



2020 - 2021 Community Impact Report



“Play is training for the unexpected.”

Mr. Marc Bekoff, American Biologist

About KidsPlay Children's Museum

Mission

Provide children with an environment that fosters imagination and creativity through interactive exhibits and play that will deepen their appreciation and understanding of the sciences, the arts and the world around them.

Vision

A sustainable anchor institution, preparing a diverse community of children to thrive intellectually, socially, and emotionally.



Strategic Priority
A dynamic Board of Directors that provides the oversight and governance of Board and Museum functions and ensures long-term sustainability.



In Memory of Val Vitalo

Feb. 3, 1949 - June 4, 2022

Val was a most valued and cherished part of KidsPlay for over 10 years. She served as Vice President of the Board of Directors and Chair of the Exhibits and Facilities Committee.

She used her knowledge and experience to develop the educational rationale for many of the Museum's exhibits. Val brought everything back to how each exhibit would be seen through the child's eyes and positively impact their development. We will continue to see her influence, expertise, and whimsy as we enhance the Literacy Tree House and install exhibits in our future galleries.

We remember Val for her kindness, creativity, and her dedication to children and the Torrington community.

KidsPlay Timeline - 2012 to 2022 and beyond!



2012

Welcomed our first visitors!

2016

Opened our world class Literacy Tree House!

2017

Expanded to 11,000 sf with the North Gallery!

2022

Celebrating our 10th birthday!

2023

Opening of 57 Main Street Gallery!

A Local Destination

In late 2020 and 2021, KidsPlay operated with procedures that met its mission and public health goals. KidsPlay provided a sense of normalcy, a safe space for social engagement, and rich informal learning opportunities during this period of disruption caused by the pandemic.

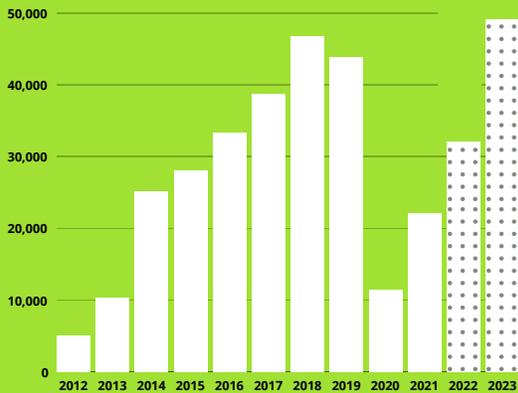


CT Summer at the Museum

KidsPlay joined a statewide effort to offer children summer enrichment and learning experiences. In the summer of 2021, the Museum welcomed record visitation to our galleries and downtown Torrington.



Playful Interactions
(visitors/year)



264,394 visitors through December 2021!

in 33 states!



from 398 towns



"Beautiful and clean. Children had lots of fun. I would definitely recommend KidsPlay to others... looking forward to our return visit."
David Mott - Chaplin, CT

In 2021, KidsPlay...

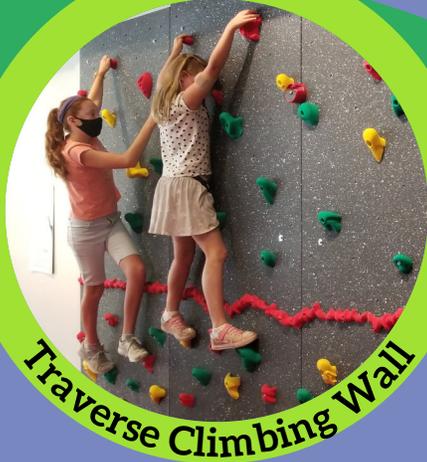
welcomed over 22,000 visitors



Inclusive Playtime

This new program provides a judgment-free and sensory-friendly play and learning environment for children with disabilities, on the autism spectrum, or with sensory-processing disorders and their families.

An Educational Laboratory



Traverse Climbing Wall



Stretch, reach, and pull your way across the wall! Never more than 2' off the ground, it is a safe way to engage in gross motor and cognitive navigational skills.



The Bank

KidsPlay's interactive exhibits are designed and built on the research-supported belief that hands-on multisensory play is a natural mechanism for learning.

The Museum also creates programs to explore various learning concepts and enhance children's cognitive and social-emotional growth.

Drive up to the teller window inside an actual vault and see money as a tool for saving, spending, and sharing. KidsPlay developed this exhibit in collaboration with and with funding from Torrington Savings Bank to build financial literacy and numeracy skills.



