

# The Scribbler

STORIES & UPDATES FROM MCM

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Frank Lloyd  
Wright**

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**2022-2023**  
**Annual Report**



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Illustrations by  
Adeline Fox

# Hi, Reader!

Welcome to *The Scribbler*, Madison Children's Museum's new magazine. Many of our visitors don't know how to read yet, but we didn't leave them out; there are coloring pages and games starting on page 33!

Sharing a window into the workings of the museum is a great joy. When people hear the kind of stories you'll find here, I see their eyes light up with pride at their own involvement, pleasure at how both our local community and the national museum field has benefited from the model we set, and a sense of good fortune that Madison has one of the most renowned children's museums in the world.

Children come first here—everything we do is in their best interests, always. These stories connect what we do with why and how we carry out our mission. Because connecting children to the world around them doesn't happen accidentally. For decades we've worked intentionally on our practices, approaches, innovations, and programming to welcome and include people from a wide diversity of populations.

Here we can tell the less-often heard stories—including our history, present work, and plans. Collectively they illustrate just what an amazing place this museum is and the inspiring people—kids, families, volunteers, staff, donors, and friends—who come together to create and bring it to life every day.

Thank you,



Deb Gilpin  
President & CEO  
Madison Children's Museum



## 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

**Jennifer Johnson**  
Immediate Past Chair

**Joel Martin**  
Vice Chair & Treasurer

**Cristina Choi**  
Secretary

**Sarah Condella**  
Officer at Large

**Matt Cornwell**  
Officer at Large

### **MEMBERS**

Asya Alexandrovich

Bryan Chan

Marta Gialamas

Gloria Ladson-Billings

Bruce Neviaser

Kristin Shutts

Maria Sobrido

Jane Villa

## **FOUNDATION BOARD**

Nick Jackson

Dan Millman

Peggy Pyle

“Play that exposes kids to problem-solving and age-appropriate risk... I knew right away I wanted to play a part in fulfilling that mission for every kid in our community.”

– Joel Martin, Vice Chair, MCM Board





## NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP



**Matt Premo**  
Chair

Matt Premo's commitment to Madison Children's Museum started in 2008 when his employer, Findorff, made him the project manager on remodeling work for MCM. Working closely with MCM's staff, Matt learned about the museum's mission and impact in the community. After the work was completed, he was inspired to stay involved and joined the board.

Matt's experience and passion proved to be critical during development of what is now the Wonderground. During the pandemic he helped adapt a multi-year project plan with a high budget to a plan that could be executed in about a year, for less money. This allowed us to fast-track a much-needed outdoor play space, quickly meeting the changing needs of the community.

Matt loves that MCM is always evolving to better serve the community. His two children love climbing and maneuvering around the museum—especially in the Wonderground that their dad helped build!



**Joel Martin**  
Vice Chair, Treasurer, and  
Finance Committee Chair

Joel fell in love with children's museums as a child in Minnesota, where he frequented the Minnesota Children's Museum as well as the Science Museum of Minnesota. Inspired by that history Joel joined MCM's board in 2019.

As an investor in healthcare software startups, the Chief Operating Officer at Veda Data Solutions, and a father of two, Joel is excited to help secure the museum's financial future to see what the museum can become for not only his children but the whole community.



# MOMENTUM!

A \$3 million campaign to refresh, reinvigorate, revitalize, and say yes!

If you've ever watched a child in our human-sized Gerbil Wheel, you've seen how hard it is to get it started. Once they've got momentum, it's easier to keep going. But it still requires focus, balance, fresh energy, and effort. Looking at the museum's success over the past year, it's fair to say we've got momentum!

So we've launched the Momentum! campaign, a new initiative raising funds to support the museum's work and plans, \$3 million in total.

To meet the campaign's ambitious goals, we must partner with all our donors: from the largest corporations and philanthropists to the five-year-old rolling a quarter down the coin vortex in the lobby.

Together we'll strengthen the museum and be ready to meet the challenges and the opportunities ahead—those we can anticipate, and those we can't imagine.

We invite you to participate in the Momentum! campaign using the enclosed envelope or by going online to [www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/momentum](http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/momentum).

**This past year, our first full year after we reopened, was one of great accomplishments at Madison Children's Museum. To name just a few:**

- Visitors flocked back to the museum, meeting or exceeding per-day attendance levels prior to the pandemic.
- Little John's Lunchbox—the first ever pay-what-you-can cafe in a museum—opened in August 2022 and continues to serve healthy, delicious food to hundreds of visitors.
- Our exhibits team finished construction on Phase 2 of the Wonderground and immediately leaped into the next big thing: designing a new second-floor exhibit.
- We laid a strong, stable financial foundation, which we're now building upon.







## **MOMENTUM! WILL FUND:**

- **A major new exhibit (25%)**  
Support the custom design and construction by MCM staff, artists, and contractors, and the first year of programming. Get a sneak peek at the new exhibit on page 11.
- **Caretakers of Wonder (23%)**  
Protect the health and well-being of children by addressing climate change through facility improvements and educational content. Learn more about this groundbreaking program on page 12.
- **Facility Fund (20%)**  
Care for our 94-year-old building with confidence—conducting planned upgrades and being ready for maintenance surprises. Learn more about the building's storied history on page 14.
- **Human Resource Development (15%)**  
Invest in our amazing staff, including wage growth and recruitment to fill skill and capacity gaps. Read about Matt Shutler, one of our staff members, on page 9.
- **Innovation Fund (9%)**  
Pilot opportunities to generate additional revenue, without creating financial exposure to general resources.
- **Refresh for hosting the 2024 national conference of children's museums (8%)**  
Ensure our entire facility and all exhibits are in their best condition and prepare to be welcoming, inspiring hosts. Learn more about InterActivity 24 on page 8.





