



**CHILDREN'S  
MUSEUM**  
of Southern  
Minnesota



**PLAY**

ALL WAYS

# PLAY

is for all of us.

The Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota was born out of a deep desire by parents and early education experts for children of all abilities to have space to explore, grow, and learn. Since that time, the Museum has been nurtured with love and built with natural materials to reflect what matters to our community. Each year we welcome over 100,000 visitors from nearly every state across the country.

However, an alarm is ringing around the amount of time youth spend with screens instead of engaging in meaningful play. It is critical that we reach even more families by offering a wider variety of play programs and activities to help develop life-building and social-emotional skills in young people.



You can make our region's future brighter when you help transform our Museum through

## PLAY ALL WAYS:

The Comprehensive Campaign for  
Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota.

### TO EMBRACE PLAY.

Play is the work of childhood and the joy of adulthood. Expanding our programming and family-centered partnerships will provide the space and resources for families to learn and connect.

### TO CONNECT WITH NATURE.

Our home state is known for its natural beauty, wildlife, lakes, and forests. Expansion will provide year-round access to the outdoors and will bring additional STEAM learning opportunities to our audiences.

### TO BUILD STRONGER FAMILIES.

Enhanced experiential learning at the Museum will improve the mental and physical well-being of all children.

### FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

Expanded programs and our free membership initiative will broaden access to the Museum.

### FOREVER.

With support from donors, volunteers, and staff, we will be a sustainable community asset for decades to come.

it's time we  
**Play All Ways**

Dear Friends,

We have an opportunity to provide the kind of safe, unstructured play we enjoyed as kids. Our campaign theme – **Play All Ways** – sums up this vision well.

**“Play”** is what we do and how we connect people to the concept of learning through discovery.

**“All”** speaks to our values of inclusiveness where every child and their caregivers feel belonging.

**“Ways”** is a nod to the variety of offerings which will be made possible by the campaign, such as the new outdoor, nature-based programs, exciting all-weather spaces, and sensory areas for children with varying abilities.

**“Always”** is a play on words to demonstrate that the Museum will always be here for Southern Minnesota through the creation of an endowment.

The **Play All Ways** campaign is a game-changer for our community. Please join me in supporting the families of Southern Minnesota by investing in our expansion campaign. Thank you.



Sincerely,

Sarah Richards  
Campaign Chair



**100,000**

Annual Museum visitors  
from **49 states**.

**2,086**

volunteer hours worked in  
2021 to make the Museum  
experience better.

Through this campaign,  
the Museum will serve

**50%** more  
people  
every year, included  
**expanded age groups**

and families of varying  
**backgrounds and  
abilities.**

**\$12.8M** **IN COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT**

Our community embraces the power of play and realizes the margin of excellence philanthropy provides above and beyond earned revenue. Friends, visitors, members, foundations, corporate partners, and sponsors have donated **\$12,884,510** since the Museum opened at our current location in 2015 and supported over **3,500 Gateway to Play** free memberships. Museum leadership is grateful to all supporters.

## Taking a Major Step for our Future

Dear Friends,

It is an exciting time at our Museum. Since 2006, with the generous support of individuals, companies, and civic organizations, we have evolved to meet our audiences with learning and play, serving families with authentic, local experiences and “fenced-in freedom.” Today, in the face of rising childhood obesity and incidents of depression in youth, we have a vital role in providing year-round play experiences. And because play is for all, it is critical that we develop new, impactful programming for children of varied abilities and age groups.

Thanks to the generosity of two donor families, Denny and Carole Dotson and Lyle and Kay Jacobson, our campus has recently expanded to 3.1 acres. Because of their support, we have an opportunity to transform our Museum into an indoor-outdoor destination for the region and grow our programs to reach more people with experiential learning and play. While we envision this future, we will also sustain it by creating an endowment through the Mankato Area Foundation.

