

Kohl Children's Museum

OF GREATER CHICAGO

Annual Report 2012-2013



WELCOME

OUR MISSION

Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago provides engaging informal learning environments featuring interactive exhibits and programs that encourage young children ages birth to 8 to become effective learners through self-directed complex play.

OUR VISION

Kohl Children's Museum nurtures a love of learning in young children.

SUPPORT US

If you would like more information about supporting Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago, please contact our development office at (847) 832-6895 or visit www.donate.kohlchildrensmuseum.org.



Dear Friends,

What does learning look like, sound like, and feel like for young children? Take a short walk through Kohl Children's Museum's bustling hands-on exhibit environment, and you'll soon have your answer.

Fair warning: it may not be quiet. It may not be organized and orderly. In fact, it may seem crazy and even a little chaotic. But that's the very nature of giving children free reign and free access to play. Everything we do is about igniting the love of learning in young children, and we believe play is the way.

Hands-on, interactive, collaborative play that is accessible to all children. Play that stretches their imaginations, lets them pretend and feeds their curiosity. Play that challenges them to take risks and allows them to mess up, all while building their self-confidence. Play that results in gasps of wonder, chattering of communication and interaction, and peals of laughter and giggles.

In our Museum, the sense of learning is tangible. It's the sound of discovery, the sight of creativity blooming, the palpable feeling of growth and transformation.

The Museum itself has been transforming as well. In the past year, we've nearly doubled the number of childcare providers receiving professional development from the experts with whom we partner, as well as our own skilled staff. Exhibits and enrichment programs addressing early literacy and combating childhood obesity debuted in the past year, while we began a major focus on addressing STEAM (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **A**rts and Design, **M**athematics) programming that will not only augment the Museum visit, but extend to complementary learning activities at home.

Now if you really want to hear the sound of learning, look no further than our newly-rebranded *Ravinia Festival Music Makers* exhibit. It was our great pleasure this year to cement our wonderful partnership with Ravinia in a vibrant exhibit that lets children compose their own melodies, conduct virtual orchestras, choreograph dances – and come away with a newfound love and appreciation of music.

Your financial support of Kohl Children's Museum helps keep the sound of transformation going. For all of us who will depend on the next generation of learners and leaders, that's music to our ears.



Sheridan Turner
President & CEO



Paul Sutenbach
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POWERFULLY PLAYFUL

As one of the Chicago area's premier cultural institutions, Kohl Children's Museum plays a leadership role in early childhood development. And we're not playing around about learning. Our outreach work is elemental to who we are, defining our commitment to making a love of learning accessible to all children.

Take a look at some of the highlights of our programming during the past year, all made possible by the support of hundreds of donors like you who believe that the future of our country is in the hands of our children – the young hearts and minds who love our Museum.



EARLY CHILDHOOD CONNECTIONS

Professional Training to Develop Stronger Educators in Low-Income Neighborhoods

Research studies have shown direct correlations between the impact of quality early learning opportunities and future success, resulting in increased literacy rates and reduced delinquency and prison rates. Our flagship outreach program, Early Childhood Connections (ECC), was developed to provide continued professional development for teachers and childcare providers serving children at risk of academic failure from under-resourced communities. The program helps teachers improve classroom and childcare center environments and offers vital opportunities for parental involvement in their children's education.

ECC creates a seamless connection between learning in the classroom, learning in the Museum, and learning in the home with activities and projects that nurture creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. The cornerstone of this program is introducing teachers, childcare providers, children, and parents to the **Project Approach**, a child-centered teaching strategy that allows children's curiosity to be expressed purposefully and enables them to experience the benefits of self-motivated learning. Imagine going to school to work on your hobby!

In 2012-13 this program enrolled **50 public school teachers and 104 childcare professionals** serving 3,580 children primarily from Chicago, but also from communities like Waukegan, Berwyn, Lansing, Highwood, North Chicago and Zion. We provided, with no fees to participants:

- Three full days of training in the Project Approach
- Focused field trips to the Museum for their classes
- Classroom supplies and resources to support a class project
- Parent/child in-school activities
- Evening events at the Museum exclusively for families of students
- Passes for free return visits for all students and their families

Early Childhood Connections was generously funded by the following organizations: Anonymous, Francis Beidler Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, Discover Financial Services, Gorter Family Foundation, Grand Victoria Foundation, HSBC – North America, Illinois Tool Works Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, C. Louis Meyer Family Foundation, Northern Trust, Polk Bros. Foundation, PNC Bank, and Ventana Charitable Foundation

ECC Teacher Testimonial

"The students chose healthy bones as the focus of the project because one of their classmates, was undergoing surgery to straighten her back. This project began as an exploration of one student's illness and evolved to how our class could help her. They will take the project lessons with them for the rest of their lives."