LEGO Ramps

Ready, set, race! Design and build vehicles with a variety of loose LEGO Bricks in the Maker Space, then race them on straight and curvy tracks.



Strategic Priority
Provide hands-on exhibits for children to imagine, discover, and create.

Express yourself with paintbrushes, stamps and water. Then watch evaporation magically make your art disappear.



Evaporating Art

The Virtual Museum

While the Museum's galleries were closed from mid-March to mid-August 2020, KidsPlay launched a Virtual Museum to support children and caregivers at home. The Virtual Museum included online bilingual storytelling, interactive cooking "shows", Maker Space challenges, play prompts, language based BINGO, science projects, and more.



Virtual Field Trip

Throughout the 2020 - 2021 academic year, KidsPlay hosted virtual field trips and after school enrichment programs.

WordPlay is an innovative social-emotional, verbal, and visual narrative program that emerged from the Picturing Peace Exhibition at KidsPlay in 2019/2020. Through interviews with KidsPlay's educators, children focused on positive emotions, storytelling, and photography to express their experiences during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.



KidsPlay Chefs



At home projects shared by Virtual Museum participants.

A Cultural Gateway

Children's museums are often a child's first point of entry to cultural assets. KidsPlay works collaboratively with our community partners to deliver arts and humanities content in a way that is meaningful to children and their families.

Over 200 people gathered in KidsPlay's parking lot to celebrate Juneteenth and the unveiling of the Torrington Civil Rights Mural. The Northwest Connecticut Arts Council and Our Culture is Beautiful convened multiple local organizations to work together with RISE Up for the Arts to bring this project to fruition as part of the MLK39: Racial Equity Mural Tour. Ben Keller, a nationally recognized artist, painted civil rights icons with messages and symbols of diversity, equality, and equity on the side of the WAPJ building (42 Water St). The mural is now a visual landmark welcoming visitors to the Museum and Torrington.



KidsPlay partnered with the Litchfield Historical Society and Torrington Historical Society during the summers of 2020 and 2021 to present literacy programs.



Humphry Rolleston, volunteer, & Carmen Neale, Board of Directors, presented bilingual interactive garden-themed stories. The programs were extended with activities that explored the natural history of the garden and STEM topics including rocks and soil and pollinators.

KidsPlay Day Camp

In 2021, KidsPlay piloted a camp for

students affiliated with the Torrington Public Schools' English Language Learners program. We designed the camp to be language-rich, creative, adventurous, and fun. The campers played games, explored the exhibits, conducted science experiments, and engaged in many literacy and craft activities. They also toured and engaged with the vibrant arts and culture venues in our community.

Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts

Campers...

built kinesthetic, visual, spatial, and musical/rhythmic intelligences through dance at the Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory.

strengthened their visual literacy skills by discussing an exhibition at Five Point Gallery. They identified their favorite pieces and created their own artwork.

Litchfield Historical Society

stepped back in time at the first Law School and Tapping Reeve House at the Litchfield Historical Society.

Five Points Gallery

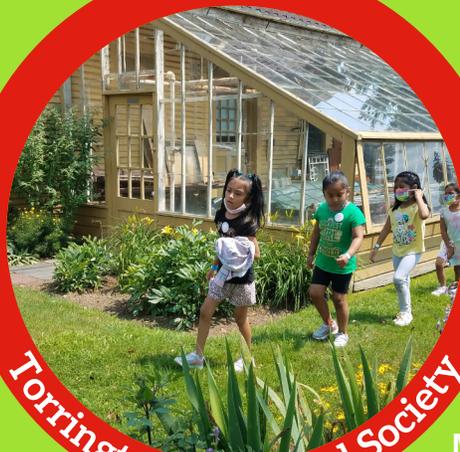
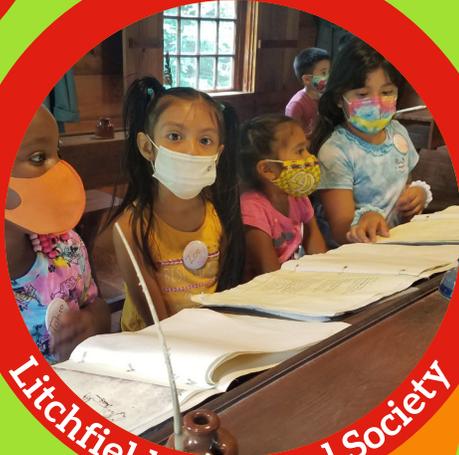
toured the Warner Theatre with Executive Director, Rufus De Rham and stepped on the stage to feel the limelight!