MCM will host the international gathering of children's museums this May

Every year children's museum professionals gather for an annual conference to share ideas, collaborate, and imagine the future. This annual conference—InterActivity— is hosted by our professional organization, the Association of Children's Museums. In May of 2024, InterActivity is coming to Madison!

From May 15 to 17 over 1,000 children's museum professionals from across the US and around the world will travel to Madison. InterActivity will bring an estimated \$700,000+ of economic activity to our community.

ACM chooses a host city based on the reputation of the local children's museum and what the city has to offer. MCM is recognized nationally as a leader and innovator, particularly in the areas of green exhibit design; sustainability; and Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs.

Hosting InterActivity will let MCM show off just how a museum in a smaller city regularly makes top 10 lists of best children's museums.

This year's theme of "Flourish!" was recommended by Madison Children's Museum because flourishing is what we all want for our children—and for our museums—to thrive, grow, and become our best selves.

As we prepare to welcome InterActivity attendees you might notice some extra work happening around the museum. Having "company come to visit" always provides extra incentive to look sharp.

**Flourishing is what we all want for our children—and for our museums—to thrive, grow, and become our best selves.**

As part of the Momentum! campaign, we're working with supporters to reinvest in the core elements of our facility and refresh spaces throughout—to shine for our peers at the conference and for the benefit of families that visit every day. Please join us as we show why Madison Children's Museum is one of the best places in the country for kids and families to learn and grow together.



## MEET THE STAFF

### Matt Shutler

Membership Manager

If you've visited the museum or purchased a membership since 2014, chances are you've had the pleasure of working with Matt Shutler. After leaving work at Epic in Verona, Matt signed on with the museum as a marketing supervisor, working directly with guests at the admissions desk and supervising admissions staff. Matt's title has changed three times over the years. Throughout, his calm, cheerful demeanor has been appreciated by the staff he supervised, coworkers, and the many visitors who have gotten to know him.

In the winter of 2021 Matt was promoted to membership manager, overseeing the program, processing memberships, answering member questions, and planning fantastic member parties. While he moved to a desk on the fourth floor, Matt still works directly with visitors during member events and Early Explorers playgroups. All staff are required to spend some time out on the floor, and Matt in particular cherishes his. Matt's many years working directly with visitors are a boon to members, as he has a deep understanding of every aspect of the museum and the ways to get the most out of a membership.

When asked why he has stayed with the museum for so many years, Matt says that while the museum itself is amazing, it's the people that make it truly special. He also notes that the careful restructuring and planning that the museum did before reopening post-pandemic has made it an even more pleasurable place to work.

We're grateful to have Matt as part of our team, and we know that many visitors and members feel the same.



**I love MCM, that's why I've worked here for almost a decade. The animals, exhibits, the people who work here... But mostly I love seeing the kiddos learn and grow through the years—and even in real time during Early Explorers Playgroup."**

— Matt Shutler, Membership Manager





## So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright

From Coops to Cathedrals exhibit retires at the end of 2023

Change is coming to the second floor! The exhibit From Coops to Cathedrals: Nature, Childhood, and the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright was developed in partnership with Taliesin Preservation and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the famous architect's birth. Now, however, Frank would be 156, and the time has come to make way for something new.

While most adults and older kids enjoy novelty, for many younger children, as well as some neurodiverse children, change can be stressful. The museum will be offering tips and events to help with the transition.

While the exhibit space is under construction from January through May, the museum's Celebrations room will be repurposed into exhibit space, with some of our most popular features from prior years making encore appearances. Also, look for construction-themed activities, sneak peeks, and pop-up programs held throughout the museum.



Hi, I'm  
Slippery

### A THIRD ACT FOR SLIPPERY

Coops might be leaving, but the museum has a long-standing practice of reusing exhibit elements in surprising ways. One of the most iconic elements of Coops is a calf unofficially named "Slippery." (It got that name from a sign on the calf that said, "Be careful climbing on me, I'm slippery." Kids took that as a literal introduction.) Slippery started out as part of Cows, Curds, and Their Wheys, a dairy-themed exhibit when the museum was on State Street. When the museum moved, kids voted on which elements should be included in the new space, and the cows won. Instead of recreating the old exhibit, the cows were used in new ways. Gertrude is now part of the "cow jumping over the moon" in the atrium and Maybelle overlooks the Wonderground. Slippery joined Coops, and plans are already underway for how this beloved bovine can become a part of another exhibit. So it won't be "goodbye" to Slippery, just "So long, and see you later!"