Teresa Winters, Forrestal Elementary School



EVERYONE AT PLAY

Museum Experiences Tailored for Families with Children with Special Needs

There are limited informal learning environments that can accommodate the needs of both typically developing children and children with special needs at the same time. Kohl Children's Museum's audience of members and visitors has repeatedly requested more opportunities for dedicated time in the Museum during which their families can enjoy the exhibits and programs in an atmosphere that is less crowded, more relaxed, and more conducive to their families' individualized needs.

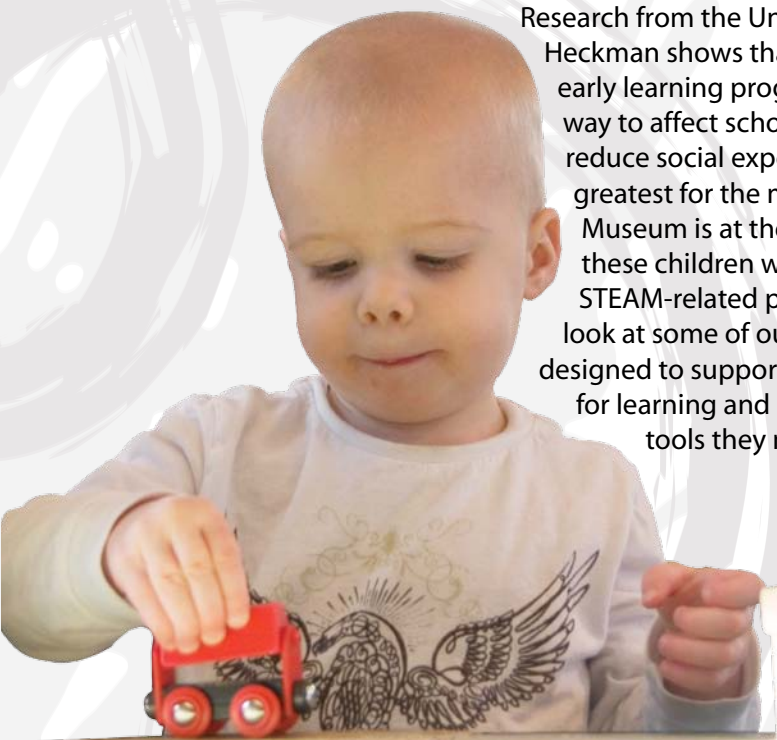
Our *Everyone at Play* program answers that call, providing a series of family events at the Museum specifically designed for children with special needs and their families to provide them with private time for focused experiences and activities among multi-sensory exhibits. The *Everyone at Play* program provides:

- An **exclusive, non-threatening introduction to Museum exhibits** and activities that can build children's comfort and familiarity for return visits during normal Museum hours.
- A chance to have a **memorable experience** that is inclusive for children with any level of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional ability.
- A **valuable play outlet** for children with special needs with examples of activities easily replicable in the home.
- Interaction with trained, registered therapy dogs from **Rainbow Animal Assisted Therapy**.

We think it's important that the Museum be equally available to guests with any level of physical, visual, auditory, or cognitive ability. The facility and all exhibits have been designed using the principles of universal design, which go beyond accessibility with an approach that uses multi-sensory experiences as educational tools. Universal design simplifies life for everyone by making products, communications, and elements of the Museum's spatial environment easier to use for all children. Every child deserves the right to play; it's our responsibility to make that play as rich and accessible as possible.



FULL STEAM AHEAD!



Research from the University of Chicago's James Heckman shows that investing in quality early learning programs is the most efficient way to affect school and life success and to reduce social expenditures later. Returns are greatest for the most at-risk children. The Museum is at the forefront of providing these children with early exposure to STEAM-related programming. Take a look at some of our engaging programs designed to support common core standards for learning and give young children the tools they need for academic success.

Science
Technology
Engineering
Arts & Design
Mathematics

Informal Math Explorations

Preparing Young Children for Higher Math Concepts with Everyday Situations

The National Math and Science Initiative has alarming statistics about America's math readiness. The US placed 25th among 31 developed countries in math skills. Jobs in computer systems design and related fields, dependent on high-level math and problem-solving skills, are projected to grow 45 percent by 2018, but fewer than half of high school graduates are prepared for college-level math, a shortcoming that has its roots in early elementary grades.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks is the increasing likelihood of children being taught rote mathematic facts and formulas without understanding the Big Ideas behind math. In partnership with the Erikson Institute and the CME Group Foundation, the Museum has developed *Informal Math Explorations*, which trains early childhood educators how to reinforce concepts like Measurement, Algebraic Thinking, and Spatial Relationships in informal learning environments like the Museum, a park, or a playground.

