



# The Scoop

News from KidsPlay Children's Museum  
Winter 2024  
*Imagine · Discover · Create*



## New Gallery (Partially) Opens at 57 Main Street

**This much-anticipated gallery is now PARTIALLY open, turning a once-underutilized building into a center for creativity and wonder.** In 2019, KidsPlay purchased 57 Main Street from the Salvation Army to transform it into an interactive gallery and a community resource. Challenges posed by the global pandemic slowed progress, but the resilient spirit of KidsPlay prevailed. We are so grateful to local philanthropists and foundations whose unwavering support has fueled this monumental expansion.



The timing of this partial opening couldn't be more perfect! **In 2023, a record-breaking 57,000+ visitors flocked to the Museum, and the galleries couldn't comfortably meet demand on peak days.** The new space was a game-changer during bustling winter weekends and vacations.

The work to fully complete and integrate this space into the Museum is moving at a good pace. In the coming months, the Hub@KidsPlay will open, including the Community Family Learning Center's Resource Library and a new program space accessible to community partners.

As funding and contractor schedules permit, work continues toward opening more exhibit space and introducing captivating STEM and trades-related exhibits. **Be ready for an immersive experience that engages young minds and the young at heart.**

KidsPlay is a project of generational significance that builds Torrington's reputation as a family-friendly, livable community. **Thanks to the support of our donors, it has become both an innovative tourist destination and an educational resource for local families.** Join us on this exhilarating journey as we usher in a new era of exploration and education!

## Exhibit Spotlight: Polar Pond

This popular seasonal exhibit debuted last winter in KidsPlay's North Gallery, where children could slip and slide across **the sock-skating rink (made of synthetic ice), play with life-sized penguin plushies, and throw fluffy "snow" balls.** In addition to encouraging imaginative play, the exhibit allows children to practice their balance and gross motor skills.

**This year, Polar Pond is located in the newly opened South Gallery expansion.** The bigger and better home for the exhibit allows for a larger rink and new fun winter-themed activities, like building structures out of "ice" blocks and snowman bowling.



## Board of Directors

Brian McCormick\*

*President*

Cheryl Kloczko

*Vice President*

Carol Quartiero

*Secretary*

Holly Hunt

*Treasurer*

Ken Merz\*

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Marc Borghesi

Stuart Grodin\*

Mary Guilfoile

John Martin\*

Carmen Neale

Brad Oneglia

Cathleen Schmitz\*

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## Advocates

Mickie-Ann Budny

Anne Green

Lynn McCormick

Susan McCray

Elaine Murphy

Ruth Nadeau Dwyer

Pascale Nejaime

Marilyn Plaskiewicz

JoAnn Ryan

Matthew Terzian

Karen Zeiner

## Admin & Creative Team

Eileen Marriott

*Museum Director*

Patricia Cassella

*Learning Experience Specialist*

Tamara Christensen

*Business Director*

Kristin Ercoli

*Hub Manager*

Bethany Frasco

*Operations Director*

Ella Frauenhofer

*Development Associate*

Karl Nilsson

*Exhibits and Facilities Manager*

Christina Prinszen

*Program and Communications Coordinator*



## Collaborative Partner

Julie Fabiaschi

*B2G Community Coordinator*



## Staff Spotlight: Karl Nilsson

Karl Nilsson is KidsPlay's Exhibits and Facilities Manager, which is a big job! In the exhibits side of his job, Karl maintains and improves existing exhibits, and also designs and tests new exhibits.



As the facilities manager, Karl is constantly working to make sure that KidsPlay's buildings are functional and safe. Karl is also heavily involved in the renovation of 57 Main Street.

Karl finds joy in many of the different parts of his job, from creating magic for kids and families through his exhibits to managing the big team efforts that are facilities and renovations.

"I also sometimes get to interact with the families and children that visit us, which is always rewarding," Karl says. "From teaching kids how our catapult at Pumpkin Chuckin' converts potential energy to kinetic energy, to answering as many questions as that 5-year-old can ask while I'm fixing a piece on the floor, interacting with the kids, when I have the chance, is definitely a favorite part of my job."

Want to read the full interview with Karl? Use the QR code here or visit our website at [kidsplaymuseum.org](http://kidsplaymuseum.org) to see what else he has to say about working at KidsPlay. Thank you, Karl, for everything you do!

