

2022 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



“Oh the places you’ll go.”

– Dr. Seuss



Letter from the Director

Dear Friend,

In 2022 we celebrated KidsPlay's 10th Birthday! As we reflected on the Museum's incredible growth from our conceptual opening in 2012, we can see the Museum's positive impact on families and the local economy.

The Museum has:

- developed thoughtfully designed brain-building exhibits.
- provided a neutral place for educators, service providers and families to work together.
- fostered positive shared experiences that decreased social isolation.
- created comprehensive access programs to welcome underserved families.
- collaborated with community partners to create diverse, innovative programs.
- attracted visitors from across the state to discover a vibrant downtown in Torrington.



This incredible growth would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of our founders, a dedicated Board of Directors, and considerable public and private support.

At ten years old, KidsPlay fulfills the vision of children's museums as a joyful space, inviting destination, cultural gateway, community resource, and educational laboratory. The Museum has also become an economic driver in the redevelopment of downtown Torrington.

With Gratitude,

Eileen Marriott

Eileen Marriott
Museum Director

10th Birthday Extravaganza!

"The Museum has provided experiences for the children and visitors that they will cherish for a lifetime... The Museum has helped make our City a destination and its contribution to our children and community is immeasurable."

- Torrington's Mayor, Elinor Carbone



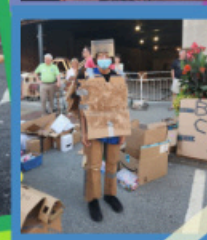
Block Party



Casey Carle's
Bubblemania



Founders' Toast



Strategic Priority

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



Economic Driver & Inviting Destination



Torrington Cultural District

KidsPlay is one of many cultural assets that are making a significant impact by drawing visitors downtown and improving the quality of life for area residents. The newly-designated Torrington Cultural District is recognized for its tourism, business development, and entertainment opportunities. Torrington was the second city in Connecticut to receive a Cultural District designation. Museum Director, Eileen Marriott, participated in the application process and served as Co-Chair of Torrington's Cultural District Committee.



Town-Hall Style Meeting with Governor and Chamber of Commerce

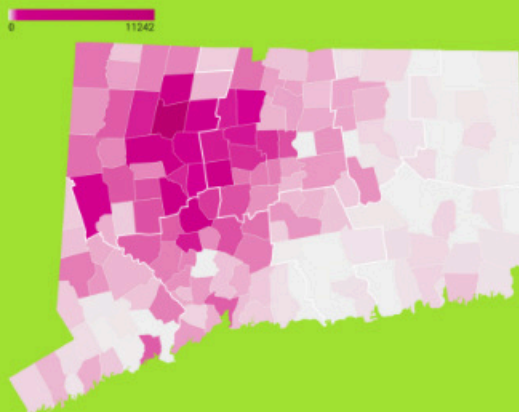
The Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce invited local business leaders to meet Governor Lamont at KidsPlay. This town-hall-style forum allowed chamber members to express their general business concerns and describe the challenges unique to Torrington. The Governor also enjoyed touring the Museum and playing in the exhibits.



CT Summer at the Museum

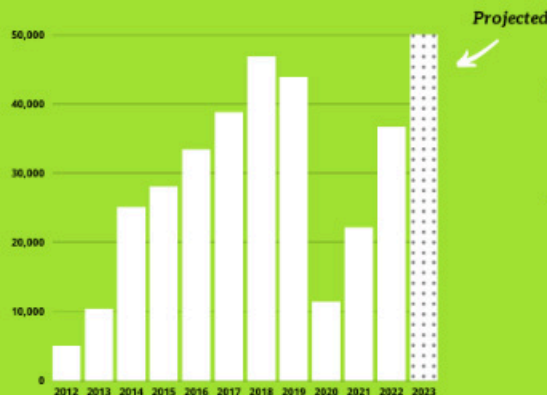
This statewide initiative promotes informal learning and summer enrichment. The Museum joined for a second year in 2022 providing 5,500+ free admissions to Connecticut's children and their caregivers. Many were first-time visitors discovering our Museum and downtown Torrington.