10 kindergarten teachers, selected from low-income neighborhoods, received free training on how to integrate these Big Ideas into classroom situations outside their formal school curriculum, giving their students a leg up on math preparation.

Early Literacy Initiatives

Three New Exhibits Highlight the Importance of Reading

"The single most significant factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school."

- *National Commission on Reading*

Literacy is a national crisis. Experts estimate that two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Recent studies by Betty Hart and Todd Risley display a clear correlation between the conversation styles of parents and the resulting speech of their children. In particular, children from lower-income homes hear **30 million fewer words** spoken to them than their higher-income counterparts by the time they are four years old. This gap does nothing but grow as the years progress.

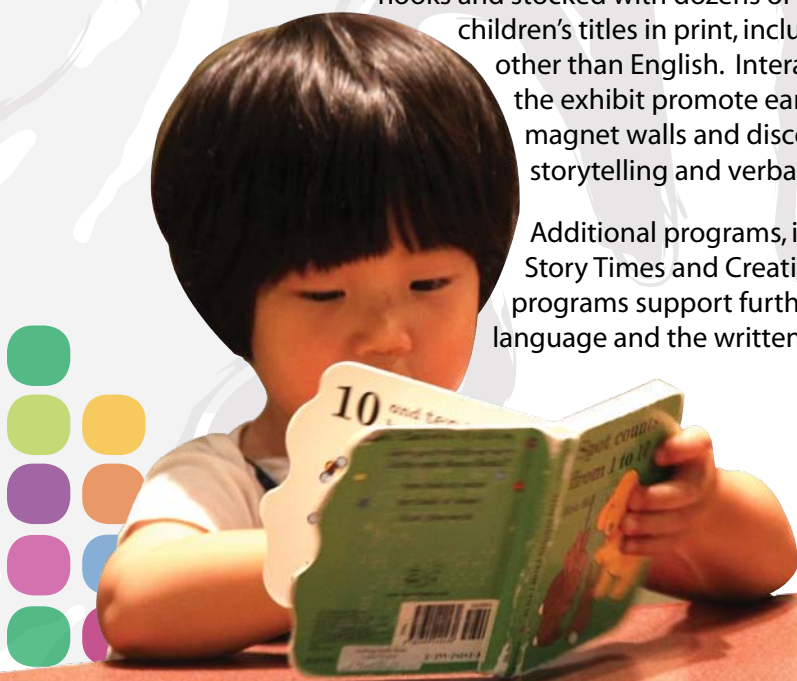
With this in mind, Kohl Children's Museum is committed to introducing young children to books and the power of reading, and providing caregivers with the tools they need to expose them to language and the written word.

In the past year, we've featured two traveling exhibits exploring classic children's stories, installed a literacy element in our outdoor *Habitat Park* exhibit, and debuted a new permanent exhibit promoting exposure to the language arts.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz exhibit (September 2012 – April 2013), based on the book by L. Frank Baum, encouraged children to interact with the narrative arc of the childhood classic. **Storyland** (September 2013 – January 2014) allows children and adults to step into the pages of beloved picture books and discover that it is never too early to develop a love for learning.

Meanwhile the *Play Library* exhibit was refurbished and rebranded as **Sheridan's Books and Crannies**, a magical bookstore and theatre space filled with inviting reading nooks and stocked with dozens of the most respected children's titles in print, including languages other than English. Interactive elements in the exhibit promote early writing skills, while magnet walls and discovery boxes promote storytelling and verbalization.

Additional programs, including weekly Story Times and Creative Dramatics programs support further exposure to language and the written word.



