

# BFK Rocket Report



2024 Annual Report Included



## 2024: Year In Review

This past year was filled with new and exciting developments at the Building for Kids, deepening our support for kids and grown-ups. In addition to updated and enhanced immersive play-based learning environments, we expanded our programming in response to community needs and created treasured memories through one-of-a-kind events. Here are just a few highlights from this past year

### **New and Renovated Exhibits**

"The Story of the Land Where We Stand" is a new, interactive art installation featuring a colorful mural by Menominee artist Renny Katchenago and created in partnership with the College of Menominee Nation, Kaehkenawapahtaeq Charter School, and the Menominee Language & Culture Commission

We celebrated ribbon cuttings for *The Lab* sponsored by Amcor, *The Studio* sponsored by School Specialty, the *Littlest Branch* sponsored by Fox Community Credit Union, and the *Doll Hospital* sponsored by ThedaCare.

Lastly, our new outer space-themed Welcome Center creates a safer and more efficient experience for visitors and includes a gift shop with exciting BFK merchandise and high-quality educational items to continue the play-based learning at home.

### **BFK Impact Crew**

The BFK Impact Crew was designed to inspire the next generation of change makers! Through facilitated programs and opportunities to create their own fundraising pages to support the BFK, Impact Crew members learned how they can use their voice to make a difference in our community.

### **Early Childhood Continuum**

To provide more opportunities for families with young children to connect, learn, and grow, we expanded our specially-designed, facilitated age cohort programming for 0-4 year olds with our Welcome Baby, Early Explorers, and Jr. Explorers programs.

### **Work it Out Wombats Visit the BFK**

Zeke from the PBS Kids show "Work It Out Wombats" brought the Treeborhood fun to the BFK with a week-long series of activities and special events! Kids and their families got to meet and take photos with the popular character while enjoying activities based off the show.



# Summer Explorer Camp

## Photography, Robotics, Music, and More

Make new friends and embark on exciting adventures with us during our Summer Explorer Camps at the BFK. This eight-week series offers a blend of skill-building enrichment, social engagement, and free play throughout the museum.

### New this year!

We're extending our sessions to include Mondays! Each camp now runs from Monday to Friday, offering a full week of care. Every week will focus on a unique theme with diverse topics that cater to all ages and interests.

What else is new for this year? Due to their popularity, Summer Explorer Camps will be available exclusively to BFK members.

We offer both half-day and full-day camps for children who have completed 4K through 4th grade (4K is available for half-days only). You can sign up for a single week or enjoy a discounted rate by enrolling in all eight weeks!

### Summer Explorer Camp Schedule

- **Photography & Pottery:** July 7 – 11
- **Music Makers:** July 14 – 18
- **Food and Friends:** July 21 – 25
- **Robot Rockstars:** July 28 – August 1
- **Photography & Papermaking:** August 4 – 8
- **Rhythm & Expression:** August 11 – 15
- **Culinary Creations:** August 18 – 22
- **Coding Crew:** August 25 – 29



Learn more about a typical day's schedule, prices, and how to register at [buildingforkids.org](https://buildingforkids.org)



## Planet Imagination

One of the BFK's most popular temporary exhibits is back by popular demand! In Planet Imagination, kids and their grown-ups can imagine, build, and discover a world all their own.

Located on the second floor by Station 99, this space-themed exhibit encourages visitors to create their own planet using giant, blue building blocks and wacky play structures. Let your imagination shine by building a shelter

on your planet or creating wild terrain to traverse, like an obstacle course.

"Planet Imagination is my favorite part of the Children's Museum," explained one of the exhibit's biggest fans. "I love to build forts and ball slides, but whatever we want to make, we can!"

Fun for all ages (adults included), Planet Imagination provides opportunities for large, gross motor movements and collaborative, open-ended play.







## Member Mornings

Every Wednesday and Saturday morning from 8 - 9 am, the museum offers exclusive access to members, allowing them to explore our exhibits before the general public arrives. Of course, members are welcome to stay beyond this hour to continue their exploration.

Member Mornings are a gesture of gratitude for our members' support, providing a dedicated hour for uninterrupted play in our 31,000 square feet of exhibit space. This special time is perfect for discovering new interactive exhibits or revisiting favorite ones, making it an ideal way to start the day and enjoy quality time together.