Warner Theatre

Torrington Historical Society

explored the Torrington History Museum & the Hotchkiss-Flyer House, and played games in the garden.

Strategic Priority
Welcome children and caregivers to engage in planned purposeful and creative learning through play.



A Community Resource

The Museum is a safe place for supervised visits, playdates and socialization, and outreach from local schools.



Parents Night Out



In collaboration with the **Northwest Regional Early Childhood Alliance**, KidsPlay hosted an evening of wellness-oriented activities provided by over 13 different organizations and agencies for caregivers of young children.



Our Guest Service Team constructed and donated 75 Maker Adventure Kits to FISH in 2020. The kits were a fun and useable backpack filled with basic supplies like tape, glue, & scissors plus 8 to 10 individual maker projects for kids to do at home during the pandemic.



In Summer 2021, KidsPlay Educator Patty Cassella hosted interactive storytimes and STEM activities at the Franklin Plaza Farmers Market in downtown Torrington.



Farmers Market Storytime

Dr. Marvin, the KidsPlay Mad Scientist, & the KidsPlay staff brewed up fun and STEM learning to create some Halloween cheer.



Mad Science Days

Collaborative Programming

Birth to Graduation (B2G) is a free program offered to families of young children in Torrington. The program provides opportunities for parents to connect and to learn about services & programs for young families in our community. **B2G** volunteers offer support and encouragement to guide parents to be their child's first and best teachers! Activities at KidsPlay include literacy programs, music and movement, and family yoga.



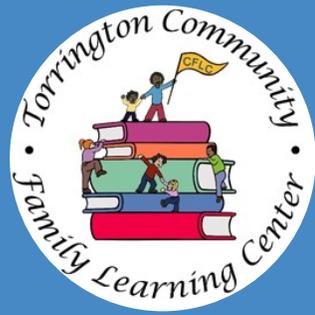
Birth to Graduation

The **Community Family Learning Center (CFLC)** is a Torrington Public Schools family outreach project. The **CFLC's** 1,800-volume Family Resource Library at KidsPlay serves the community by connecting families to resources for education, parenting, and more. The **CFLC Library** is registered with the **Connecticut Library Consortium** as an officially designated school library off-campus.



Even Start

Paula Gajewski is a certified K-6 teacher and library media specialist who oversees the CFLC Library for Torrington Public Schools. Throughout the pandemic, Paula operated the CFLC Library. She reached out to families that struggled with hybrid virtual learning and met with incoming students and their families at KidsPlay.



For many years KidsPlay has welcomed parent/child playgroups as a part of Torrington's family literacy initiative, **Even Start**. During the pandemic, the initiative's ESL and parenting education classes for parents relocated to KidsPlay. We are proud to support this initiative that targets at-risk families to provide access to the training and support they need to enhance their children's academic achievement.

Advocates for Children

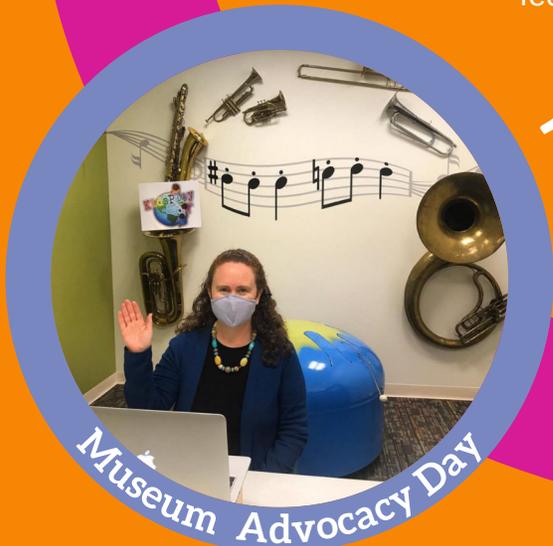
This new initiative's objective is to ensure that the region's most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens have the ability to engage in purposeful play in a safe environment. The initiative encompasses four accessibility programs: Museums for All, Community Membership, Access Membership and Agency Partnerships.

These structured, small-group discussions were introduced to engage the greater community in designing KidsPlay for the future. Conversations were held virtually and face-to-face with people from a variety of demographics.



In 2020, KidsPlay launched an **Audience and Community Engagement Assessment** to better understand how we are uniquely positioned as a children's museum to respond to community needs and to design a comprehensive plan that meets the needs of diverse audiences. The **Museum Assessment Program (MAP)** framework included a combination of self-study and peer review. To learn more about this process and the resulting initiatives, read this article by Mary Guilfoile, a member of the Museum's Board of Directors and a member of KidsPlay's MAP team.