Robust Science Investigations

International Kudos for Introducing Young Children to Scientific Thinking

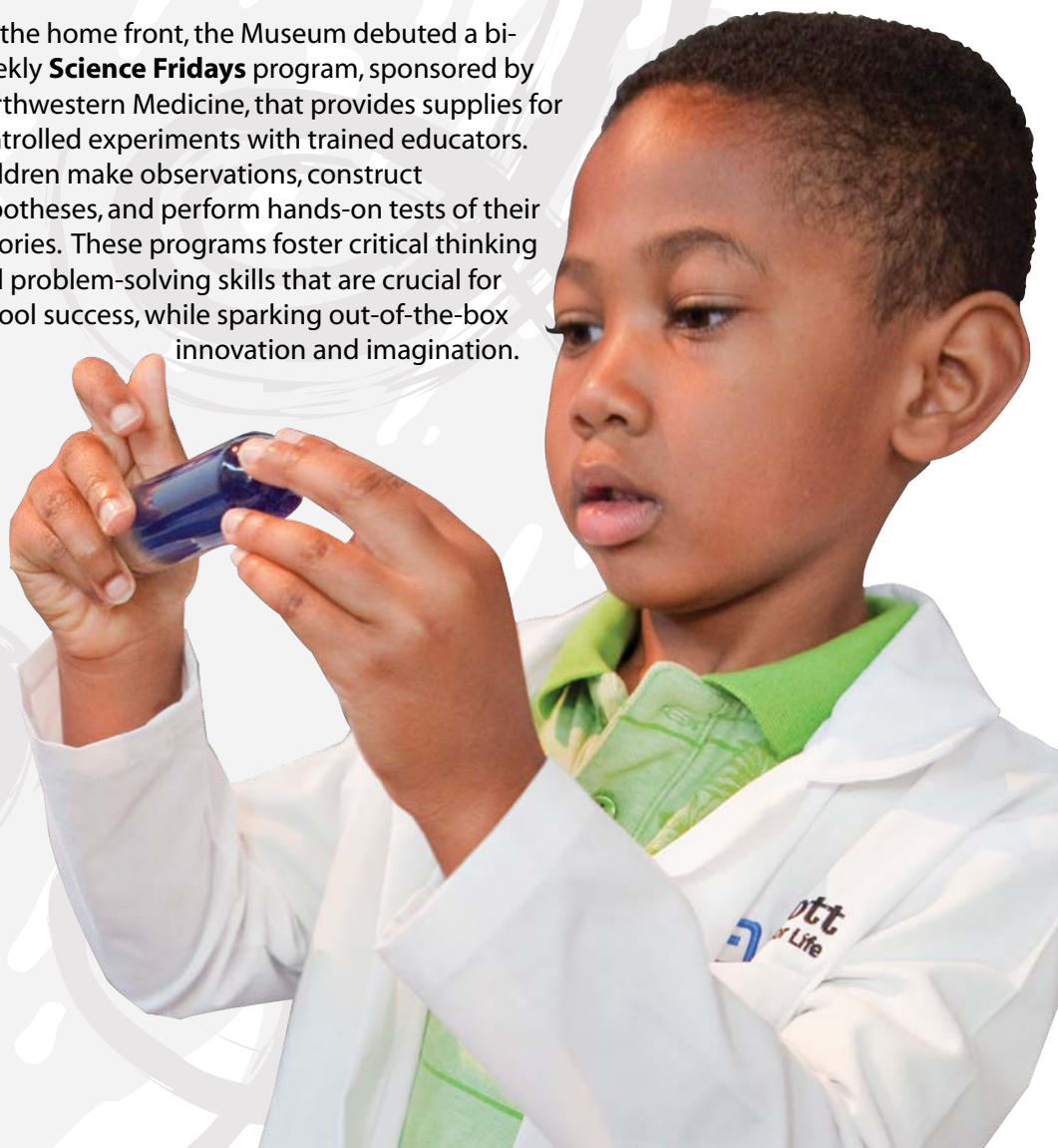
"If this is science, I want to be a scientist when I grow up!"

– 8-year-old girl after playing in the Museum's Science + You exhibit during its run at Ecotarium in Worcester, Massachusetts.

In 2011, the Museum debuted its groundbreaking *Science + You* exhibit, a unique child-sized laboratory that lets children explore the scientific method through play. Through exploration of balanced lifestyles, proper nutrition, the immunity process, and scientific tools and methodologies, children discover the important role scientists play in keeping people healthy and happy.

After collecting laudatory raves during its national tour in 2012, the exhibit, sponsored by the AbbVie Foundation, embarked on an international tour to Germany and Brazil in 2012-13, providing the Museum's first exposure overseas and drawing rave reviews from educators and scientists alike.

On the home front, the Museum debuted a bi-weekly **Science Fridays** program, sponsored by Northwestern Medicine, that provides supplies for controlled experiments with trained educators. Children make observations, construct hypotheses, and perform hands-on tests of their theories. These programs foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are crucial for school success, while sparking out-of-the-box innovation and imagination.



Inspiring Encounters with Music

Partnership with Ravinia Festival Breathes New Life Into a Favorite Exhibit

This year saw the most visible indication of one of the Museum's successful cultural partnerships: the debut of the newly rebranded **Ravinia Festival Music Makers** exhibit.