2022 KidsPlay by the Numbers



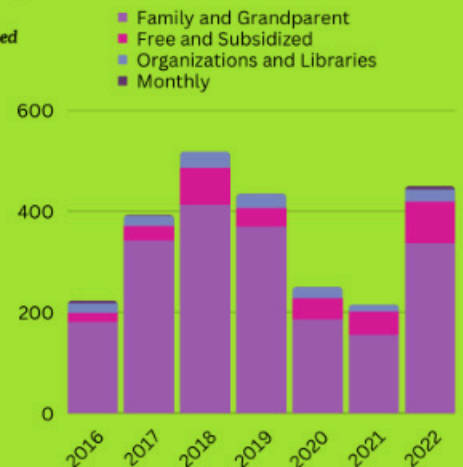
Visitors by Town

KidsPlay welcomed 36,629 visitors from 34 states, 5 countries, and 143 out of 169 CT towns!



Visitors by Year

Since inception KidsPlay has reached 301,021 cumulative visitors!



Memberships at Year End

By the end of December, 412 families and 30 organizations were part of the KidsPlay family.

Educational Laboratory

Strategic Priority

KidsPlay welcomes children and caregivers to engage in planned purposeful and creative learning through play.



KidsPlay Day Camp

In its second year, KidsPlay hosted two sessions of its summer camp for English language learners. KidsPlay camp staff provided unique opportunities for the rising 1st and 2nd graders from the Torrington Public Schools to engage in hands-on STEM learning, literacy-based imaginative play, and community exploration.

KidsPlay collaborated with community partners to introduce campers to local cultural resources. They toured and engaged with the vibrant arts and culture gems that make our community so special.



The Torrington Historical Society



Litchfield Historical Society Tapping Reeve Meadow



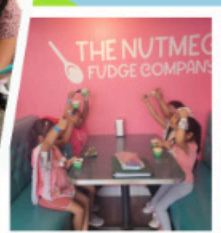
Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory



Five Points Gallery



Litchfield County 4-H



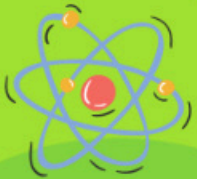
"KidsPlay Day Camp was always full of surprises and laughter. One day, the campers were visited by baby goats from a local 4H Club! They loved feeding them hay and giving gentle pets. And of course, every Friday needed to end with a sweet treat from Nutmeg Fudge Company!" - Christina Prinssen, KidsPlay's Program and Communications Coordinator



The Warner Theatre

Spooky Science

KidsPlay celebrated National Chemistry Week in October with this "spooky" event sponsored by Dymax Corporation. Volunteers from Dymax introduced children to fundamental STEM learning concepts through hands-on experiments that included making bubbling baking soda and vinegar "witches' brews", spooky full moon chromatography, bizarre handmade bouncing balls, and much more!

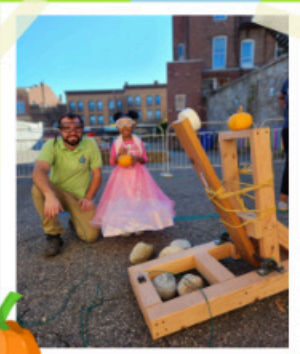


Best Summer Ever

Ultimate Exploration "Best Summer Ever" offered playful summer enrichment with special programs, events, and exhibit enhancements.

STEM Club

Children investigated how STEM concepts shape the world around them at STEM Club. KidsPlay's STEM Specialist, Donna Maraia facilitated activities like making casts of fingerprints or exploring acids and bases through common beverages. Kids discovered that science is more than a subject in school - it's a part of their everyday lives.



Pumpkin Chuckin'

This physics-themed event encouraged parent-child teams to engineer mini-catapults and then fling pumpkins across the parking lot using a catapult built by our exhibits team. It was minimally destructive and maximally educational fun! Other pumpkin-based activities included dissection, ring toss, bowling, and painting.



