invite you to discover those 26 words* in our ABCs of Kindness by completing this crossword puzzle. The clues are inspired by the in-exhibit prompts for adults. Look for the words in action when you visit the Nice Age Trail!

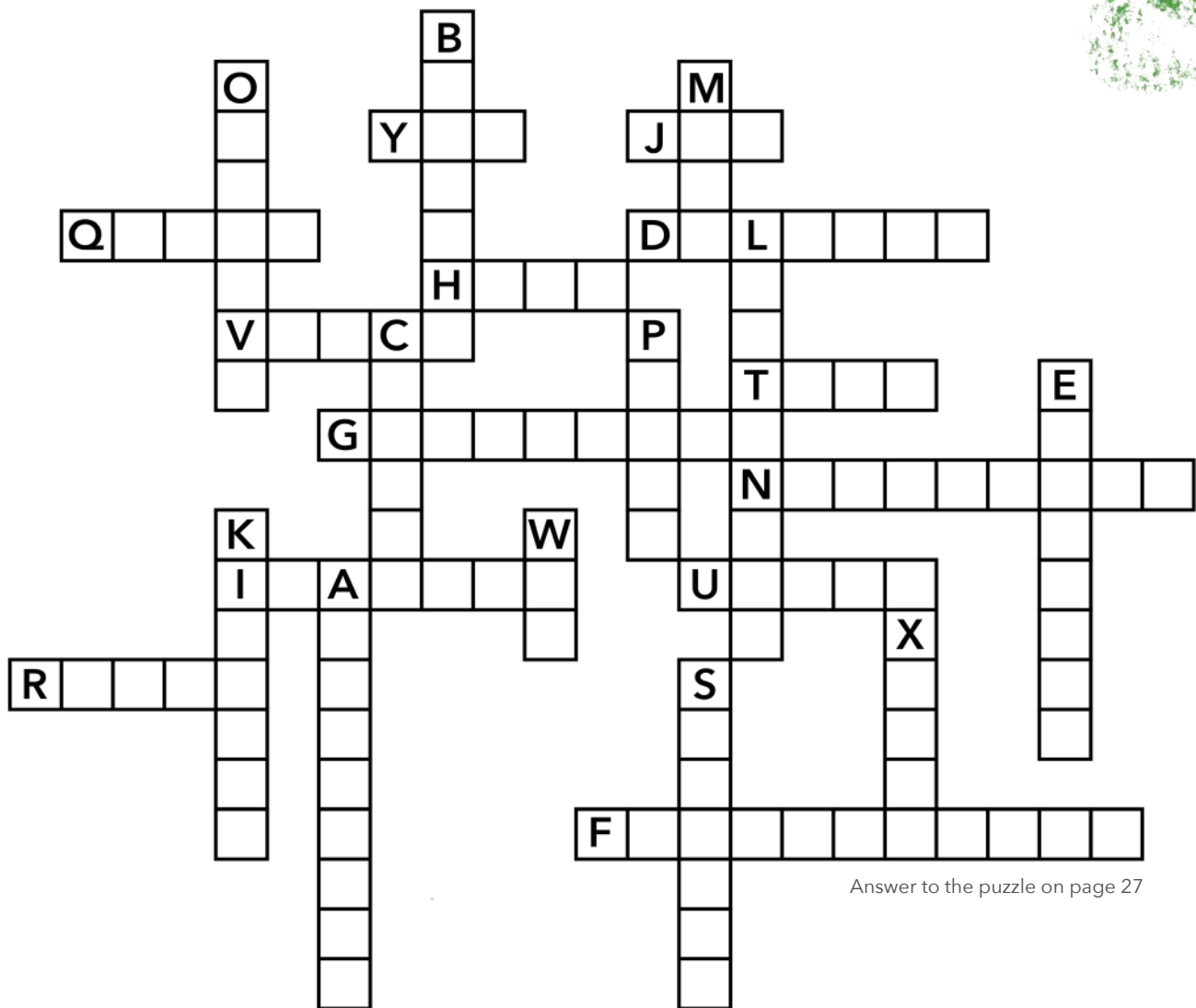
Note: This puzzle is intended for grown-ups. For a puzzle for earlier readers see page 31.

