

KidsPlay The Scoop

KidsPlay's Donor Newsletter

Summer 2024

Imagine · Discover · Create



Exhibit Spotlight: Seasonal Exhibits & Prototypes

KidsPlay has a lot of new space - and with new space comes new exhibits! Prototyping is an important part of the exhibit design process. It helps KidsPlay's team test exhibit concepts to see what's interactive, fun, and interesting. It gives the Museum an opportunity to incorporate feedback and adjust a design before investing in a piece that will stand up to years of play.

Construction Exhibit

Step into the exciting prototype of our Construction Exhibit, where young builders can test out kid-sized machinery and explore the building process before we bring the finished version to life. The Construction Exhibit prototype features a kid-powered train, rubberized foam "rocks," a mini pavement roller, a kid-sized grabber, and a kid-sized excavator - with real hydraulics, just like the real things! Construction is open with staff supervision as we continue to build and improve the exhibit.



Construction is a multidisciplinary process that takes teamwork, problem solving, and cooperation to be successful. Introducing the next generation to the sciences and arts used in the construction process will strengthen Torrington's local economy and Connecticut's infrastructure.

KidsPlay Raceway

KidsPlay Raceway is the latest addition to our series of seasonal, physically active exhibits! Following Polar Pond, KidsPlay Raceway gets kids of all ages excited about summer with Plasma Cars! These person-propelled racers combine whole-body movement with gross-motor skill building to get visitors around the track as fast as possible. In the other areas of the exhibit, visitors can explore the design of racing by building and testing their own Duplo race cars down the KidsPlay derby track, observe the mechanics of racing in the KidsPlay Garage where visitors can take apart an "engine," change tires, and observe the steering gear on a real SoapBox Derby Car, and test the limits of physics by designing their own Hot Wheels racetrack.



Staff Spotlight: Carolina Gonzalez, Sr. Guest Service Associate

Some things come naturally to some people - and it's safe to say that Carolina is a natural at working with kids and connecting with caregivers! It's also true that she, like the children who visit KidsPlay, is always learning new things.

In the eight years that Carolina has been part of the KidsPlay team, she says she's learned a lot about teaching young children. It requires patience, understanding, and creativity. It also requires a lot of knowledge: about children, about families, about different cultures, and about community resources.

"People come to us and we can show them other paths. We're good advocates for families," she says. Carolina, one of KidsPlay's bilingual staff members, recalls being surprised at how many Spanish-speaking families KidsPlay has been able to help by connecting them with resources including local ESL classes.



"I love meeting people," she says. "We're growing as a museum, we're growing as coworkers, and people are growing as families. **This is really where I belong.**"



Program Spotlight: KidsPlay Day Camp

For the fourth year in a row, KidsPlay hosted the KidsPlay Day Camp, a language-rich day 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.



"What a delight! Fifteen little ones, all listening, speaking, playing, enjoying books, and doing fun things, under the wonderfully patient and energetic direction of KidsPlay staff, particularly Tammy and Carolina. This is truly a model program!" - Joanne Creedon, Torrington Public Schools.



Community Collaboration

KidsPlay collaborated with several local partners to introduce campers to local resources and cultural institutions in the area. They toured and engaged with the vibrant arts and culture venues that gave downtown Torrington its Cultural District designation.

Visitor Spotlight: Faye Tway-Grant & Gary Grant

When Gary Grant first heard about KidsPlay through a presentation by Ken Merz, a founding member of KidsPlay's board, the Museum was still more dream than reality. Gary didn't imagine the big role that the Museum would play in his family's life over the next twelve years as he and his wife Faye Tway-Grant became regular visitors and volunteers at the Museum.



From Dream to Reality

Sharing knowledge from their careers as mechanical engineers and seeing their grandchildren grow and learn at KidsPlay has been a source of joy for both Faye and Gary. "The Museum exists now," Gary says. "That's part of what being an engineer means: taking a dream, and building it into something real. Even more special is seeing our own grandchildren enjoy it so!"



Visit KidsPlay's website or scan the QR code to learn more about this and other stories from the newsletter!

Program Spotlight: KidsPlay's 12th Birthday Bash

KidsPlay's 12th Birthday Bash was a lively celebration marking twelve years of inspiring young minds! The event, **generously sponsored by the Connecticut Higher Education Trust**, featured games from around the world, the grand opening of the new Construction Exhibit prototype, and a visit from KP, KidsPlay's beloved mascot. Guests enjoyed dancing to music from a DJ, winning exciting raffle prizes, and, of course, indulging in delicious birthday cake. The festivities were made even more special with colorful face painting and balloon twisting, bringing extra joy and creativity to the celebration. **It was a joyful day filled with fun, learning, and community spirit!**



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Guest Service Team

Gallery Supervisor Tammy Royer	Guest Service Associates Sofia Frauenhofer Victoria McClintick Christina Santiago
Senior Guest Service Associates Carolina Gonzalez Peggy Monat Deborah Kellogg	Guest Serve Assistants Ellie Ercoli Selena Hernandez Melissa Killmer Kim Lyga Tariana Medina

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Andrea Chuva
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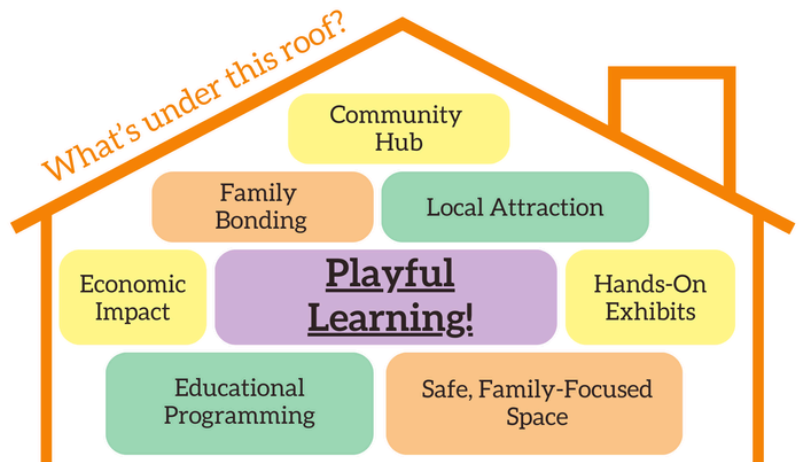
An Evening at Norbrook Farm Brewery

KidsPlay had a great time at Norbrook Farm Brewery in July! Coordinated by KidsPlay Advocate Elaine Murphy, this event featured locally-brewed beer in Colebrook's beautiful scenery, as well as a surprise tour of the brewery for event attendees. Thank you so much to everyone who came out to support our fundraiser, and thank you to Norbrook for hosting this great event!



Northwest Corner Gives

We did it! Together we raised \$52,560 to replace KidsPlay's roof through Northwest Corner Gives - 105% of our goal.



Northwest Corner Gives is a crowdfunding campaign organized by the Northwest CT Community Foundation (NCCF). The foundation matched the first \$25,000 in donations dollar-for-dollar

The total cost to replace the roof of KidsPlay's Main Gallery and repair damage is over \$125,000. In addition to the funds raised through Northwest Corner Gives, KidsPlay has received \$15,000 from the Draper Foundation Fund, \$10,000 from the Seherr-Thoss Foundations, and \$2,000 from the Northwest Community Bank Foundation.

We are so grateful to our community and the foundations for making this project possible. Thank you!