**We are pleased to announce the following staff promotions:**



Tamara Christensen to Business Director  
Bethany Frasco to Operations Director  
Kristin Ercoli to Hub Manager  
Ella Frauenhofer to Development Associate.



## Guest Service Team

### Senior Guest Service Associates

Carolina Gonzalez

Deborah Kellogg

Peggy Monat

### Group Sales Associate

Alyssa Lyga

### Guest Service Associates

Sofia Frauenhofer

Victoria McClintick

Christina Santiago

### Guest Service Assistants

Ellie Ercoli

Selena Hernandez

Kim Lyga

Tariana Medina

Caroline Sienkiewicz



## Advocate Spotlight: Elaine Murphy

KidsPlay, as the name suggests, is a place for kids. Just as importantly, though, it's also a place for their parents.

This is something that Elaine Murphy, Museum Advocate, knows well. An early supporter of the Museum whose fundraising skills helped bring it from a dream to a reality, Elaine recalls raising her own children and the importance of playgroups to her. The playgroups were not only a place for her children to meet other children, but also a place where she met other parents, made new friends, exchanged information, and gained valuable peace of mind.

For Elaine, KidsPlay is a hub of activity, where parents can interact with other parents and with other community members. **It is also a place where children can have their first encounter with arts and culture organizations, building a lifelong appreciation for museums' role in the community.**



Now, with the planned opening of the Hub@KidsPlay resource center, the Museum is expanding its role as a community resource and cultural gateway. The longtime loyal support and insights of people like Elaine have helped make this possible. Thank you, Elaine!

**“KidsPlay is a great opportunity for young families to now have another group of new friends,” she says. “It gets the ball rolling.”**



Literacy Tree House Dedication 2023  
Top: Elaine and Eileen dedicate the Tree House in Val's memory  
Right: Elaine and Marilyn Plaskiewicz hang Val's dedication plaque in the Story Nest



Cut-a-thon 2023

## Stewards of the Literacy Tree House

Elaine has been instrumental in the fundraising for the Literacy Tree House ever since this world-class exhibit was just an idea. From 2014 to 2016, Elaine organized the “Magic of Childhood,” an annual event to raise funds to build the tree house. In early 2022, when the exhibit was ready for an update, she and her friend Val Vitalo launched a second campaign to expand the exhibit's artistic and learning potential with botany, biology, and environmental science.

After Val passed away, Elaine worked with the staff, board, and fellow advocate, Marilyn Plaskiewicz, to dedicate the Story Nest in her Memory.



# Ways to Give: Steadfast Friend

*Did you know that you can support KidsPlay through a monthly recurring gift?*

The Museum may not exactly be able to take these folks out to the movies or catch up over brunch, but **we still call these monthly donors our “Steadfast Friends”** because they provide **consistent support for KidsPlay’s programming and operations.** Many of our Steadfast Friends commit to about as much as you would pay for a monthly subscription to a streaming service, and by doing so, they help KidsPlay to have a stable income flow throughout the whole year.

Visit our website at [kidsplaymuseum.org/donate-individual](http://kidsplaymuseum.org/donate-individual) or use the QR code below to learn more!



# Save the Date

March 2: KidsPlay After Dark: 70s vs 80s Night  
TBA: The Hub@KidsPlay Opening  
April 24 - 25: Give Local  
August 30: Little House Event  
TBA: Small Experience Fundraisers

Visit our website for more info!

# Play is... Measuring!

2023 by the numbers...



57,060  
Visitors



4,265  
Summer at the  
Museum Visits



6,624  
Access Visits



2027  
Volunteer Hours



199  
Birthday Parties



224,823  
Website Views

# Program Spotlight: Countdown to Noon

More than 700 visitors joined us for Countdown to Noon on December 31, 2023! Families had a blast exploring the Museum, seeing the new and improved Polar Pond, and playing fun games with DJ Mark. The Museum has hosted Countdown to Noon yearly since 2014, with a short break during the pandemic. Thank you **Torrington Savings Bank** for being our Sponsor to bring in 2024 with fun and excitement for families with young children!

[www.kidsplaymuseum.org](http://www.kidsplaymuseum.org)  
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