## Bringing the Outside In

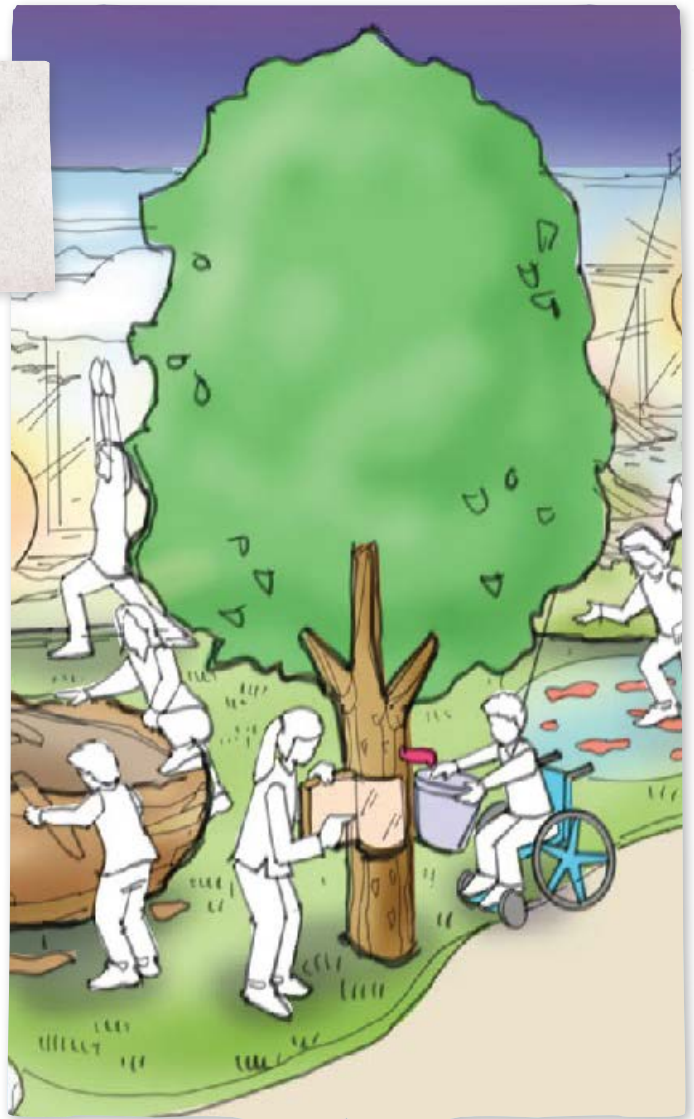
MCM will build a new exhibit opening summer 2024

What do bears, burr oaks, and bugs have in common? A new home on the second floor of MCM! Coming in spring 2024, visitors will enjoy a new exhibit (name to be determined). The museum's in-house exhibits team will transform the 2,000-square-foot space at the Capitol Square point into an interactive nature experience, indoors.

Grounded in the developmental framework developed by Caretakers of Wonder (see page 12 for more information), the new exhibit will encourage kids to show kindness to all living beings—to animals, to plants, to themselves, and to each other. The new exhibit combines many of the things MCM does best (like supporting open-ended play) in an immersive environment mimicking the outdoors. As children traverse the landscapes and explore how all living things are interconnected, over 40 interactive components will engage them in enriching tactile and sensory activities. In line with the museum's longtime commitment to the health and well-being of visitors, as much of the exhibit as possible will be created using natural and sustainable materials.

### What do bears, burr oaks, and bugs have in common? A new home on the second floor of MCM!

With visual center points like the sun and seamless transitions across the four seasons, the new exhibit offers four distinct and intertwined types of Wisconsin ecosystems: forest, woodland stream, marshland, and oak savannah.



As with other MCM exhibits, local artists will contribute their own creative touches, including photographer Tom Jones, muralist Angelica Contreras, illustrator Duachaka Her, and woodcarver Djam Vivie. They will each create a new work that is inspired by the exhibit's theme.

We sure are busy beavers around here! We're grateful to our confirmed supporters as we continue to raise funds to bring this effervescent exhibit to life.

Keep an eye out for more information in the coming months.





## Caretakers of Wonder

A hopeful initiative for a pressing problem

What if we could address climate change with joy, kindness, and getting up close with nature—giving those gifts to our children? For children eight and under, research shows that's the best approach. Though young children are aware of and stressed by climate change, discussing it directly with them can be overwhelming and counterproductive, especially if not presented in hopeful language and actions.

Madison Children's Museum is leading a new national initiative, Caretakers of Wonder, designed to create an innovative, research-based approach that museums can use to meet the needs of young children amidst the growing threat of climate change on their lives.

Climate change is the greatest threat facing the world's children and young people. Climate change poses major threats to their health, nutrition, education, and future. ”

—UNICEF, 2022 report

Nine museums and science centers are collaborating with experts in neuroscience, climate science, equity, and early childhood nature education. Each organization will create exhibits, activities, or programs that foster joy, empathy, and connections with nature. We'll assemble what we've



**"If we want children to flourish... then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it."**

—David Sobel, author and Caretakers of Wonder advisor

collectively learned and share a toolkit with museums and others around the world, reframing messages for young children in age-appropriate ways that nurture resilience, hope, and connection to nature.

At Madison Children's Museum, the new nature exhibit opening in the spring of 2024 will be the most visible flower of that work. See page 11 for more information.

Each museum has also committed to significant climate actions to lower carbon emissions within their organization and to communicate about and model this work to their audiences.

The exhibit and the lead role in the Caretakers project continue decades of national leadership in this work under the visionary guidance of Brenda Baker, MCM vice president of exhibits, facilities & strategic initiatives. Brenda explains that "Leading this monumental national project is helping us build new organizational capacities and create generative, hopeful solutions for the most serious threats to children and their future."

Caretakers of Wonder is partially funded by a two-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded through the National Leadership Grant program and managed in partnership with Environment & Culture Partners and the Association of Children's Museums.

