

BFK Rocket Report

🚀 Celebrating 30 years of play 🚀

The BFK is Turning 30!

The Beginning Years

Founded by two local businesswomen and mothers, Paula Meyer and Rochelle Lamm, the Fox Cities Children's Museum opened its doors for the first time on November 2, 1992. Through the work of numerous volunteers, partner organizations, and early supporters, the museum aimed to achieve its original mission of enriching the lives of children.

Located in the heart of downtown Appleton, the museum occupied only a section of what is currently our second floor. Early exhibits included a fire truck from Pierce Manufacturing and a crane from the Boldt Company, versions of which can still be found in the museum today. Visitors from the museum's first year might also remember Science Spectrum, Grandma's Attic, Creation Station, Kids' Care Clinic, and many more exhibits that local sponsors helped build and bring to life.



What's Inside?

★ Page 2

Celebrate our 30th!

★ Page 3

Director's Digest

★ Page 4

Founders Interview

Mere weeks after opening, the museum staff and a large group of Imagineers, the museum's volunteer taskforce, prepared to host its first traveling exhibit, Dinosaurs Alive! This group of animatronic dinosaurs helped attract families from the local community and beyond. Within the first ten weeks of opening, the museum saw over 50,000 visitors.

Today, the Building for Kids Children's Museum continues to serve as a safe place for families to play and learn together. In November, the museum will celebrate its thirtieth birthday and the millions of kids and their grown-ups who have been impacted by this fundamental community asset over the years.



Learn more about how you can help us celebrate the museum's 30th birthday on page 2!

Celebrate with us!



BFK Birthday Bash



Saturday, Nov. 5: 9am - 4pm

Your family is invited to our 30th birthday party!

We're celebrating with family-friendly birthday-themed activities, face painting, goody bags, and a happy birthday confetti throw at noon.

Plus, all who attend will be entered for a chance to win a FREE annual membership to the Building for Kids!

Admission is free for BFK members and \$9.50 per person for non-members.

No pre-registration required.

Learn more at buildingforkids.org

Party Like It's 1992

Saturday, Nov. 5: 7pm - 10pm

Where were you in 1992?

From grunge to pop, flannels to fanny packs – you're invited to rewind and celebrate all things '90s with this adults-only (21 and older) event!

Join us for:

- Pizza & Cereal Buffet
- '90s Fashion Contest
- Jolly Good Soda Bar
- DJ and Dance Party
- Board & Arcade Games
- Cash Bar

A group rate (\$15 per person) is available for groups of 6 or more. The group rate deadline is Saturday, October 22.

Otherwise, this event is \$30 per person. The final registration deadline is Tuesday, November 1.



30th Birthday Membership Sale

Saturday, November 5 - Saturday, November 12

Anyone who purchases or renews a family, grandparent, or dual membership during our birthday week will receive a **discount of 15% off!** Current members can take advantage of this discount too! Memberships purchased during the sale won't start until after any current memberships expire.

Memberships can be purchased online, over the phone, or in person at the museum. For online purchases, enter code BIRTHDAY at checkout. Visit buildingforkids.org/membership.

Annual Member Meeting

All members are invited to join us for our annual meeting on Wednesday, October 26 from 8:30am - 9:00am. During the meeting, we'll present an overview of the organization's strategic plan and elect members to the Board of Directors.

The meeting will take place virtually over Microsoft Teams. If you're interested in attending, please RSVP to our Office Manager, Alyssa, at anickel@buildingforkids.org by Monday, October 24.

Director's Digest

One of my first memories as a kid is staring up at the twelve huge animatronic dinosaurs the Fox Cities Children's Museum hosted its first year. I can still remember the way they growled, roared, and moved in their specially-made dinosaur habitat.

I was fortunate to grow up visiting the Children's Museum and have many other special memories coming to the museum as a child, including sliding down the Amazing Heart Slide and sitting in the giant chair in the Grandma's Attic exhibit.