Cultural Gateway

Strategic Priority

Infuse diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) into all areas of operation

In 2022, we worked with our community partners to co-create engaging, educational, respectful, and fun programs that explored our community's racial, cultural, and educational diversity.



Storytelling with Our Culture is Beautiful

Effie and Angaza Mwando co-founded Our Culture is Beautiful to celebrate culture and bring people together. At KidsPlay they used song, drumming, improvisation and dramatic storytelling to share important stories.

Ruby Bridges

Effie shared the story of Ruby Bridges, one of the first black students to integrate into the white school system in New Orleans in 1960 and became a powerful example of how children can make a difference.

"Children build curiosity and empathy by learning about history and culture." -
Patty Cassella, KidsPlay's Learning Experience Specialist



African Drumming

Angaza led several African Drumming programs, inviting children and parents to join him in playing different types of drums while learning about these instruments' cultural and historical importance.

Unsung Heroes of Flight

Effie highlighted amazing women of aviation who made space travel happen. She shared true stories about early pilots, scientists, mathematicians and engineers including Harriet Quimby, Bessie Coleman, Hilda Hewlett, and Edith Berg.



Sensory Friendly Playtime

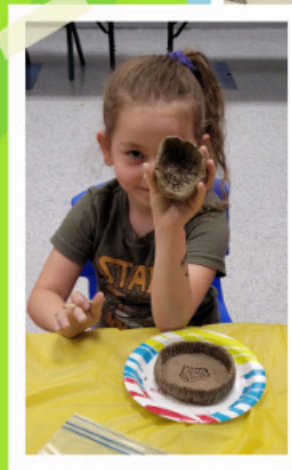
What's fun for one child can be very upsetting for another. This is especially true for children with sensory disorders and learning differences, and it can be difficult for families to find safe and inclusive places for their children to play, learn, and socialize. In recognition of this, KidsPlay hosts a Sensory Friendly Playtime, where reduced Museum capacity and various sensory accommodations make it easier for children and families to meaningfully engage in playful learning. Sensory Friendly Playtime is generously sponsored by the Union Savings Bank Foundation.

"This meant more than you know. It's not always easy to find a place that understands the special circumstances of a ASD family. We'll definitely be returning!!" - Glenda V., KidsPlay Visitor



Indigenous Lifeways and History

Darlene Kascak of the Institute for American Indian Studies (IAIS) led several programs at KidsPlay to share Indigenous lifeways and history. Topics included the role of oral storytelling in native cultures, innovative "technologies" of the past that helped communities adapt to changing environments and the relevance of the talking stick. The programs often included tactile resources and artifacts.



Art Adventures - Native Voices

How do we explore art and difficult subjects in a way that is safe and age-appropriate? This year's Art Adventure focused on the Native Voices exhibit at Five Points Gallery. The powerful exhibit used stunning portraits to highlight the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW). Patty Cassella, KidsPlay's Learning Experience Specialist, worked together with the gallery to help children understand the art using the theme of identity. This lens puts emphasis on the power of art to tell stories. Children shared their interpretations of the work on display. Afterward, they were given mirrors and art supplies to create a self-portrait and choose how they want to represent themselves. Programs like Art Adventure give children the tools to understand and enjoy art more fully as they grow.

Explore the World with "Play"

KidsPlay was selected by the Association of Children's Museum (ACM) to host "Play," a prototype from the Freeman Foundation Asian Culture Exhibit Series (FFACES). The exhibit is designed for children and families to promote different types of play and highlight cultural elements of South Korea, China, and Japan.

Children learned about Korea's Haenyo divers and the abundance of seafood as they crawled through the ocean tunnel and explored a replica of Busan's Jagalchi Fish Market. They cared for pandas in the panda sanctuary and sold candied hawthorn berries and scallion pancakes from traditional Chinese street food carts. They also discovered the art of Japanese Kigumi, or the art of joining wood together without nails or screws.