"We are thrilled to embrace Caretakers of Wonder and we appreciate the leadership role Madison Children's Museum has taken with the project," says Arthur Affleck, executive director of the Association of Children's Museums. "I can't think of anything more important than this work, because we serve children, and they are most affected by climate change."

Watch for more information about Caretakers of Wonder, the new exhibit, and MCM's other sustainability initiatives. We invite friends of the museum to support Caretakers of Wonder and the new exhibit by participating in the Momentum! campaign.

## **PARTNER MUSEUMS & SCIENCE CENTERS**

- **Chicago Children's Museum**  
(Chicago, Ill.)
- **Children's Museum of Southern Oregon** (Medford, Ore.)
- **Discovery Museum** (Acton, Mass.)
- **KidsQuest Children's Museum**  
(Bellevue, Wash.)
- **Louisiana Children's Museum**  
(New Orleans, La.)
- **Madison Children's Museum**  
(Madison, Wis.)
- **Museum of Discovery & Science**  
(Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)
- **National Children's Museum**  
(Washington, D.C.)
- **The Wild Center** (Tupper Lake, N.Y.)

## **EXPERT ADVISORS**

- **Dr. Richard J. Davidson**  
UW-Madison neuroscientist and Founder of the Center for Healthy Minds
- **Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings**  
UW-Madison professor emeritus, current National Academy of Education
- **Dr. Jonathan Patz**  
UW-Madison professor and climate scientist
- **Mr. David Sobel**  
Antioch University New England professor and author, early childhood and nature expert



# 100 North Hamilton Street: Past, Present, and Future

It's an odd building, wedge-shaped, commanding a corner across the street from the Wisconsin State Capitol building. And even before MCM arrived it had a colorful history, entwined with the fortunes and functions of downtown Madison.



## Montgomery Ward, 1929-1942

The building was constructed in 1929 to be a Montgomery Ward department store as part of a major effort by the former catalog retailer to open up hundreds of retail stores. The Madison store featured Art Deco elements popular in the late twenties, including column-like designs etched into the stone and geometric designs over windows. While only reaching five stories, the original architects designed the building with an eye toward later upward expansion. The building was constructed by John Findorff & Son.

Photo Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society  
Image 16635

## United States Armed Forces Institute Headquarters, 1943-1968

In 1943, after Montgomery Ward moved to State Street, the building became home to the recently created United States Armed Forces Institute. Founded during World War II, the USAFI served the growing number of military service members in need of general education courses. The Madison location was the headquarters, picked both for its comparative safety after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and for its proximity to the University of Wisconsin. One of the most interesting impacts of USAFI was the development of standardized, long-distance testing. The USAFI was eventually made redundant and vacated the building in 1968.

## Expanding & Capitol North, 1977-2003

After 1969 the building became office space for a series of tenants. In 1977 it was purchased by a real estate developer and in 1984 was expanded to encompass the whole block. Between 1990 and 1999 the building became known as "Capitol North" when it housed the legislators and agencies displaced by renovations of the Wisconsin State Capitol building.





### **A New Home for MCM, 2005-2010**

In 2005, Madison Children's Museum was housed at the top of State Street and was ready to expand. Philanthropist Jerry Frautschi pledged \$5 million to purchase the building and a \$10 million capital campaign raised the funds to renovate it and create the new museum. Findorff was selected to do the renovations. The rooftop garden, a gift of Pleasant T. Rowland, was only possible because the building was engineered to hold the weight of additional stories.

The new museum opened in August 2010. In 2011 the museum won the National Medal for Museum Service. In 2014 we achieved LEED Gold Existing Building, Operations & Management certification.



### **Growing & Improving MCM, 2011-2023**

MCM has continued to care for the building and creatively expand its uses. In 2020 construction began on the largest change to the building since the additions in 1984. In the fall of 2021, the Wonderground opened, adding 10,000 square feet of play space. Findorff was the principal site contractor.

### **BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP FOR 40 YEARS**

Findorff has supported Madison Children's Museum for nearly four decades. We share history and values. The museum's mission is to connect families with their communities, and one of Findorff's values is to be a resource to the community. Through this joint philosophy, our partnership has championed childhood development opportunities through learning experiences. These opportunities are available to everyone, including the 1,000 Findorff employees and their families. Findorff has contributed ongoing support not just through construction projects, but with presence on the MCM board and committees.

Findorff President & CEO Jim Yehle, whose children grew up visiting MCM, says, "Findorff is committed to making a positive impact on the communities we serve. We value all Madison Children's Museum does for children and families, and all they do to bring our community together. By supporting MCM, we're helping to make the greater Madison area a better place for everyone to live, work, and play."

With a dedication to going beyond the role of a traditional construction manager for over 130 years, Findorff is committed to investing in the community through skilled volunteerism, sponsorships, and civic leadership. For all the community has given to them, Findorff is proud to invest in the development of all those who call Madison home.

**Findorff**

### **100 North Hamilton in 2024 & Beyond**

The museum is committed to keeping this unique space as our "forever home." Being in a historic, older building presents challenges, which is why, as part of the Momentum! campaign, we're replenishing our building fund.



## Holiday Deal on Membership!

Get a Family Plus Membership for the price of a Family Membership

Just in time for school breaks and the holidays, enjoy all the benefits of our 6-person Family Plus Membership for the price of a 4-person Family Membership.