ACROSS

- D** Finding ____ in small things, like the beauty of a pinecone, a snowflake, or patterns in the clouds, builds connection and resilience.
- F** Kids need to learn to offer ____ after mistakes—both to themselves and to others.
- G** Feeling ____ and saying "thank you" for an act of kindness strengthens relationships.
- H** Offering ____ to others in need builds feelings of belonging and connection.
- I** First, kids ____ a future world; then they can go build it.
- J** Feeling ____, laughing, and having fun improves wellbeing—no matter our age.
- N** As Mr. Rogers taught, ____ depend upon each other for protection, help, and support.
- Q** Learning to seek out moments of calm and ____ helps kids observe and identify their feelings and what's going on around them.
- R** Like prairie plants, kids with strong ____ can weather challenging times.
- T** Cooperating and working as a ____ leverages our strengths.
- U** Working together helps us do bigger things, stay safe, and conserve energy. When we ____ as one, we achieve more.
- V** Show your child how important it is to use your ____ to advocate for issues you care about.
- Y** Trying new things builds confidence. Find ways to say "____" to new experiences.

DOWN

- A** When you look closely and pay ____ you can see incredible things in nature.
- B** Learning to be mindful as they ____ in and out helps kids develop strategies to calm themselves at stressful times.
- C** Kids learn empathy by ____ for small animals, insects, and plants.
- E** Pretend play allows children to experiment with ____ in safe ways, learning that feelings constantly change.
- K** Finding ____ with all those who share our Earth helps kids see themselves as part of a larger system, which deserves our care.
- L** Active ____ builds awareness, trust, and connection with others. Practice building this skill by tuning in to the sounds of nature.



Answer to the puzzle on page 27

- M** When kids _____ like an animal—pretending to gallop, slither, or fly—they build empathy and get exercise.
- O** See what catches your child's attention and encourage them to _____ more carefully; talk about what they notice.
- P** When kids are having big feelings, teaching them to _____ before reacting helps manage emotions.

- S** It's not just a skill for little kids, when resources are limited, _____ allows everyone to survive and thrive.
- W** To explain the concept of interconnectedness we often say "We are all strands in the same _____."
- X** Being a kid or a caregiver is challenging. Take a moment to inhale and _____X_____.

*** The one we couldn't fit**
Caring for yourself, kids, and the planet all take physical, mental, and emotional energy. Show yourself kindness and get some ZZZZZZs.

Summer Events for Adults at MCM

While the kids are away, the grown-ups play ... or play music ... or watch a play

The best entertainment for children, like "Sesame Street" and "Bluey," also appeals to grownups. By design, MCM meets the needs of children while also delighting adults. This summer, experience a range of events created for adults—with or without children.



Live from the Wonderground

for adults and kids

May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2, September 6

After a successful first run last year, our alfresco live-music series returns this summer. On the first Friday of the month, visit the Wonderground for performances by some of Madison's best in a family friendly environment. Kids play while their caregivers enjoy grown-up drinks—and everyone listens to the music! Parents enjoy a night out without relying on a babysitter and kids get a chance to enjoy the museum's most iconic outdoor space.

Drama in the Wonderground

for adults and teens

June 28-30

In our eighth year of collaboration, Madison Shakespeare Company returns to MCM to stage three evenings of Christopher Marlowe's first play, the tragedy "Dido, Queen of Carthage," with the Wonderground climber taking center stage—literally. It might not exactly be the set envisioned by the infamous playwright, poet, spy, and member of The School of Night, but Elizabethan London lacked our exhibits team. Check the museum's website for ticket information.