Eileen Marriott, KidsPlay's Museum Director, joined hundreds of museum advocates to make the case for federal museum support through meetings with members of Congress and their staff. Among other issues, museum advocates discussed COVID relief, funding for the **Institute of Museum and Library Services' Office of Museum Services**, tax incentives for charitable giving, and federal education policy.



The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is supported through a cooperative agreement between the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the American Alliance of Museums.

Affiliations

ASSOCIATION OF
**CHILDREN'S
MUSEUMS**



**NWCT
ARTS
COUNCIL**



Northwest Regional Early
Childhood Alliance (NW-RECA)

Torrington School
Readiness Council

Awards & Recognitions

2021 Community Award

Susan B. Anthony Project

For welcoming their clients free of charge, giving children a place to play and parents a much needed break.

2020

Quality of Life Award

Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce

For its rapid assumption of a role as an anchor institution in downtown Torrington, providing a safe environment for purposeful play to families across the socioeconomic and educational spectrum.

2021

Litchfield Hills Creative Award

Northwest Connecticut Arts Council

As a "COVID Hero" for going above and beyond to support and enliven their local arts and culture communities during the pandemic.



Susan B Anthony Project Community Award



Litchfield Hills Creative Award



Business Leader Award
Stephen P. Reilly
Northwest Community Bank

Community Leader Award
Maria Gonzalez

Quality of Life Award
KidsPlay Children's Museum

Notable Special Investments

A Museum for the Community

A significant expansion of KidsPlay's accessibility programs started with a tidal wave of support from **176 donors through the Connecticut Community Foundation's 2021 Give Local Campaign**. Grants from the **George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation** and the **Petit Family Foundation** further expanded the initiative to include more families and a network of Agency Partner Members.

STEM is All Around Us

The Dorr Foundation granted funds to help KidsPlay increase and highlight STEM learning opportunities within the Museum galleries, promote STEM learning at home and strengthen connections to early childhood centers and schools.

Neighborhood Assistance Act Program

The **Northwest Community Bank, ConnectiCare Insurance Co., Eversource / Yankee Gas, The Torrington Water Co., Webster Bank, The York Hill Trap Rock Quarry, & William P. Ryan DMD** utilized Connecticut's Neighborhood Assistance Act Program (NAA) to convert part of their corporate tax liability into an investment in building a more family-friendly community. Their investments in KidsPlay's approved energy conservation projects will transform 57 Main Street into a safe and sustainable educational landscape. Additional support for this energy conservation project came from **Dymax, Travelers Insurance, and McKenna Orthodontics**.

City of Torrington

In 2021, The City of Torrington pledged \$25,000 to renovate the facade of 57 Main Street (the former Salvation Army) through the **Torrington Façade and Building Improvement Program**. The proposed project addresses the safety, energy efficiency, and aesthetics of this building's Main Street presence.

Government COVID Relief Funding

In 2020 & 2021, KidsPlay received unprecedented support from government sources including two rounds of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding and a Shuttered Venue Operators Grant from the **U.S. Small Business Administration**. The Museum also received recovery funding through the **Connecticut Humanities Council, Inc.** and special Directed Local Funding from the Connecticut State Legislator through the **Department of Economic and Community Development / Office of the Arts**.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Programming

In late 2021, the **American Savings Foundation** and the **Nolin Selby Fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation** granted funds to help KidsPlay infuse diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into all areas of operation.



Strategic Priority
Develop the diversified funding and communication strategies necessary to build organizational capacity and relationships.

2021/2022 Corporate Partners

Partners in Transforming



CollinsvilleBank

A Division of Northwest Community Bank

Litchfield Bancorp

A Division of Northwest Community Bank

Partners in Innovating



Partners in Constructing



Partners in Imagining



Exhibit Sponsors



Donors

Barron & Company, LLP
Barry Cone Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.
Berkshire Alarm
Ebersol, McCormick, Reis & Steck
King, King, & Associates CPAs
Litchfield Ford
McKenna Orthodontics
PAC Group LLC
The York Hill Trap Rock Quarry Co.
Todd Mac Donald
William Ryan DMD
Wolff Financial Group, LLC

Through these significant investments and all who support the Museum, KidsPlay offers children and caregivers the opportunity to share intrinsically memorable, whole family learning experiences and build skills that extend beyond the Museum.

