

BFK Rocket Report



Play • Imagination • Inclusion • Connection • Integrity



Space Station

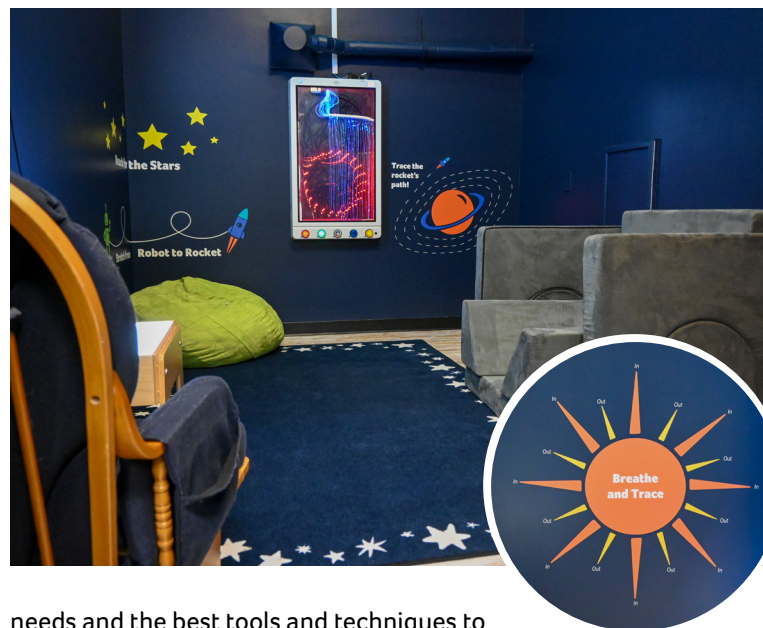
A Quiet Space for Everyone

At the Building for Kids, we strive to make our play-based learning environment a welcoming place where all families can thrive. Amidst the excitement of our museum, we recognize that some visitors, particularly those with autism or sensory sensitivities, may occasionally need a quiet place to take a break. In our continuous efforts to best serve all members of our community, we have recently opened an updated quiet room called the Space Station, designed to better support the autism community (although everyone is welcome to use the room).

The new space theme of our redesigned quiet room carries dual significance: it uses the tranquil imagery of outer space and creates "space" away from the stimulating museum environment for those who need it. Updates to the room include updated lighting, themed graphics, and new interactives, all designed to embody the outer space theme. Additionally, we have enhanced our self-regulation tools to include noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, and various fidgets.

To ensure that sensory resources are available beyond the room, we have also introduced mini "Space Stations" at various locations throughout the museum. These mini stations feature bags containing self-regulation tools like the ones found in the room. This continuation of the Space Station allows families to access these tools wherever they are in the museum, promoting a sense of empowerment and autonomy.

This project was inspired by insights from our partners, especially the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin and their local Fox Valley chapter, who work closely with families of children on the autism spectrum. Their guidance helped us understand various sensory



needs and the best tools and techniques to address them. With this knowledge, an intern from Lawrence University assisted us in incorporating a range of these self-regulation tools and techniques into the room.

The Space Station project was made possible thanks to funding from Lawrence University, the SAC Development Disabilities Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, and the Appleton Rotary Foundation - Helen Thom Roemer Fund.

Our Longstanding Commitment to Inclusion

After more than a decade of deep collaboration, the BFK was recognized in 2020 as the first Autism Friendly Community Partner in the state of Wisconsin by the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin for our dedication to providing opportunities for families with children on the autism spectrum.

Sensory Superstars: Monthly Event

To further support those with sensory sensitivities, we offer Sensory Superstars, a free program for families in the autism community that allows them to experience the museum in a lower sensory environment. During this program that takes place every third Sunday of the month, we create a quieter setting with dimmed lighting, no music, and selected exhibits turned off. Starting this fall, we are also introducing a Sensory Superstars version of our Character Playdates!