FREEMAN FOUNDATION
Asian Culture Exhibit Series

Administered by Association of Children's Museums



Ravenswood Studio, the exhibit fabricator, is using the feedback provided by staff and guests throughout the prototype period to enhance the exhibit and replicate it for children's museums nationwide. The final version of "Play" will be added to our permanent collection in the fall of 2023.

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



Dance Around the World

Presented in collaboration with Our Culture Is Beautiful and as part of the fifth annual Make Music NWCT Celebration hosted by the NWCT Arts Council, Dance Around the World displayed what community partnerships can make happen! With 128 attendees and performances by eight groups, including an international dance group from Torrington High School and a student performance by the Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory, this event used the best of what Torrington has to offer to teach children how people move, dance, and play all around the world.



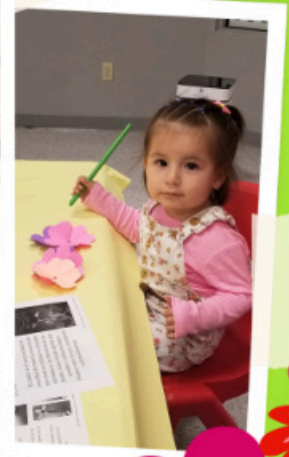


Community Conversations

KidsPlay invited members of the local Latine community to discuss how KidsPlay can celebrate and appreciate Hispanic culture and to serve the community better. These conversations led to the creation of the Hispanic Heritage Month programs, a bilingual reading corner, and several other events throughout the year.

Latin American Mother's Day Celebration

Mother's Day is celebrated in many places around the world! This program focused on Mother's Day traditions from Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Argentina. Children learned about these traditions and made beautiful craft bouquets inspired the national flower from these countries.



National Hispanic Heritage Month



To celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month in September, KidsPlay designed a 5-week program series for children and families to learn about different countries and cultures across Latin America. Children and caregivers enjoyed a cozy bilingual reading corner in the North Gallery Program Room.

Programs included making Frida Khalo paper flower crowns, weaving God's eyes, and making Guatemalan Worry Dolls.

To close out the month, KidsPlay partnered with New Opportunities to co-host Dance Across Latin America, a showcase of local youth dance groups who demonstrated different dance styles across the Americas.

Community Resource

Birth to Graduation

Birth to Graduation helps families to spend quality time together while teaching caregivers how to best serve their children's developmental needs. With translation services available for Spanish-speaking families and early intervention options for children with learning differences, this program helps to empower families to use the network of available community resources in Torrington. In 2022, over 40 families with 70 children participated in B2G programs at KidsPlay!

"KidsPlay is an amazing foundation for our program and other agencies that are able to meet at the Museum. Everyone is focused on building community and preparing our children to succeed when they get to school." - Julie Fabiaschi, Community Coordinator for Birth to Graduation

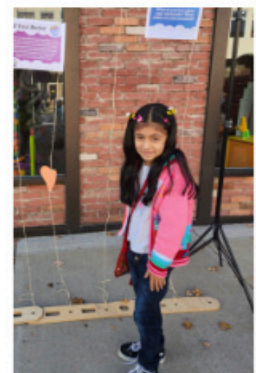
Community Family Learning Center

The Community Family Learning Center (CFLC) is a Torrington Public Schools family outreach project that includes a 1,800-volume Family Resource Library at KidsPlay.

Paula Gajewski is a certified K-6 teacher and library media specialist who oversees the CFLC and uses her time at the KidsPlay to foster positive relationships with current and future Torrington Public Schools families. The CFLC provides resources and support to proactively address students' needs and ensure their academic success.

Celebrate "Kids" and "Belonging"

When the Celebrate Belonging in Your Community event was rained out, KidsPlay opened its galleries to the B.E.R.E.A.D.Y. Project for a modified event, "Celebrate Kids." The Museum welcomed 125 people to play and meet organizations providing resources for families. A month later, The B.E.R.E.A.D.Y. Project, with sponsorship from the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, hosted their all-ages event on Main Street. It included food, music, and activities that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Museum was open for play and provided community art projects and collaborative family games.