Adult Swim

for adults ages 21+

June 14, August 16

Play like a grown-up for the evening—crawling, sliding, crafting, and dancing your way through the museum. Each Adult Swim has a theme, with whimsical crafts, activities, and performances. This June we're returning to Camp Camp, with drag performances and crafts that combine the tongue-in-cheek camp aesthetic with the bug spray-scented delights of old-school summer camp. In August, test your luck and bravery at the Risk & Reward themed swim; break out of your comfort zone to make friends, flex some survival skills, or even get a spontaneous tattoo.

Adult Swim is presented by Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.

Subscribe to our email newsletter for more information or to be notified when tickets become available—many of these events sell out.



madison children's museum



photo: Amanda Red

Throw a party just as playful as you!

From intimate weddings in our lush rooftop garden to blow-out parties for hundreds of your employees, the museum is perfect for any event seeking fun, whimsy, and chickens.

Now booking! Celebrate@MadisonChildrensMuseum.org

A photograph of an older woman with white hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored sweater, sitting on a wooden structure. She is holding a young child on her lap and reading a book together. The child is looking at the book. The background shows some greenery and a wooden structure.

Today's Child Is Tomorrow's Citizen

Research-guided strategic planning with funding by
Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Compassion. Gratitude. Resilience. Empathy. Curiosity. Courage. These attributes provide a foundation for social-emotional learning and character development in young children. Children's museums have always played a role in nurturing these character traits and skills as children explore, wiggle, and giggle their way through immersive play environments with one another and with the adults in their lives.

In 2023, Lilly Endowment, Inc., invited 23 U.S. children's museums to experiment, learn, and reflect together on the ways our museums can further support crucial areas of character development as part of an initiative called Fostering Character Through Children's Museums. Madison Children's Museum is honored to be included in this cohort of museums, which is working with the Association of Children's Museums to learn together and share ideas about fostering character development. Through a \$100,000 planning grant, the museum is collaborating with local and national partners to research and evaluate the ways in which our museum supports learning and character development through our exhibits, programs, and community outreach collaborations.

Using the planning grant from Lilly Endowment, we are collaborating with researchers from the University of Wisconsin's Center for Healthy Minds, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Waisman Center Social Kids Lab. Together, we are studying the playful social learning that takes place at the museum. The Nice Age Trail—which celebrates the intersection between kindness and well-being—will provide a particularly rich area for research when it opens this summer.

And all this research may lead to even bigger things! We will have an opportunity to apply for a project implementation grant from Lilly Endowment in fall 2024 to fund the continuation of this work and a potential major expansion of our services. We're grateful to Lilly Endowment for including MCM in this invitational initiative, which supports research, reflection, and planning, as well as funding opportunities to realize the plans that arise.

As we're researching and planning during the spring and summer of 2024, we are inviting input from partners, colleagues, supporters, and visitors—including kids! Say hello to our researcher friends if you meet them at the museum!



MCM staff win 2024 Governor's Tourism Award

Education, Visitor Services, and Outreach teams recognized for Service Excellence

It's official: Our staff are the best! Now the whole state knows what we've always all known.

In March, the staff of three MCM departments who work most closely with the public won the prestigious Governor's Tourism Award for Service Excellence. We are so proud of the expertise, playfulness, professionalism, and creativity our team brings to the museum every day. They treat each visitor with respect and dignity, offering the creative play that every child needs to thrive.

Please congratulate them when you see them in the museum or out in the community.

I want to congratulate all the winners on this well-deserved recognition and thank them for their leadership, dedication and innovation that help support our state's tourism industry and make Wisconsin a place that people from all over choose to visit. //

—Governor Tony Evers , March 12, 2024



Community Partnerships Help Us Flourish

YWCA Madison, Madison Metropolitan School District's
Play and Learn Program, Goodman Community Center

The museum's Access for Everyone programs remove barriers so that all children and families can enjoy brain-building, creative play. The best known of our access programs are discounted, \$1 per person tickets and sliding-scale memberships, but our commitment to access goes deeper than that.