Not only am I grateful for my time spent at the museum, but I'm also grateful to be able to bring my kids to play at the Building for Kids Children's Museum. Together, we're making new memories driving the Schneider truck in our Big Rig Depot exhibit and playing concerts on water-powered instruments in the Water Gallery.

While it looks like simple fun on the surface, I know that play provides a unique opportunity to support cognitive and physical development, buffer against toxic stress, and build social-emotional resilience. Play is a powerful tool that can help shape future success.



This November, the Building for Kids will celebrate thirty years of play. Since 1992, the museum has served as a safe place for families in our community and beyond to learn, grow, and explore, impacting generations.

As stewards of one of the largest children's museums in Wisconsin, we all have a role to play to ensure this community asset continues to make an impact for generations to come. I look forward to the day when I might bring my grandchildren to play at the BFK.

We are so grateful to you and our community for the support over the last three decades. We would not be the museum we are today without it.

I hope you are able to join us in November as we celebrate our thirtieth birthday.

See you soon,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Oliver W. Zornow".

Oliver Zornow
Executive Director
ozornow@buildingforkids.org



Founders Interview

Paula Meyer & Rochelle Lamm



1. What inspired you to start a children's museum in Appleton?

Rochelle: We were both recruited to Appleton to build new mutual fund companies for two different insurance companies. We traveled a lot for work and noticed that other cities had used children's museums as a way to revitalize a downtown. Since Appleton has always been a family-friendly place and since downtown Appleton had a high vacancy rate in the early 90s, we thought a children's museum would be the perfect solution. Plus, it would be something meaningful and fun to do together.

2. Can you share what starting a children's museum was like?

Paula: Children's museums were not very common when we first started considering the idea. We both had senior executive-level business experience but neither of us had started a non-profit before, so we learned a lot as we went. Fortunately, we had a large group of volunteers, each with their own skill set, who put in so many hours and truly brought the museum to life.

R: I have memories of us painting at 11:00 at night with our own young kids sound asleep in the Pierce firetruck exhibit. From volunteers to partner organizations to our early financial supporters, it took a whole community to create the museum.

3. What role do children's museums play in a child's growth and development?

R: Children's museums are special because they are founded and rooted in the conviction that children learn through play. This was a guiding force for us when we were designing exhibits. We wanted kids to go home having learned something. At a children's museum, kids could become the instigators behind their own learning.

4. Why are children's museums important to our community?

P: Children's museums are a community asset. Just like you need bike paths, parks, sports fields, and so on, a children's museum is something a family-friendly community should have.

R: Parents are incredibly busy. Having a fun and creative place that provides an educational backdrop that guides and encourages parents to engage with their kids is critical. A children's museum already has everything set up and in place, so all you have to do is show up and play. Plus, Wisconsin winters can be tough on families. We wanted to create a space that would provide learning opportunities year-round.

5. Do you have a favorite memory from starting the Children's Museum?

P: I have many favorite memories. My oldest daughter wrote a poem called "I Hate Cheese." We framed it and hung it in the museum. She was so surprised. I also remember during our first winter open, we took part in Appleton's Holiday parade. We created a big float with our seesaw logo on it and our families, volunteers, and board members participated to help us promote the newly opened museum. One other favorite memory was our decision to bring in a traveling animatronic dinosaur exhibit to help us launch the museum. Appleton had never seen something like that before, so it was a huge deal.

6. What is your dream for the BFK over the next 30 years?

P: I am so grateful to the community for taking good care of the museum all these years. I hope the museum can continue to be an important community asset for generations to come.

R: I would love to see the museum used as a platform for causes that affect the Fox Valley. I specifically think it would be wonderful to install exhibits that make an impact, not just for one visit, but for a lifetime.



Founding Board of Directors

Paula Meyer, Denise Pannemaker, Bruce Olson, Jean Rogers, Rochelle Lamm, Linda Mast, Wendy Schmidt, Joan Orthober, Sally Jahnke, and Karen Casper