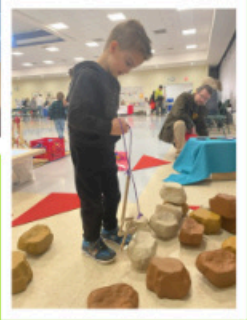
Art is Everywhere! Bilingual Stories in the Meadow



Children enjoyed stories centered around colors, shapes, lines, imagination, and creativity in the beautiful outdoor setting of the Litchfield Historical Society's Tapping Reeve Meadow. For the third year, Board member Carmen Neale and volunteer Humphry Rolleston teamed up to facilitate his four-session Spanish-English storytime program. The program engaged children in learning and appreciating the value of both languages. After the storytelling, Patty Cassella, KidsPlay's Learning Experience Specialist, led children through art-based activities including colorful spin art, line drawings, stone water paintings, and more!



Ready, Set, Kindergarten! Torrington Public Schools



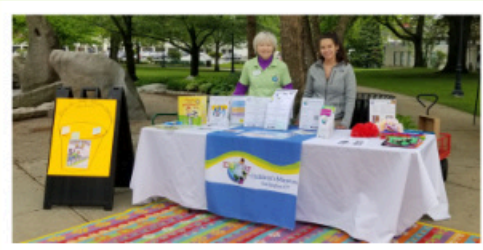
Center School in Litchfield Summer Kick-off event



"Raise the Bar" Gerald Incandela's Studio



Wellness in the Park Prime Time House



Affiliations



Torrington School
Readiness Council
Northwest Regional Early Childhood
Alliance (NW-RECA)
Early Childhood Community Advisory
Council (ECCAC)





Our 2022 Financial Story



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.

Operating Funds

Revenue



\$865,413

Expenses



\$861,238

Capital Support



\$290,880

A Legacy Investment

KidsPlay was grateful to receive its first bequest from a longtime member of the Board of Directors, Valerie Defeo Vitalo. Val taught at Torrington Public Schools for 38 years and had deep ties to the local arts community. She understood that the sustainability of the Museum's work was essential to its long-term impact. Val was instrumental in establishing the Museum's Legacy Circle to recognize individuals who included KidsPlay in their estate plan. She knew firsthand that some donors might be able to make a greater financial impact with a legacy gift than through donations during their lifetime.

State of Connecticut

In Connecticut's 2022 - 2023 Biennial Budget, the Legislature recognized that children's museums across Connecticut were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic and designated special Directed Local Funds for children's museums through the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). KidsPlay received \$180,000 in both 2021 and 2022. This program was administered by the Office of the Arts.

KidsPlay also benefited from the State's sector-wide support through the CT Cultural Fund (\$5,000) and the CT Summer at the Museum program (\$66,560). These State investments were administered by the Connecticut Humanities Council (CT Humanities).

A Museum for the Community

Ensuring all families are welcomed and feel a sense of belonging is part of KidsPlay's broad commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. The Museum for the Community Initiative, a multifaceted accessibility program, expanded in 2022 with grants from the Union Savings Bank Foundation (Sensory Friendly Playtime), and the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation (Agency Memberships), along with contributions to the Community Fund from many donors.

**Thank you to the
400+ individuals,
50+ businesses,
10+ foundations, &
Federal, State, and City funds
that supported our work in 2022!**

Notable Investments



Northwest Corner Gives

42 donors reinvigorated the Museum's expansion effort! The Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation organized and matched donations for this crowdfunding campaign helping KidsPlay raise \$53,710, or 107% of the goal. These funds are being used to rebuild the space within 57 Main Street into new exhibit galleries and the Hub@KidsPlay. This project increases the museum's capacity and its collective impact on children and families.

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



Literacy Tree House

The Museum's Literacy Tree House has been a beloved signature exhibit since 2015. Despite its sophistication, it lacked the artwork and design elements first envisioned.