These three featured partner organizations work hard to improve the quality of life for children and families in our community. The museum has formed long-lasting collaborations with them to help us reach populations and families who might not feel able or welcome to visit the museum. In 2022 the museum committed to deepening and expanding our outreach and partnership efforts by hiring Charlotte Cummins in a newly created position as director of community partnerships. Find more about Charlotte on page 21.

Like all good relationships, the partnerships grow and change over time, and benefit both parties. By sharing their expertise, our partners help us improve our practices, deepen our cultural literacy, and connect with new families. This all opens the door for us to do what we do best: serving children and families. We are stronger together.

YWCA Madison

Our across-the-street neighbor, YWCA Madison, is all about strengthening and supporting families. At that location YWCA Madison provides short-term and long-term transitional housing for single women and women with young children. The museum has had a decades-long relationship with YWCA Madison. Their families visit the museum for free. We've been part of their annual block party for years and hosted their annual Christmas Party. We secured funding for all staff to take their racial justice training. During the pandemic we created art project kits for the kids at YWCA Madison. During listening sessions in 2015, YWCA families told us they wished they had a backyard. Now, the families who live there visit often and on closed days we've invited the kids to play in the Wonderground—the backyard they dreamed of.





Madison Metropolitan School District's Play and Learn Program

MMSD Play and Learn maintains seven sites across the city providing both caregiver education and early development support. They offer services free of charge for children ages birth to 3+ and their caregivers who reside in the district. Since our early years on State Street, we hosted Play and Learn field trips to the museum. Many of the participating families go on to become members through our discounted Access Membership program. As we do with many other partners, we supply MMSD Play and Learn staff with free passes they can give to their client families. Play and Learn are local experts on ages birth to three—they are one of our go-to partners when we seek information and guidance on this age group.



Goodman Community Center

Goodman Community Center serves families from several diverse, east side neighborhoods. MCM has partnered with them for many years. We've welcomed their field trips, provided their staff with passes, and co-hosted programs. Beginning during the pandemic, our longtime partnership led to the opportunity for a deeper collaboration between MCM and the center's preschool. MCM early childhood education expert Heather Davis visits weekly with Goodman Center preschool students, leading special programs in their class. Other staff assist Heather, learning how to best serve this age group. Goodman students also visit as a group during our free, extended hours on Thursday evenings and through field trips. (Heather tells us that the reactions of many of the students when they see her at the museum—instead of in their classroom—are often very funny.) This past year, MCM Roadshow visited the Goodman Center Science and Art Family Nights.

These three organizations, and dozens more like them, keep our hearts open—they teach us. Through our partnerships, we develop deep relationships with families. We're reminded how each family is special and deserves respect, kindness, and a great quality of life. Our partners help us flourish.

Access for Everyone is sponsored by



**EXACT
SCIENCES**

J.P.Morgan

We also thank the other 200+ households and organizations for their gifts of less than \$2,500.

Meet the Staff

Charlotte Cummins

Director of Community Partnerships

If you've watched news coverage of MCM's holiday programs, visited during one of our free community programs, or joined one of our community listening sessions, you may have seen Charlotte Cummins. Charlotte joined the museum in January 2023, taking on the newly created role of director of community partnerships, a position created to expand and deepen the museum's ties with the communities we serve. (For more on that work, see pages 18-20.)



Before coming to MCM, Charlotte served as director of education and programming at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. For 12 years she was an elementary art educator in Madison schools. She started her education and career studying fiber, textiles, and fashion and traveled globally as a technical designer for Lands' End.

Charlotte's commitment to art and community extends off the clock as well. She organized with other art educators to paint a Black Lives Matter mural on State Street in downtown Madison and serves as a facilitator for the local chapter of the Institute for the Healing of Racism. She performs with a community African dance troupe, and recently traveled to Guinea to further her study of dance and drumming. She is also a mother of three and last year became "bibi" (Swahili for grandmother) to Eden.