Both Ravinia and the Museum recognize the intrinsic value of a collaborative partnership between two treasured Chicago-area cultural institutions to demonstrate their shared commitment to early childhood education and music education. *Music Makers*, one of the Museum's most beloved and unique exhibits, focuses on the science and art of sound, affording children ages birth to 8 and their caregivers the opportunity to explore music concepts such as melody, tempo, rhythm, and notation.

With the support of Ravinia, *Music Makers* will continue to be refreshed with cutting-edge new elements, such as the installation of a **Virtual Conductor** element. Using simple technology, children can control an orchestra's rendition of several classical pieces, speeding and slowing the tempo and controlling the volume of play. In years to come, we plan many new additions to give young children the chance to discover their inner musicians.





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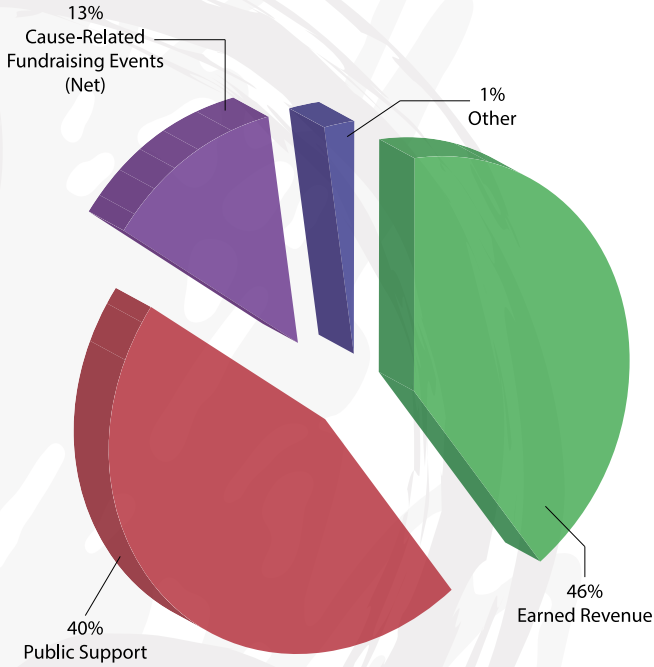
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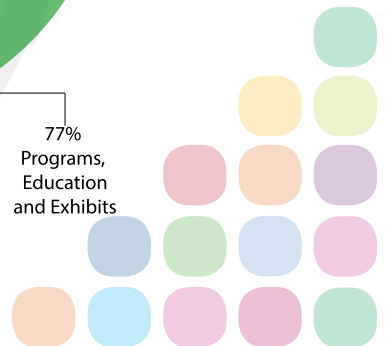
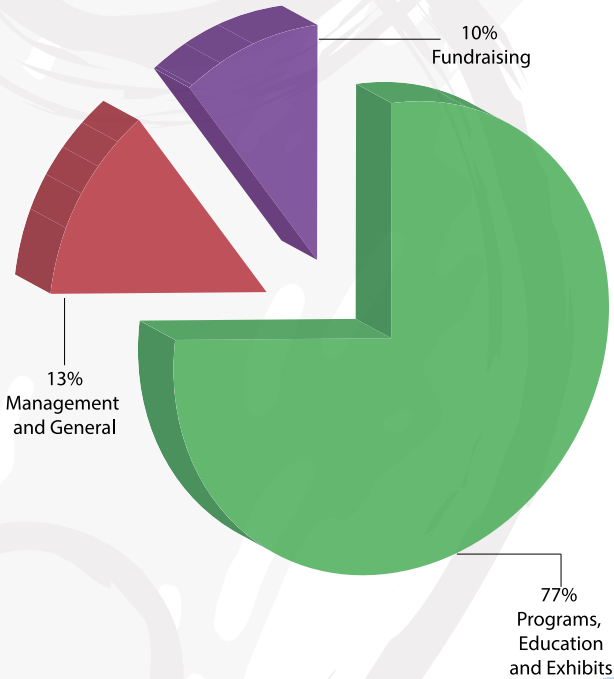
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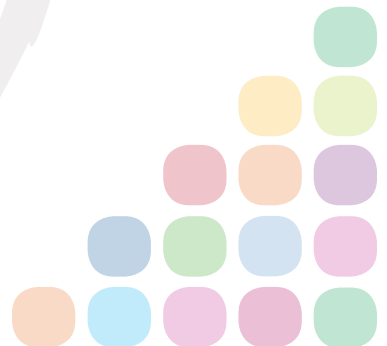
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