## Director's Digest

32 years ago, I visited the museum for the first time as a child. That visit was filled with excitement, discovery, and some of the most vivid memories I have as a young child. While I got to spend significantly more time at the museum this past year at 36 than I did at 4, I am amazed at how this special place continues to embody those same feelings for me and nearly 130,000 kids and their grown-ups each year.

Our members, donors, visitors, volunteers, team members, and partners should be incredibly proud of what we accomplished over the last year and the foundation we've continued to strengthen for the future of our community.

From new exhibit spaces and security enhancements to a dramatic expansion in programming addressing the emerging needs of kids and their grown-ups, there is far too much to celebrate from 2024 to fit within a single newsletter. However, I hope that you recognize how your engagement and continued partnership demonstrate our shared commitment to the importance of play-based learning in child development and our shared future.

One particularly moving development this last year was the opening of "The Story of the Land Where We Stand." This interactive art installation was the result of nearly two years of co-creation with leaders within the Menominee Tribal Community. It was a tear-filled ribbon cutting for those closest to the project as vision became reality. If you haven't had a chance, please make sure you visit the museum to see the fruits of this partnership.

We have so much in store for 2025, and we hope you will be a part of it. Everything we do at the museum is fueled by our thousands of member families. We hear from our members how they value the ability to make the museum a part of their regular routine—and members now have exclusive access to the museum through our Member Mornings and our incredibly popular Summer Explorer Camps. If you are not



currently a member, please consider joining us so you and your family can enjoy all that the museum has to offer.

We believe that every family should have the opportunities to play and learn together at the Building for Kids. That is the motivation that fuels our Access for All Initiative. In 2024, our donors and members supported nearly 5,000 admissions for families facing financial barriers.

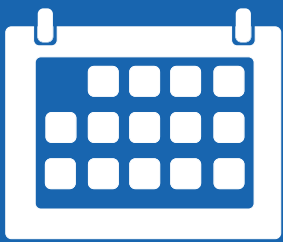
Whether as a member, donor, or day visitor, I hope we can count on your support as we look ahead to 2025 with the same level of enthusiasm and wonder that I felt three decades ago, making life-long memories with my grown-ups.

Thank you and see you soon!

*Oliver W. Zornow*

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## Upcoming Events

March 7

5:00 – 7:00pm

### **Pizza Playdate with Curious George**

Curious George is coming to visit the BFK! Join us for after-hours play, pizza, story times, themed activities, and lots of opportunities to meet Curious George.

March 15

9:00am – 4:00pm

### **St. Patrick's Party**

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day a few days early with us! Join us for Irish-inspired activities and play in our exhibits.

April 12

9:00am – 4:00pm

### **Make Money Count**

Part of Money Smart Week Fox Cities, join us for a day of financial fun with the whole family.

For more information about these and other upcoming events, visit [buildingforkids.org](http://buildingforkids.org).

## Member Spotlight

### Ludtke Family

*Members since 2021*

#### 1. Why did you become members?

As a kindergarten teacher in the area, I have been bringing my classes to the Building for Kids for field trips every school year for many years. I truly appreciate how the BFK provides hands-on learning experiences that make education exciting and engaging for young children.

As parents, we love spending our weekends exploring with our daughters, and the BFK quickly became one of our favorite places to visit. We're members and continue to renew our membership every year because our girls love it and frequently ask to go! One of the highlights for our family is attending the special events – our favorites this past year were the Llama Llama character playdate and the BFK New Year's Eve Celebration. We're excited to experience even more events in the coming year!

#### 2. What do you enjoy most about visiting?

It changes for my girls all the time! Right now, they're especially enjoying Food to Grow and the fire truck exhibit, while our 2-year-old loves exploring Babies & Toddlers Around the World. No visit is complete without a stop at The Studio to paint—it's a must for us!

What makes BFK so special is how it grows with them. As their imaginations expand and their interests evolve, there's always something new and exciting to discover.



#### 3. Why is the BFK important to our community?

The Building for Kids is a vital part of our community, providing hands-on, interactive exhibits that inspire children to learn through play while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. It offers a safe, welcoming environment where families can connect, explore, and learn together – strengthening bonds and creating cherished memories.

#### 4. Any advice for families visiting the BFK?

- Get a membership – It's affordable and gives you flexibility for repeat visits.
- Follow your kids' interests – Let their curiosity guide them to new exhibits.
- Take your time – Enjoy exploring without the pressure to stay long. You can always return!
- Attend special events – Don't miss the fun events, especially the book character ones!
- And above all, enjoy the experience and the memories you create!

## Board of Directors

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