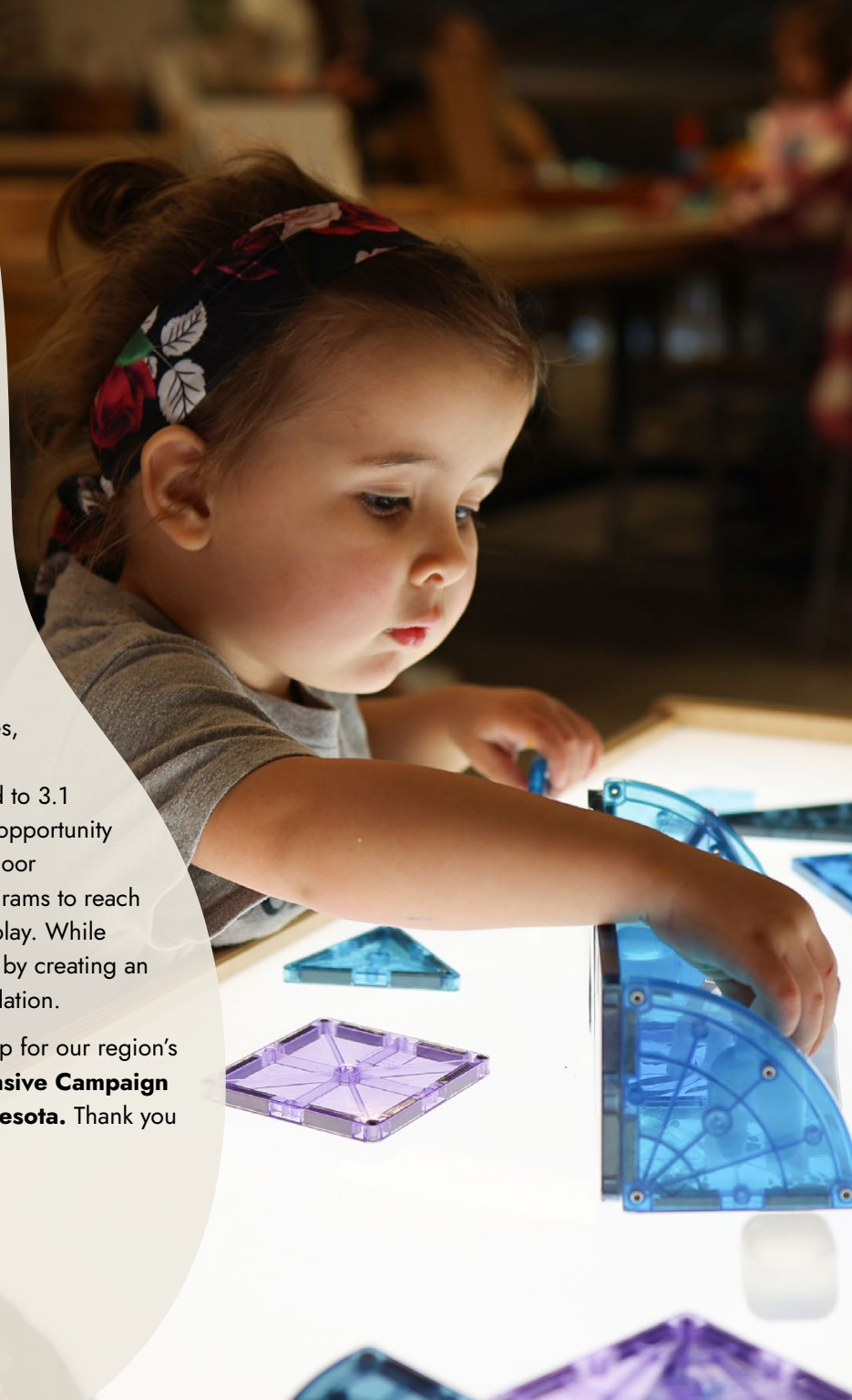
I hope you will join us as we take a major step for our region’s future with **Play All Ways: The Comprehensive Campaign for Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota**. Thank you for your continued interest and partnership.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Louise Dickmeyer'.

Louise Dickmeyer



The logo for 'PLAY ALL WAYS' features the word 'PLAY' in large, bold, black letters. Below it, 'ALL WAYS' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The text is set against a light teal background with a white outline of a play button.

## Campaign Overview



### ACCESS

Expand the Gateway to Play free membership program exponentially to increase access, create new enriching experiences for audiences with differing abilities, provide more space for community collaboration, and add new spaces for older children to play and community members to gather.