### Family Plus Membership includes:

- 6 named members who get free admission all year
- 10 guest passes to bring friends and family to the museum for free
- Invitations to member parties and special members-only hours
- Free admission to select science centers, 50% off admission to select children's museums across the country

Use code **PLAYMCM23** at checkout to get the upgrade

### A sale like this only comes around once a year

This membership deal is only available now through November 30. Don't forget to use the discount code **PLAYMCM23**, as it cannot be applied after purchase.

Want to give a gift smaller than a membership? MCM also offers gift cards and gift tickets for single visits.

Purchase at [www.MadisonChildrensMuseum.org](http://www.MadisonChildrensMuseum.org).





# Winter Holidays at Madison Children's Museum

## Santa Day

Sat., Dec. 2, 9 am–4 pm

free admission all day, photos with Santa starting at 10 am

For the third year in a row, Madison Children's Museum is partnering with the Progress Center for Black Women to present a special photos-with-Santa experience. In honor of this VIP visit, museum admission is free. Visit your favorite exhibits and stop by the Art Studio to make Santa-themed crafts. Subscribe to our email newsletters for updates, including preregistration for photos. (Subscribe with the sign-up form at bottom-right of our home page.)

## Winter Wonder Weeks

Sun., Dec. 17 through Sat., Jan. 6

The winter holiday break is a busy time at Madison Children's Museum. During winter break the museum puts on Winter Wonder Weeks with special hours and additional programming—all included with the cost of membership or museum admission. Past programs have included performances by local musicians and dancers, Art Studio crafts designed for kids to give as gifts, and pop-up exhibit additions. The full schedule of Winter Wonder Weeks programs, performances, and activities will be released in November.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<b>12/17</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/18</b> closed	<b>12/19</b> closed	<b>12/20</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/21</b> open 9 am–8 pm	<b>12/22</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/23</b> open 9 am–4 pm
<b>12/24</b> closed	<b>12/25</b> closed	<b>12/26</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/27</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/28</b> open 9 am–8 pm	<b>12/29</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>12/30</b> open 9 am–4 pm
<b>12/31</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>1/3</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>1/2</b> open 9 am–4 pm	<b>1/3</b> closed	<b>1/4</b> closed	<b>1/5</b> closed	<b>1/6</b> open 9 am–4 pm

Winter 2023 holiday hours





## The Museum that Dolls Built:

American Girl Benefit Sale, 1988–2023

With tears, high-fives, and hundreds of giant purple bags stuffed with dolls, the last American Girl Benefit Sale was held June 24 & 25, 2023, concluding over three decades of a wildly successful collaboration between American Girl, hundreds of volunteers, and Madison Children's Museum.

### 1988: From Idea to Instant Success

It started with a problem to solve. Since its launch in May of 1986, Pleasant Company's line of historical fiction dolls, books, and accessories had exploded in popularity. Developed by founder Pleasant Rowland to make American history

interesting and accessible to girls, the high-quality toys, attention to detail, and positive messages made the brand popular with parents, librarians, and kids alike. By 1988 returned items started piling up with nowhere to go.

On the morning of that first sale, shoppers started lining up at 4:30 am.

Pleasant Rowland and her husband, Jerry Frautschi, approached Heidi Bollinger, board president of Madison Children's Museum. They chose MCM because it was a tax-exempt organization whose





MCM volunteers and staff at the 2023 sale

mission and audience aligned with American Girl's. Heidi leapt at the chance, and the very first sale was held in the summer of 1988 at her home, using a garden outbuilding. Everything about that first sale was improvised. Heidi's son used his old firetruck to transport products from Pleasant Company's warehouse on East Washington Street. A team of friends and neighbors worked to sort the items and prepare for the sale.

On the morning of that first sale, shoppers started lining up at 4:30 am. Close to 700 people attended, requiring all-day traffic control in cooperation with local police. By the end of the day \$44,000 had been raised for the museum.



Shoppers at the 1988 benefit sale





An eager shopper at the 2018 sale

### 1989-2007: A Global Attraction

The first sale was a hit, but Heidi and other volunteers already had plans to go bigger and better. Heidi asked builder Marshal Erdman to donate the use of one of his warehouses. Reynolds Moving Company delivered goods to the Erdman Company warehouse every week for over 12 years. The warehouse served for repair and preparation as well as the site for the actual sale.

And the sale kept growing. Fans came from all over the country and abroad. The volunteer team grew to over a hundred men and women working year-round to sort inventory and repair broken dolls and accessories to like-new condition.

The sale did so well that Pleasant was concerned that its success could endanger the museum's nonprofit status or discourage other donors. In 1995, MCM and Pleasant Company arranged for the museum to run the sale and then split the proceeds with the newly formed American Girl Fund for Children, held by the Madison Community Foundation. The American Girl Benefit Sale would eventually become the largest single source of funding for children's arts and culture programming in Dane County. When Pleasant

Company was purchased by Mattel in 1998, Mattel agreed to continue the arrangement.

In 2007, at its most lucrative, the sale brought in \$1.6 million: over \$2.3 million in today's dollars.