In the year-plus that Charlotte has been with the museum, we've been awed by everything she's accomplished, all the people with whom she's connected, and the way she's expanded the impact of everything we do. We're deeply grateful she's brought her experience, passion, and creativity to MCM.

Before I joined the staff, everything I heard about MCM resonated with me—the free First-Time Parent Membership, the pay-what-you-can cafe, and the strong access admission and membership programs. Now I'm delighted to see first-hand how we treat each member of our community with dignity and respect. I'm in the right place."

— Charlotte Cummins, Director of Community Partnerships

Why We Support MCM

Darcy Kind & Marc Vitale

All answers are from Darcy on behalf of her and Marc

Q | Why did you decide to get involved with MCM?

I think all parts of a community—whether children, the environment, or the arts—are key to building a healthy and happy community. Without even one of those components, a community can't function as well. What I love about Madison Children's Museum is the intersection of many of the elements that help make a community wonderful: arts and culture, care for environment, supporting children and families, and so much more. It's likely a lot of the kids who go to the museum now will live in the Madison area as adults, so it's important to continue building MCM as a community resource and help everyone realize the importance of having the children's museum in our community.

Q | Is there an aspect of the museum, whether it's a specific exhibit or a program, that you love?

Every time I visit the museum, I am like a kid in a candy store, just awed at the inspiration that happens and the ideas and the use of materials.

I really appreciate the Access for Everyone program and both Marc and I have a strong focus on that. I don't think enough people within the community are aware of it. Programs like Little John's Lunchbox are a really great model that could be implemented in a lot of other museums. Marc has also been thoroughly impressed with the creativeness and use of materials.

Q | Why do you think it's important for Madison Children's Museum and all children's museum spaces to teach children about the importance of sustainability and making our world a better place?

One thing that strikes you right when you enter the door is the sustainability of MCM and how it's such a focal feature. Even before the idea of sustainability really became even more mainstream, it's been something that the museum has embraced and championed. The outdoor spaces at the museum may be the safest, most comfortable outdoor spaces that some kids have access to. In those spaces, they can learn and play. So, I think the museum really does a great job of getting kids outside and fostering a connection to nature.



Q | As someone that doesn't have kids, what made you decide that the youth in our community are worth investing in?

We want to be part of a happy and healthy community. The museum is an important part of this community. The museum encourages play and imagination and allows kids to take risks and learn that it is ok to take risks. These are all values that are important in life.

Q | What made you decide to support the Momentum! campaign?

As Wisconsinites, the environment is important to us, and we feel fortunate to be in a state with a land ethic. We love that the museum is teaching kids about the local environment and natural resources through exhibits and activities. We love the Ice Age Trail Alliance and are happy to see how the museum is connecting to their work with the new exhibit.



Donors & Volunteers

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 February 1, 2023 and January 31, 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) 256-6445 or at give@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 all contribute to making Madison Children's Museum a wonderful place for children and families. Individuals listed volunteered between February 1, 2023 and January 31, 2024.

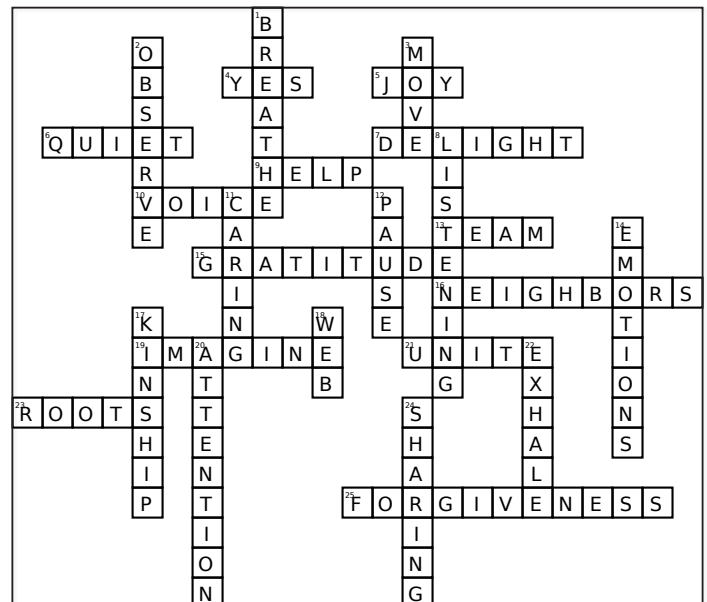
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Meet the Board of Directors