Our Financial Story

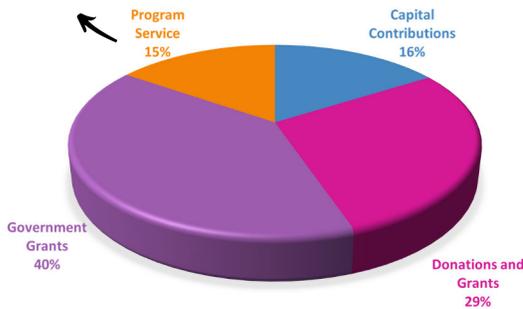
Over the past ten years, KidsPlay has grown considerably in size and impact, driven by community needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically shifted how KidsPlay operated and how we could best serve our audience.

While the Museum's galleries were closed, KidsPlay launched a Virtual Museum to support children and caregivers at home with resources and learning activities.

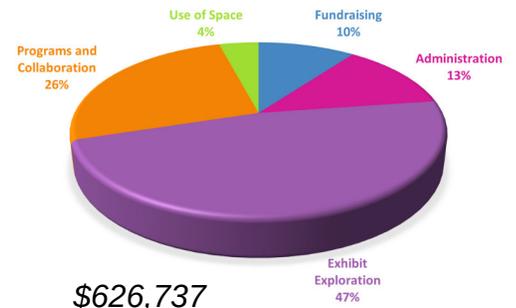
Admissions
Membership
Field Trips
Facility Use Fees

2021 Revenue



\$915,714

2021 Operating Expenses



\$626,737

While many places remained shuttered, the Leadership Team and Board of Directors developed a plan to serve the community that was consistent with the mission and public health goals. This plan included many risk reduction strategies, including operating at a significantly reduced capacity. The implementation of this plan was made possible through private donations from our community and federal relief funding.



The Museum's focus on operating through the pandemic slowed fundraising for the major capital project to integrate 57 Main Street into the Museum. This delay was a small price for remaining relevant and of service to families as a safe and interactive space for play, social engagement, intervention work, and learning programs. The Museum's commitment to being open for play provided a sense of normalcy for our community.



Thank you to the 500+ individuals, 60+ businesses, & 20+ foundations who supported our work in 2020 and 2021!

Despite heroic efforts by our schools and caregivers, children have experienced substantial learning loss and social isolation due to the pandemic. Research shows that play significantly helps children buffer stress and is "brain building." **As we move forward, we continue to serve our community as an invaluable educational resource, a place of reprieve, and a family-friendly attraction.**

Strategic Priority

Be a responsible steward of earned income and philanthropic investments through the development and implementation of appropriate financial controls, oversight and strategic investment policies.

Ways to Support our Work

Donate to the Annual Fund to ensure high-quality, whole family learning experiences are available to all at the Museum each day.

- Give a one time gift through our website, in person, or by mail.
- Become a "Steadfast Friend" by pledging an automated monthly gift.
- Make a federal tax-free charitable distribution from your IRA or grant from your Donor Advised Fund.



Make a lasting impact by including KidsPlay in your will. A legacy gift will enrich our community for generations to come.



GIVE the gift of play to families who cannot otherwise afford the Museum's reasonably priced admission. **Sponsor a family through A Museum for the Community Fund.**



Volunteer as a play facilitator for programs or exhibits, at a special event, or with behind the scenes projects including administrative tasks and exhibit building/maintenance.



Become a Corporate Partner to meet your philanthropic and marketing objectives while offering unique benefits to your employees.

Play is the way that children engage, experiment, and interact with the world around them. The presence of a children's museum helps create a more family-friendly community and reflects how generous people value and invest in child-centered learning.

Play is... imagining, creating, expressing, collaborating, experimenting, constructing, persisting, innovating

"I've visited a few museums between my daughter and when I worked with kids in the past. This has been my favorite museum. I love how the exhibits all seem to have activities for both younger and older children. It was a great time."

Rhiannon Morton - Cheshire, CT



"KidsPlay is a place that genuinely tries to open its doors in support of everyone. It explicitly invites people of all backgrounds and makes them feel welcome. As a Latina, I wholeheartedly support this amazing museum that is a great asset to our community."

Carmen Neale, Board of Directors



"I wish we lived closer. We loved your museum. So bright and attractive, fun exhibits that appeal to a range of ages and tastes, clean, friendly, welcoming and well-kept. The neighborhood was welcoming, and it was easy to find and easy to park. We had a very positive experience."

Hilary Koreeda, Fairfield, CT



Find & Follow



www.kidsplaymuseum.org

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860-618-7700

KidsPlay Children's Museum, Inc. is a 501(C) (3) not-for-profit organization