### EXPANSION

Transform the physical footprint from a singular building to a city-block campus, providing year-round indoor and outdoor programs for children of all ages, making Mankato a one-of-a-kind destination for experiential learning.



### SUSTAINABILITY

Activate new spaces and programs, increase annual support to deepen our margin of excellence, and sustain the power of play with the creation of an endowment.



**ZIPLINE**

**PRAIRIE EXPLORATION**

**POND**

**LOG STEPPERS**

**ROPE BRIDGE**

transforming a busy downtown streetscape into a **NATURAL PLAYSCAPE**

**THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM IS TRANSFORMING ITS PHYSICAL FOOTPRINT FROM A SINGLE DOWNTOWN BUILDING TO A CITY-BLOCK SIZED CAMPUS, PROVIDING YEAR-ROUND OUTDOOR AND INDOOR PROGRAMS IN DOWNTOWN MANKATO.**

Every child needs to enjoy spontaneous play inside and outside. Now is the time to expand our offerings of discovery, exploration, and self-directed learning for the children in our community.

pond for fishing and ice skating. Our visitors will also enjoy beautifully landscaped paths to wander and wonder.

This year-round, half-acre play area will encourage physical movement, free-flowing discovery, and active exploration of natural materials. Every step into the adventure takes children from secure and familiar experiences to more challenging and wild settings where parents and caregivers can encourage their child's exploration.



**LEGEND**

**EXISTING FEATURES TO REMAIN**

- 1 Existing Water Feature
- 2 Cafe Area
- 3 Mud Kitchen & Sensory Play Area
- 4 Cottonwood Tree Grove

**LEARNING AND GATHERING**

- 5 Interior Sensory Lab
- 6 Butterfly House & Garden
- 7 Solar Flower
- 8 Garden Plots
- 9 Amphitheater & Open Lawn
- 10 Studio Patio
- 11 Fire Pit
- 12 Bison Sculpture
- 13 Prairie Garden
- 14 Experience Settings

**EXPLORATION AND PLAY**

- 14 Relocated Log Climber
- 15 Large Multi-Tier Climbing Structure with Connection from Level 2
- 16 Rock Outcropping Climber & Waterfall
- 17 Water Play Feature
- 18 Rope Bridge through Existing Trees
- 19 Zip Line
- 20 Pond

**TRAILS AND PATHWAYS**

- 21 Crushed Aggregate Pathways
- 22 Mowed / Natural Trail

**WAYFINDING, ACCESS AND SECURITY**

- 23 Relocated Monument Sign
- 24 Retaining Wall & Monument Sign
- 25 Perimeter Fence(6'-0" height)
- 26 Expanded Parking (600 Total Stalls)
- 27 On-Street Parking(20 total stalls)
- Blue Triangle Vehicular Entrance
- Orange Triangle Visitor Entrance
- Red Triangle Egress and Site Access



Research<sup>1</sup> shows that children today spend only four to seven minutes per day in unstructured play outdoors. Outdoor play benefits children's ability to learn through increased attention span, improved health, and declining rates of depression. Kids who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive, and less anxious than kids who spend more time indoors.

<sup>1</sup> Childmind Institute, "Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature," <https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>, 21 Sept. 2021

**A NEW TWO-STORY ADDITION** adjacent to our existing building will offer expanded learning and community spaces as well as two studios for early education programming equipped with garage bays leading to the Nature Playscape outdoors. Staff offices will move to this new building as well, opening up additional sensory exhibit space in the current building. A new storage and fabrication area will allow for authentic, large-scale exhibits to be created and maintained on site. A second-floor deck will overlook the expanded campus.



**SLEDDING HILL**



**FIRE PIT**



**ICE SKATING**



The expansion will also allow for a new **LOOSE PARTS PLAY HUB**: a multi-dimensional resource centered on the play and learning value of materials that can be gathered, moved, carried, combined, taken apart and put back together in unscripted ways.