**A total of 4,500 shoppers came from 35 states and Canada to attend the last benefit sale.**

It was generosity that kept the sale going. American Girl/Mattel continued to donate massive quantities of products. And the sale itself would not have been possible without the dedicated volunteers who continued to work year-round, despite challenging conditions in a warehouse without climate control. Volunteers ranged in age from 10 to 92. Some were retired, with professional skills like inventory management, and many had worked for American Girl, bringing an encyclopedic knowledge of the products and a deep understanding of the fan base. Others had grown up loving American Girl dolls and wanted to give back to the next generation. All told, sale volunteers gave over 350,000 hours of their time over the life of the sale.

## **2008-2022: Overcoming Challenges**

In 2008, new consumer product safety regulations designed to ensure the safety of all products used in children's toys meant that repaired toys would require governmental reinspection—an impossible step for the operation. Without the larger inventory of toys and the related revenue, the sale value was greatly reduced. The costs—all paid by Madison Children's Museum—also rose. Rent, overhead, and bank and technology fees ate into a substantial portion of sale profit. With significantly reduced return-on-investment, MCM leadership began considering shutting down the sale.

By 2019, additional challenges were emerging. The warehouse's landlord denied permission to hold future sales at their location. MCM had to downsize to a new site—hiring trucking and storage through the process. American Girl had recently donated a record quantity of products to the sale, due to closing several retail and outlet stores, but warned there might be less given in future years.

And then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The museum closed to visitors in March 2020. Tickets to the 2020 sale had been sold and a large surge of dolls had been released from more decommissioned AG/Mattel sites, for which MCM had rented additional storage. Canceling the sale would have been disastrous. With American Girl's permission, a small contingent of MCM staff and volunteers reconfigured the entire sale to move online and plan for shipping—something they'd never done. Out of concern for the ongoing pandemic and the health of volunteers the sale remained online from 2020 through 2022. But online sales were difficult, expensive, and exhausting.

## **2023: The Final Sale, Finishing Strong**

While there was still much affection for the sale, it became clear that at some point in the not-too-distant future the expenses and difficulties of running the sale would outweigh the value it brought. In close consultation with American Girl/Mattel, Madison Children's Museum opted to "go out on a high note," as MCM President & CEO Deb Gilpin put it.

The final sale was an in-person event, but in place of a sweltering warehouse it was held at the air-conditioned Alliant Energy Center Exposition Hall. Many shoppers, staff, and

volunteers said this was the easiest, most enjoyable sale in decades. A total of 4,500 shoppers came from 35 states and Canada to attend the last benefit sale.

The final sale was a bittersweet experience for many—full of excitement and shared love of dolls and the event, tempered by a sad awareness that it was the end of an era. As always, the sale was a multi-generational experience, with shoppers who fondly remembered coming as children now bringing children of their own. Many volunteers had served for decades and formed lasting friendships.

## **Looking Ahead**

There will never again be anything quite like the American Girl Benefit Sale. Over its 36 years, the sale rescued and resold over 250,000 dolls and tons of other products. Over \$28 million dollars were raised and given to over 100 non-profit organizations that serve children, supporting over 500 programs.

**The American Girl Benefit Sale is now a beautiful and inspiring story in Madison Children's Museum's history, and MCM will always be "the museum that dolls built."**

The smiles on the faces of children, both the recipients of toys bought at the sale, and the children supported by MCM and other organizations, are simply countless.

Madison Children's Museum is deeply grateful for the years of generous support received from so many quarters: from Pleasant Rowland, Pleasant Company/American Girl/Mattel; from the hundreds of volunteers; and from the thousands of sale customers.

As the future of the benefit sale had been in question for many years, MCM's board and leadership have steadily diversified revenue streams so that the museum would remain strong in the post-sale era. The new Momentum! campaign continues those efforts.

The American Girl Benefit Sale is now a beautiful and inspiring story in Madison Children's Museum's history, and MCM will always be "the museum that dolls built."



# 2022-2023 Annual Report

**167,871**

Total visitors in 2022, 57% increase over previous year

**100**

Gallons of paint brushed on the Art Studio's paint wall

**2,300**

Number of children who got to pet a chicken

**70,839**

Member visits

**15,570**

Meals eaten from Little John's Lunchbox

**29%**

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



## An Amazing Year of Growth and Momentum

The 2022-23 fiscal year was an exciting year for Madison Children's Museum. We opened the first pay-what-you-can cafe in a museum, completed the Phase 2 expansion of the Wonderground, and held the final American Girl Benefit Sale.

Our financial position continues to strengthen. Robust numbers of visitors and the continued generosity of our community helped us significantly exceed our membership, fundraising, and visitation goals. This success allowed us to make crucial investments in our facility and staff, while continuing to build our newly established reserve funds—a key footing of the museum's financial foundation.

The successes of this past year continue to reverberate throughout the museum and create momentum as we begin our new fiscal year. Work on the new nature exhibit, refreshing the museum, advancing the Caretakers of Wonder initiative, and preparing to host the InterActivity 24 conference will all continue over the coming months. We look forward to sharing the results with you.

As I assume the role of board chair, I am honored and humbled to help lead Madison Children's Museum at such an exciting time in its history. I would like to thank everyone who visited the museum, volunteered, made a gift of support, participated in a focus group, served on a committee or on our board of directors, or showed your enthusiasm for the museum in another way. The successes of this past year could not have happened without you.