Summer Explorer Camps

Learn more and register
at buildingforkids.org



Make new friends and discover with us during Summer Explorer Camp at the BFK! This eight-week series of themed drop-off camps offers a blend of skill-building enrichment, social engagement, and free play around the museum. Camps are Monday through Friday and are for kids who have completed 4K through 4th grade.



Visual Arts with Photo Opp

July 7 - 11 & August 4 - 8

Our visual arts-themed camps have something for every artistic mind, with explorations in photography, pottery, and papermaking. Begin the day with a session dedicated to photography lead by Photo Opp. In the afternoon, unleash your creativity with hands-on pottery or papermaking workshops in The Studio.

Coding & Robotics with Amcor

July 14 - 18 & August 11 - 15

Great for kids that love a challenge, our coding & robotics-themed camps offer an exciting journey filled with STEM-based activities. Start your day with an engaging robotics session led by Amcor, and continue the adventure in the afternoon with more STEM activities in The Lab.

Food with Sustainable Kitchens

July 21 - 25 & August 18 - 22

Perfect for introducing your child to healthy eating habits and a love of cooking, our food-themed sessions explore concepts within the culinary arts. Learn scratch cooking techniques with Sustainable Kitchens in the morning, and create healthy snack recipes while exploring Food to Grow in the afternoon.

Music with Local Artists

July 28 - August 1 & August 25 - 29

Embark on a musical journey during our music-themed camps. Start your day with an interactive session led by our special guests, Marisol & Bernardo. In the afternoon, keep the excitement going by making music with friends and deepening your understanding of musical concepts.



Choose to register for all eight weeks at a discounted rate or just the sessions that work for you.

16th Annual BFK Children's Parade

Presented by ThedaCare | Wednesday, July 23

You're invited to participate in the 16th annual BFK Children's Parade presented by ThedaCare, a signature event of U.S. Venture Children's Week!

This event invites kids and their families to stroll through the streets of Downtown Appleton, showcasing their creativity with themed costumes and non-motorized floats. Families are encouraged to brainstorm their theme together, with costumes often ranging from old Halloween attire to hand-made floats or simple group themes.

After the parade, the festivities continue in City Park with a variety of activities, entertainment, food trucks, and an award ceremony.

Sign up your family or put together a group of families from your school, work, daycare, or any other organization. This is a free event, but registration is required at buildingforkids.org.



Register:



U.S. Venture Children's Week

July 20 - 26, 2025 • AppletonChildrensWeek.com

Join us for a week of free or reduced-cost family activities with organizations across our community.



Building Blocks of Impact: Annual Appeal



Make an impact! Your support can help ensure that all families have access to the critical, intergenerational play-based learning opportunities offered by the BFK.

When kids and their grown-ups visit the museum, their admission, membership, and program fees help support immersive play-based learning environments and museum operations. However, earned revenue does not cover the full cost of admission. Contributions from generous donors and sponsors extend the impact of our work.

Learn more or
donate here:



Director's Digest

With the remodeling of our quiet space and the expansion of our Early Childhood programs, spring has been an exciting season at the Building for Kids.

Among these exciting developments is the expansion of our Jr. Explorers program to include more sessions than ever before. Now reaching over 50 kids and their families twice each week, this free program is helping more 3 and 4-year-olds prepare for kindergarten and build connections with their peers through play-based learning. The Guyer family, whose story you'll find on the next page, is just one of the many families that have observed remarkable growth in their child's self-confidence, social skills, and school readiness through the program.

To ensure new opportunities or expanded programs are as impactful as Jr. Explorers, our core values of Play, Imagination, Inclusion, Connection, and Integrity are centered at the heart of each of our decisions. These values and the decisions of our organization are driven by you, our members. Each year, our members elect our Board of Directors, who articulate and uphold our values while representing the interests of kids and families in our community. Additionally, your participation, feedback, and support inspire us to ensure that our initiatives align with the evolving needs and aspirations of our community.