Get to know a few of our committed board members



Jane Villa

Board Member, Former Campaign
Chair for Our Future in Play

Upon relocating to Madison in 2008, Jane was inspired by the rich experiences MCM offers and has been closely involved with the museum ever since. She helped realize the Wonderground by chairing the Our Future in Play campaign; volunteered at many events; and has been an annual donor to MCM, most recently supporting Little John's Lunchbox, the pay-what-you-can cafe. Her first gift to the museum was the greenhouse on the rooftop, brought over from her own backyard.

Jane's training in finance, experiences from living around the world, and service with numerous organizations, such as the Wisconsin Historical Society, give her a unique voice on MCM's board. She looks forward to the future of the museum and is excited for MCM to continue its tradition of extending a welcome to our whole community.



Matt Cornwell

Officer at Large,
Strategic Planning Lead

As a father of two, Matt Cornwell was already a frequent visitor to the museum when he joined the board of directors in 2019, bringing a wealth of knowledge. As the director of organization and change effectiveness at American Family Insurance, Matt's career has focused on strategy development and execution, process design and improvement, innovation practices, and systems building. Matt helped MCM leadership turn crisis into opportunity by bringing that expertise to the work of planning, restructuring, and reopening after the pandemic closure.

Matt is always looking for new ways to get involved in the community, most recently delivering food to homes of local families in need, giving financial literacy talks to high school groups, mentoring founders of nonprofit startups, and coaching some of his kids' youth sports teams. He also serves on the board of directors at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Matt looks forward to helping shape the future of MCM by using his skills to lead strategic planning for the organization.



Jennifer C. Johnson
Immediate Past Chair,
Search Committee Lead

Jennifer Johnson is an accomplished attorney who focuses on family law and immigration law. She has been involved with Madison Children's Museum for about 10 years, most recently serving as board chair from June 2020 to June 2023. Jennifer has always been inspired by the Access for Everyone program, even before becoming a mother, but now, with the lens of parenthood, she's even more dedicated to the museum's mission.

Jennifer is committed to our community. In September 2021, she was appointed by the mayor as a member of the Sister City committee for the city of Madison, where she serves as the Madison representative for Cusco, Peru. Jennifer also serves on the Art and Wine Auction committee for Tandem Press at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Jennifer looks forward to seeing how MCM will continue to evolve and find innovative ways to show up for children and families.

"A community that prioritizes the well-being and support of children and families sets the foundation for all its members to lead fulfilled and healthier lives."

—Jennifer C. Johnson, Immediate Past Chair,
Search Committee Lead



FPO

Page Coming Later

Kids Page

New exhibit word search

During our December 2023 member party, kids were invited to discover the name of the upcoming new exhibit by completing puzzles, including this word search.

The name of the new exhibit is hidden in the word search below. First find and cross out all of the words in this list:

BADGER
EMPATHY
NEST

BUG
FLOWER
OAK

BREATHE
EAGLE

FOREST
PRAIRIE

N	B	N	I	C	E	B	E
F	R	E	E	R	I	U	M
O	E	S	E	E	R	G	P
R	A	T	A	W	I	A	A
E	T	G	G	O	A	K	T
S	H	E	L	L	R	T	H
T	E	R	E	F	P	A	Y
B	A	D	G	E	R	I	L

The _____

Write the remaining letters in the spaces above to discover the name of the new exhibit, opening in the summer of 2024.





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