As the Museum's exhibit efforts progressed, an opportunity to highlight STEM more thoroughly in the tree house was also identified. In early 2022, Board Member Val Vitalo and Museum Advocate Elaine Murphy launched a plan and a fundraising campaign to complete the Literacy Tree House and refresh worn elements. These efforts included a grant from the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation's Miriam Mason Cable Trust Fund, a Back to School Cut-A-Thon, and more. When Val Vitalo passed away, the gifts made in her memory were designated to complete this project that was so meaningful to her.

Neighborhood Assistance Act Program

ConnectiCare, Dymax, Eversource, Santa Energy, The York Hill Trap Rock Quarry Company, and William P Ryan DMD invested \$69,000 into energy efficiency projects at the Museum. KidsPlay worked with these businesses to secure business tax credits for their donations through Connecticut's Neighborhood Assistance Act Program. Additional support for these projects was provided by Alliant and McKenna Orthodontics.

City of Torrington

A robust safety and security infrastructure is critical to protecting capital investments and providing a safe environment for families. The City of Torrington pledged \$74,270 of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation to secure this infrastructure for KidsPlay's growing campus. This Community Impact Grant supplements the City's 2021 Facade Improvement grant for 57 Main Street. Together, these programs aim to make transformative investments to sustain and strengthen Torrington's economic recovery. KidsPlay's expansion of interactive exhibit galleries and program capacity from 11,000 sf to over 20,000 sf amplifies the Museum's reputation as an innovative tourist destination for families.



Give Local - Best Summer EVER

In April 2022, we raised money through the Connecticut Community Foundation's Give Local of Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills online giving campaign for 'KidsPlay's Best Summer EVER.' Thanks to all the donors who supported this effort, we reopened the Maker Space, added new exhibit elements, offered special programs, and participated in community events. It was the ultimate way to nourish the social, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing of children.



cthumanities

Office Of The Arts

Timeless Impact®

2022 Corporate Partners

Partners in Transforming



Partners in Innovating



Partners in Constructing



Partners in Imagining



Dr. Michael Curi & Dr. Jessica Magda
Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine



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William Ryan DMD
York Hill Trap Rock
Quarry, Inc.

Together with our Partners, we are preparing a diverse community of children to thrive intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

Ways to Support

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.

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



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



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.

"You have no idea how important you and KidsPlay are to me! Don't want to sound melodramatic, but from the first day I came in to apply for volunteering, I have felt welcome." - Sally Bergad, volunteer



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

Mission

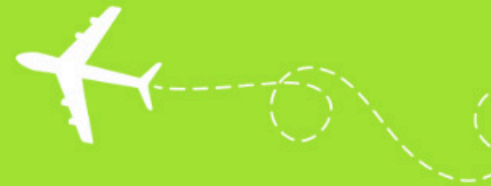
The mission of KidsPlay Children's Museum is to provide children with an environment that fosters imagination and creativity through interactive exhibits and play that will deepen their appreciation and understanding of the sciences, the arts and the world around them.



Vision

The vision of KidsPlay Children's Museum is to provide a sustainable anchor institution, preparing a diverse community of children to thrive intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

"We are members and love coming on Thursdays after school when the museum is open later. It's a nice way to spend the time before dinner! The kids get a variety of things to do and we often meet up with a friend to play together." - a KidsPlay Member



"I took my two boys, ages 2 and 5, to KidsPlay Museum today for the first time and they had an amazing time. I want to thank you and your team for providing such a great experience. I also want to thank your staff for being so flexible with us as we were late for our reservation time. I was very stressed after a 40 minute drive and your flexibility and understanding meant the world to me. We will definitely be back!" - Jessica N.

"I can't believe we are here in real life!" - a child overheard by the Guest Service Staff



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www.kidsplaymuseum.org
61 Main St, Torrington, CT
860.618.7700

KidsPlay Children's Museum, Inc. is
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