For example, we first launched our Jr. Explorers program in 2024 in response to a growing need we identified in our community for young children to develop school readiness and social and emotional skills in the aftermath of the pandemic. We continue to expand and refine the program today because of the positive feedback we receive from our members and the demonstrated impact it has on participating families.

You can help us make more impactful choices for our future by sharing your valuable insights. Our *Imagine! Committee*, established to help us better understand and address the needs of our community, is seeking community-based input to inform our medium-term strategic direction.



Please scan the QR code to complete a brief survey and help shape the future of the Building for Kids.

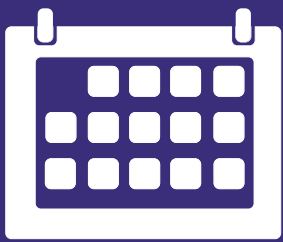


You can also impact our future by contributing to our Annual Appeal. As a non-profit, member-governed organization, we rely on the generosity of our community to extend our impact, expand our program offerings, and build on our commitment to make the Building for Kids accessible to all families.

Thank you for the various ways you contribute to our mission. Whether it's through your feedback, a donation to our Annual Appeal, or being a member with us, your support makes a difference. Together, we create a community where every child and family can thrive.

Oliver Zornow
President
ozornow@buildingforkids.org





Upcoming Events

June 15

9:00am - 4:00pm

Father's Day

Celebrate the fathers and father-figures in your life with a special day at the BFK. Dads will receive free admission!

June 21

9:00am - 4:00pm

Dino Day

Dig into the past and join us for a prehistoric adventure! All day at the museum, we'll have dinosaur-themed activities.

July 23

6:00pm - 8:00pm

BFK Children's Parade

March through downtown Appleton in costumes and non-motorized floats. Participate with your family or put together a group!

For more information about these and other upcoming events, visit buildingforkids.org.

Member Spotlight

Guyer Family

Members since 2022

1. How does your family engage with the Building for Kids?

We absolutely love participating in the Jr. Explorers, Early Explorers, and Welcome Baby programs—as well as all the fun character events! Each one adds something special to our experience at the Building for Kids.

2. What has your family gained from participating in our Early Childhood programming?

As a stay-at-home mom, my children haven't had much exposure to other kids, and they've never been in a drop-off setting before. The programs at the Building for Kids have been a game-changer, helping them build confidence and develop the social skills they'll carry with them into school. Every morning, my oldest wakes up and asks if it's a Jr. Explorers day. It makes my heart so happy to see how excited he is to go, play with his friends, and spend time with Ms. Lisa and the wonderful staff.

3. Why is the BFK important to our community?

I can't imagine our community without the Building for Kids. The connections we've made with other parents and grandparents here have truly given us a sense of belonging in the Fox Valley. It's a safe, welcoming space where children are free to explore, grow, and discover their passions at their own pace.



4. What has the BFK meant to your family?

Aside from guaranteeing great post-visit naps, the Building for Kids has become a special place for our family to connect. It's where learning is wrapped in play, and every visit brings new discoveries. It's become a weekly ritual for us, and I love seeing the pure excitement on my children's faces each time we walk through the doors.

5. Do you have a favorite memory from the BFK?

My favorite memory at the Building for Kids isn't just one moment—it's the ongoing experience of watching my children grow here. My youngest first visited at just two weeks old, and now he's crawling through the exhibits, fully engaged, and exploring the world around him.

Board of Directors

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Ethan Haas, *Vice Chair* - Amcor

Barb Gonnering, *Treasurer* - Wipfli LLP

Amanda Chavez, *Secretary* - Go Valley Kids

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Trevor Lord - Lawrence University

Michael McCormick - Schreiber Foods

Debra McDowall - Community Leader

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Dr. Abby Smolcich - ThedaCare

Dr. Carrie Willer - Appleton Area School District

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