**AMPLIFY THE EXPERIENCE**

I have watched the Children's Museum throughout my career and as a mom, and it is so much more than I anticipated. The Museum and Greater Mankato Growth have many synergies, from bringing visitors to our downtown core to amplifying our cultural, historical, and agricultural presence across our region. It's an incredible amenity and adding outdoor space will distinguish us even further and amplify the experience for everyone.

— **Jessica Beyer**, President and CEO, Greater Mankato Growth



## SOCIAL SERVICES HOLDS FAMILY MEETINGS AT THE MUSEUM

I value our partnership with the Museum. Sometimes we have families who don't want visitors in their home or don't have the right space to meet, but we can meet at the Children's Museum, and both feel good about it. It's a contained safe place for the kids to run free and for us to have private conversations as we watch them play naturally.



- **Lindsey Northenscold,**  
Social Worker with Mankato  
Area Public Schools

spaces for

# EVERYONE

The Museum is intentionally adding spaces for varying ability levels to serve all audiences and grow opportunities for children's independence and mobility. We will promote equitable access to play with a focus on developing exhibit components for sensory exploration.

-  **A new indoor sensory space to create** 1,348 square feet of dedicated space for visitors with a wide range of learning abilities
-  **A new outdoor space with sensory gardens,** a butterfly garden, and water features
-  **Dedicated spaces and special programs** for children up to age 12
-  **A quiet meeting space for therapists,** second language groups, social service workers, and families who meet regularly at the Museum



# SUSTAINING THE FUTURE

## at a Transformational Moment

The Museum is a recognized leader and advocate around the power of play for all children regardless of backgrounds and abilities, and soon it will be even more unique and impactful. The Museum must continue along a path of growth to help build a stronger, more vibrant community even during uncertain social and economic times.

Creating an endowment will ensure the organization is financially stable, will secure our expanded footprint, and will deliver on the vision of access for all.



Tom and I donate our time and money because we love our museum. It gives us a tremendous sense of pride when people come in from Rochester or St. Cloud and other places and tell us how much they like our museum and how authentic our exhibits are.

We are trying to bring in more kids who don't have backyards or safe places for unstructured play. This kind of free time builds confidence in a child. It encourages them to use their imagination and be physical and take charge of their own play.

— **Bridget Weight**, retired elementary school teacher and volunteer sewing group member

**Many Gateway to Play free membership families tell us the Museum is the *only* safe place they can bring their children to play unencumbered.** The endowment will expand funding for this free membership program, giving families with physical, financial, social, or cultural barriers unstructured play opportunities that will allow their children to grow emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

**With a new endowment, the Museum will be able to live into its vision to ignite the natural curiosity of ALL children by sustaining programs that intentionally create an inclusive community.** As the community needs grow, an endowment will help the Museum maintain excellence by providing a reliable income source.





# STRENGTHENING

## a Community Asset

**WITH EXPANSION OF SPACES AND PROGRAMS, THE MUSEUM EXPECTS TO REACH 50 PERCENT MORE PEOPLE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OUR COMMUNITY.**

Such growth will require that we increase partnerships with social services agencies, therapists, educators, musicians, healthcare clinics, and workforce development groups to serve our visitors. Current-use funds through annual support will help activate new and expanded partnerships, spaces, and programs at our newly expanded home and will allow the Museum to bring on additional staff and other resources. This increased capacity will position the Museum for growth and an improved quality of life for residents and visitors.



The Museum is a community asset because it gives young people of all backgrounds the opportunity to learn about science and nature. When my kids were young, we drove to metro Saint Paul for the science museum, and this museum will have that same kind of appeal for people across south central Minnesota and northern Iowa.

The expansion makes tremendous sense. Joyce and I think it's very promising for the future of our region.

— **Dennis Findley,**  
community benefactor





## OUR VISION

To be catalyst for building a stronger, more vibrant community around play so that all children in our region can have a bright future of opportunity and well-being.



# THANK YOU.

Thank you for considering a commitment to the Play All Ways campaign. We are grateful to our donors for fueling the amazing power of play for families in our region.

In recognition of extraordinary investments which transform lives through play, the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota is pleased to offer opportunities to name spaces, endowed funds, and programs. Please contact us for a full list of Named Gift Opportunities.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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