



The Scoop

KidsPlay's Donor Newsletter
Year End Update 2025
Imagine • Discover • Create



KidsPlay 2025: A Year of Resilience and Community Impact

KidsPlay continues to grow as a place where families come to learn, play, and connect. We are proudly on track to welcome **more than 60,000 visitors** this year. Every visit adds energy to downtown Torrington and strengthens KidsPlay's role as a cultural anchor for Northwest CT.

This year showed the strength of our mission. KidsPlay advanced hands-on learning, supported early childhood development, and welcomed families from all backgrounds. **Our educational programs reached more children through Maker Space activities, Exhibit Explorations, Rigamajig outreach, Sensory-Friendly Playtime, and youth workforce opportunities.** The Hub@KidsPlay also played a bigger role in connecting families with early learning support, literacy resources, and community partners who care deeply about child development.

KidsPlay worked to make play and learning open to all families. Through our Community Fund programs, **one in eight visitors received free or substantially reduced-price admission.**

Across the campus, we invested in exhibits and building improvements that made KidsPlay safer, more engaging, and more sustainable. Families explored seasonal exhibits like *A Day at the Beach* and *Autumn in New England* and tested new elements from our *On the Job* Construction and Train and Renovation Station exhibits. **We also completed the Main Gallery roof replacement, which protects our spaces and strengthens our foundation for the future.**



As we look ahead to 2026, **KidsPlay is launching a community-centered planning project to guide the future of our programs and exhibits.** We will assess our buildings, gather input from families and community partners, and study how to create the best possible experiences for children. This work will result in a long-term capital plan that strengthens KidsPlay's role as a regional hub for creativity, learning, and community connection.

KidsPlay thrives because of the families, partners, volunteers, and supporters who believe in the power of play. Thank you for being part of this community and for helping children learn and grow with confidence and joy.

Exhibit Spotlight: On the Job - Train & Renovation Station

All aboard! KidsPlay's kid-powered train has a new home. Inspired by Torrington's historic station, transportation, and the trades, this exhibit develops fine and gross motor skills through immersive, imaginative play. Children renovate the station using real tools and navigate the hand-cranked train between two tracks using turntables.

Advocate Spotlight: Keith Woolford

Being a KidsPlay Advocate is a great way to share your unique talents with the community, and Keith Woolford is a prime example.

Keith has used his experience as a truck shop foreman and as a self-taught welder, fabricator, and machinist to build KidsPlay's kid-powered train, tracks and turntables plus the steamroller. His skills and creativity delight and engage children and their families every day.

Thank you, Keith!



Get Involved at KidsPlay!

Volunteer: Volunteers play a vital role in supporting KidsPlay's programming, assisting with projects, and even helping construct new exhibits. It's a wonderful way to share your time and talents while making a positive impact on our visitors' experiences.

Advocate: Advocates are passionate supporters of KidsPlay's mission, bringing specific skills, abilities, and community connections to help advance the Museum's strategic goals and participate in fundraising—without the commitment or fiduciary responsibilities of board service.

Board Member: The Board of Directors sets the mission and strategic goals and fulfills fiduciary responsibilities while playing a key role in fundraising. Board members are generally recruited from our pool of dedicated Advocates.

Would you like to get involved?

Contact Eileen Marriott at director@kidsplaymuseum.org to learn more.

The Train will soon be open for play!



Program Spotlight: The Hub@KidsPlay - Strengthening Family Support & Community Connections



The Hub@KidsPlay continues to grow as a **trusted place where families connect to resources, learn together, and build strong foundations through play.** Despite continued uncertainty with federal funding, here is a sample of this year's Hub activities:



- Families explored books and games in the **Community Family Learning Center (CFLC) Resource Library**, bringing home tools to support language, play, and emotional development.
- Caregivers gained confidence in supporting learning at home through **Birth to Graduation**, a 20-week play-based literacy program that encourages language-rich play, movement, music, and storytelling.
- **Letters Are Characters** helped families develop early literacy skills through fun, phonemic-based activities.
- **The CT Family STARS project** convened pediatric and early childhood providers to identify and address barriers to developmental screenings and early intervention.
- UConn Health's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities hosted the **First Signs, First Steps Conference** for educators.

Despite challenges, The Hub@KidsPlay initiative is fulfilling its goal of being a model of collaboration among schools, nonprofits, and service providers. **This is the only initiative of its kind within a children's museum, providing partners with direct access to families in an informal, welcoming environment.**



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*Founding Board Members

Staff Spotlight: Tori McClintick, Guest Service Associate

For the past two years, Guest Service Associate Tori has been a friendly and familiar face at KidsPlay. She does "a little bit of everything" from greeting families at the desk and in the galleries to helping the Exhibits & Facilities Manager build and repair exhibits.

Tori says her favorite part of the job is "getting to see the kids get joy and learn something new." When she visits with her son, she loves showing him the exhibits she helped create and proudly saying, "I did that - I made that!"



Tori in the Autumn in New England and Polar Pond exhibits she helped build!

Ways to Give: Year End Appeal

KidsPlay's year-end appeal supports the Museum's general operations, including exhibits, programs, staffing, maintenance, and the daily work that keeps KidsPlay welcoming and safe for thousands of families each year. **Your gift strengthens our ability to offer hands-on learning, community partnerships, and a joyful space where children and caregivers connect.** If you are able to contribute this season, your support will help KidsPlay stay strong and ready for the year ahead. **Thank you!**