We've got another exciting year ahead of us. We look forward to sharing it with you and hope you'll visit the museum often.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Premo', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Matt Premo  
Board Chair

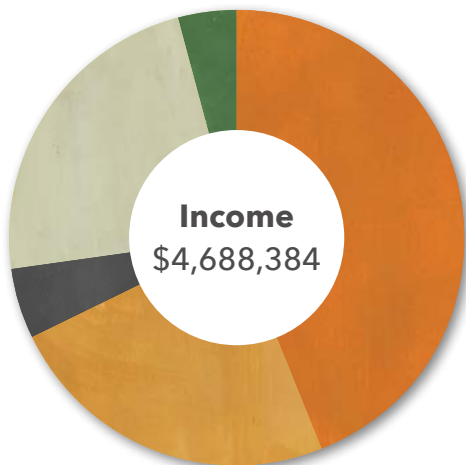
# Financial Overview

Fiscal Year 2023: July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023

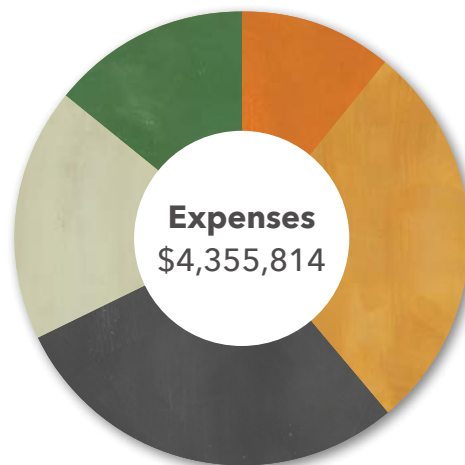
## A strong year of visitors and fundraising

During our 2023 fiscal year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to subside and the number of new and returning visitors to the museum grew, approaching pre-pandemic levels. The museum also received several significant grants to help support major initiatives such as Caretakers of Wonder. Coupled with continued enthusiasm from the community, MCM had an excellent year of fundraising. The timing of the final American Girls Benefit Sale caused two sales to be reflected in this fiscal year, pushing related income and expenses higher than is typical.

## 2022-2023 FINANCIALS



- **44% Contributions - \$2,062,952**
- **24% American Girl Benefit Sale - \$1,116,048**
- **5% Endowment - \$233,322**
- **23% Admissions & Membership - \$1,096,546**
- **4% Other - \$179,516**



- **11% Education - \$476,922**
- **28% Exhibits - \$1,213,556**
- **29% Visitor Services - \$1,256,376**
- **18% Operations & Admin - \$788,012**
- **14% Fundraising - \$620,948**

## Capital Expenses

Madison Children's Museum has begun making a series of investments in our facility and exhibits that are shown as capital expenses outside our operating budget. One example of these investments was the buildout of Phase 2 of the Wonderground, completed in October of 2022.

**\$289,795**

Capital Investment  
Expenses



## Why We Support MCM

The Huffman Family: Jenny, Adam, Eloise (7), and Joshua (5)

### Q | What made you decide to start coming to the museum as a family?

**Adam:** During the weekend I always needed a good fallback activity, where I knew that we could come and be engaged the whole day and even do lunch before going home. (It) became a routine to come and visit.

**Jenny:** Eloise had some medical issues when she was a baby. For the first couple of years of her life there were a lot of appointments, a lot of stuff at the children's hospital, and a lot of anxiety and fear. Coming to the children's museum offered a chance just to be normal, to be around other kids not in a hospital context, to be around other grown-ups who weren't defining her by her diagnoses. It became just one of our go-to safe places.



### Q | As parents, what are aspects of the museum that you love?

**Jenny:** I think for me, the two big things that come to mind are accessibility and inclusivity. Whatever the needs are that each kid has, you say, "okay, let's hear those needs and figure out how to meet them in order for everybody to have equal opportunities." Even when our kids haven't needed some of those extra accessibility related steps, that matters to us.

### Q | Do you have a special memory of a past visit to the museum?

**Adam:** I remember the first time Eloise actually climbed up the big slide, because she had been terrified of it for a long time. Other kids were going up in there, and she went up there and went down the slide. I appreciate having that opportunity for her personal growth.

### Q | Why do you support the museum?

**Jenny:** It's important to us that if we're utilizing such an amazing community resource, that we're willing to back that up with the resources that we have. We want to give back to those places that have meant so much to us. If we can use our financial resources that we've been blessed with to allow other people to have access to this too, that really is important to us.

The Huffman Family are Wonder Maker level members.





## Partnering with Exact Sciences

Exact Sciences supports Madison Children's Museum's Access for Everyone program, which removes economic, social, and other barriers so that all children and families can enjoy brain-building, creative play. We recently interviewed Katie Boyce, senior director of corporate impact and community relations.



### Q | Tell us a bit about your role at Exact Sciences.

**Katie:** In 2022, Exact Sciences created a centralized and devoted corporate impact team to work towards being part of the broader community. It is really important that we give back, show up, and really listen to what matters to our community. Being at the table to listen to people's ideas, concerns, and hopes is central in framing our work. This team is always asking ourselves, "How can we show up?"

### Q | How would you describe Exact Sciences?

**Katie:** Essentially, we are cancer fighters. We champion early detection of cancers and post-diagnostic testing. Many may also know us as the creators of Cologuard, the at-home colon cancer screening test.

### Q | Why did Exact Sciences choose to support MCM?

**Katie:** To us, MCM embodies comfort and care. Your museum feels like the community's museum. Exact Sciences feels strongly about the access piece in particular—being inclusive and accessible to anyone and breaking down as many barriers as possible. It's a core principle that Exact Sciences and MCM deeply share.

Personally, I have a daughter who is 14 years old now and I remember going to the museum early on in her life. She and I both have fond memories, like the paint wall in the Art Studio! It was amazing to be in a place where, as a parent, you could say "yes" to everything, even if it was messy—like "yes, play and paint on the wall." There weren't any limits to her creativity.

### Q | As MCM plans for the future, what are your hopes and dreams for us?

**Katie:** Just keep doing what you're doing. Keep being there for everybody and making active, fundamental play happen!

Thank you, Katie and Exact Sciences!

**EXACT  
SCIENCES**





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](mailto:Celebrate@MadisonChildrensMuseum.org)**



# Fiscal Year 2023 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, 2022 and June 30, 2023. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you believe an error has been made, please contact our development team at **(608) 256-6445** or at [give@madisonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:give@madisonchildrensmuseum.org).

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**\$25,000 - \$49,999**



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**\$5,000 - \$9,999**

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Madison Children's Museum gratefully acknowledges the following donors for their contributions honoring family and friends. Gifts were received between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023.

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### In memory of Brett M. Wise

Mitchell & Roslyn Wise



## VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to our volunteers! Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting museum operations. Whether they were welcoming visitors, watering and weeding our gardens, or helping to make our final American Girl Benefit Sale a success, they all contributed to a successful and memorable year at the museum. Individuals listed volunteered between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023.

Wendy Ahl	Zosia Dedie	Catherine Harris	Katherine Koehler
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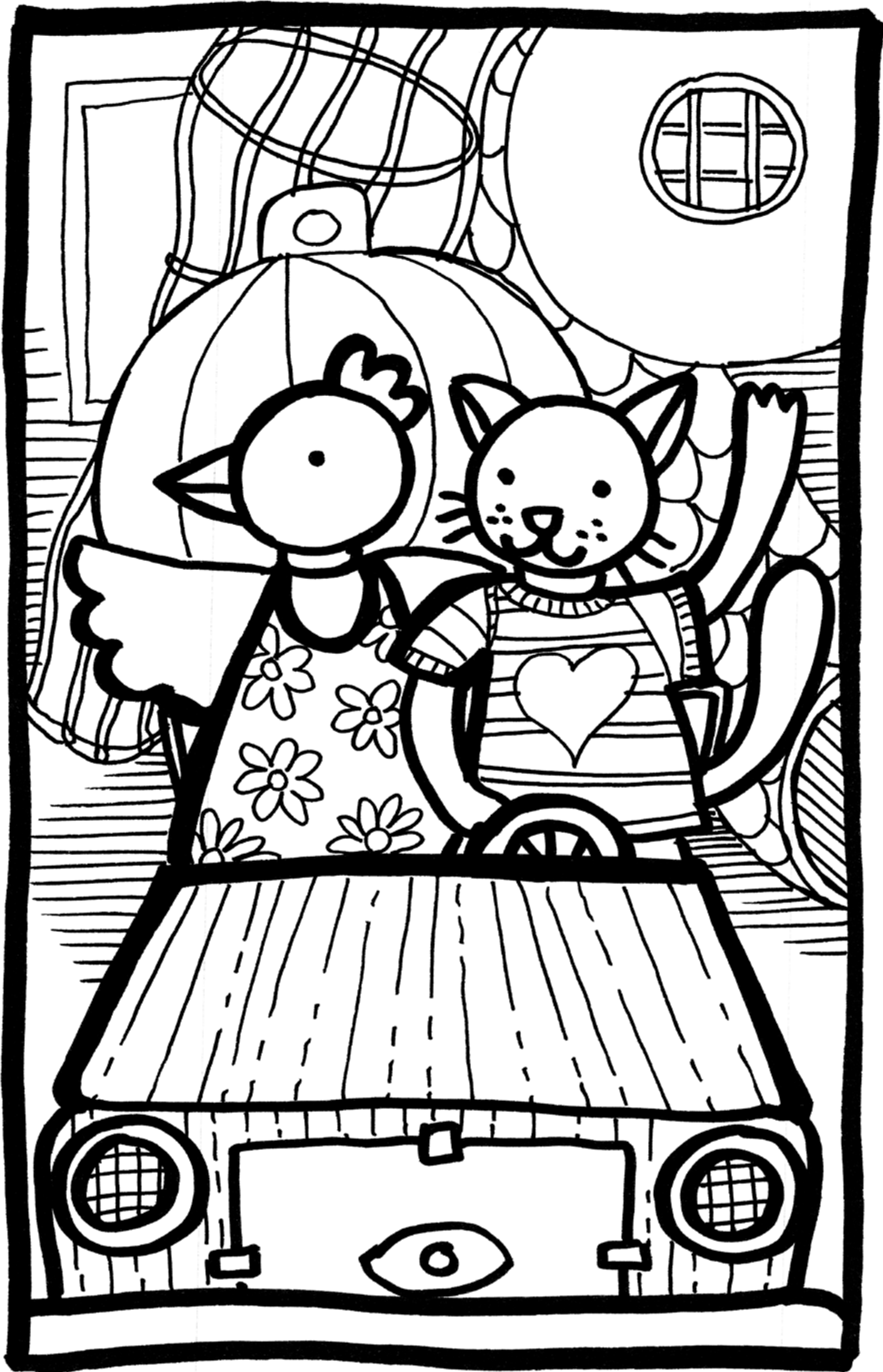
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