

THE PLACE WHERE

AWESOME

LIVES



**2014-2015
ANNUAL REPORT**

Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago



Dear Friends,

The future is in the hands of our children – the young hearts and minds that love Kohl Children’s Museum. When families walk into our Museum, they feel the warmth and the welcome. They find themselves firmly planted at the intersection of wonder and awesome.

For 30 years, the Museum has been committed to providing the highest quality early learning opportunities to children and their parents, caregivers, and educators. As one of the Chicago area’s premiere cultural institutions, Kohl Children’s Museum plays a leadership role in early childhood education.

Your support has been instrumental in furthering our vision of igniting a love of learning in young children. In this report, you will find several examples of how the Museum continues to challenge itself to grow and embrace the changes in the world to create the best learning experiences possible for young children and their families. Even more importantly, our outreach programs ensure these experiences are accessible to all children. Neither physical limitations nor socio-economic status should be a barrier to a child’s right to play and learn.

It’s thanks to you that the Museum can continue be responsive to the community and create solutions wherever we see a need. You have helped us to harness the power of play and jump start the next generation.

Your generous support makes us *The Place Where Awesome Lives*. Thank you!

Sheridan Turner
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**CREATIVITY
CAN'T BE TAUGHT
WITH FLASH CARDS**

THE PLAYING FIELD FOR LIFE



Childhood doesn’t get a second chance. We know the most important learning in a child’s life happens during the first eight years.

For children born into poverty, there are well-documented inequities in early learning experiences.

- By age three, a young child’s brain has developed 80% of its systems and structures that are responsible for all future learning, thinking, feeling, and behaving.
- By age four, disadvantaged children have heard approximately 30 million fewer words than their more affluent counterparts.

That’s where Kohl Children’s Museum steps in. Research shows that every competency important to school success is enhanced by play, and Kohl Children’s Museum uses play to ignite a love of learning in young children better than anyone.

Outreach work is elemental to the Museum’s mission, and the need in our community is significant. Kohl Children’s Museum works to reach as many young children as possible through outreach, specialized programming, travelling exhibits, and thought leadership, all driven by current research.

The Kohl Children’s Museum team never tires of creating an unforgettable experience for everyone who enters the Museum. We are proud to say the Museum is as exciting and unexpected as the day we first opened the doors. As you see the highlights from the past year, you’ll understand **the power of play**.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Early Childhood Connections

The underlying principles of Kohl Children's Museum's *Early Childhood Connections* outreach program (ECC) are grounded in the Museum's belief that creativity can't be taught with flash cards. The program trains educators from high need neighborhoods in the project approach, encouraging children to formulate questions, seek out and discover answers, consider their findings and form conclusions.

Empirical evidence shows that high quality early childhood systems foster the development of cognitive and socioemotional abilities, especially for disadvantaged children.

ECC consists of several critical components: professional development and resources for teachers and childcare providers, focused field trips to the Museum, and family engagement. The program has been in place for over a decade, and all is still provided at no cost to the participants. There is evidence that ECC produces both practically and statistically significant positive changes in the use of developmentally appropriate methods and strategies by early childhood educators.

ECC by the numbers:

- **141** teachers and childcare providers trained to better facilitate the learning journey and development of the children in their care
- Sparked a love of learning in **2,178** young children at-risk of academic failure
- **85** field trips were welcomed to The Place Where Awesome Lives
- Over **3,100** passes distributed for free return visits so families can discover the power of learning through play

Kohl Children's Museum is a thought leader in early childhood education. Museum educators presented the successes associated with ECC and the Project Approach at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference in 2014. Judy Harris Helm, PhD, a world-renowned expert in the Project Approach and ECC consultant and trainer, developed an instruction and support book, *Becoming Young Thinkers: Deep Project Work in the Classroom*, which features the Museum's work.



BRING

THE WORLD

DOWN TO SIZE

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Everyone at Play

Kohl Children's Museum was specifically designed using Universal Design principles that transcend the Americans with Disabilities Act. This ensures that all guests are able to enjoy the Museum, regardless of any physical or cognitive challenges they may have. The Museum works collaboratively with community organizations to invite families with children with special needs to explore the exhibits while closed to the general public on six Sunday mornings each year. This provides opportunities for calm, creative, and collaborative play.

A parent of a child with physical limitations wrote the following about her family's experience at Kohl Children's Museum:

"My son loves to play in the water, but twice this week I've encountered 'water play' exhibits which were completely inaccessible for him. What caught my attention about your exhibit were push button activations that were low enough and slightly sticking out from the wall. Perfect for our needs. Suddenly, right there was the experience I'd been hoping for all week. My son got to play alongside his peers, something he rarely if ever gets to do."



"My whole family can explore and play together. I can't tell you how grateful I am for this opportunity."



Creating systemic change in classrooms for at-risk students

CME Early Math Explorers

In partnership with Erikson Institute's Early Math Collaborative, the Museum provides early math learning professional development opportunities for childcare providers. By training educators to recognize and utilize opportunities to introduce basic math concepts in informal learning environments such as the Museum, we help prepare young children for success in mathematics later in their education. Field trips to the Museum with their families encourage additional parental engagement in math concepts.



Allstate Kids Matter

The Allstate Kids Matter Program boasts two key components: bringing the Museum's interactive workshops to academically at-risk children, and bringing those children with their educators, parents, and caregivers to the Museum for field trips and special events. Sharing experiences as a family helps create patterns between caregiver and child that can enhance learning throughout life. Participation in special events will also allow the Museum to educate and empower parents from high-need neighborhoods to rediscover the power of play with their children.

STEAM PROGRAMS

STEAM Carts

High-quality STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) experiences are vital for young children. To address this important need in our community, the Museum is creating exciting STEAM opportunities so young children can explore these concepts in developmentally appropriate ways. To facilitate activities, Museum educators designed two custom-made STEAM carts that travel throughout the Museum engaging visitors in interactive STEAM activities.

Underwritten by HSBC



**SURPRISINGLY
SERIOUS
ABOUT PLAY**



**JUMP START
THE NEXT
GENERATION**

Photo courtesy of Anixter

Tinkering Tuesdays

This program encourages children to do what they do best - let their curiosity take over! In partnership with technical experts and engineers from Anixter, activities were developed to encourage children to explore the world of engineering by building machines and creating processes. These unique activities are sure to inspire future scientists, technology experts, engineers, and mathematicians.

Underwritten by Anixter



Science Sleuths

Science Sleuths lets children become pint-sized scientists as they study evidence, make predictions, and test their hypotheses with the guidance of a Museum educator or local professional. Through this type of special scientific inquiry, children learn to conduct their own investigations and how to find solutions.

Underwritten by Astellas Pharma USA Foundation

Math Counts

This program introduces children to the wonderful world of math in a fun, informative way. Participants enjoy a special story time before engaging in fun activities that deal with the basic building blocks of math: sets and patterns, counting, numerosity, geometry – even algebraic thinking!

Underwritten by Wells Fargo Foundation



**DISCOVER
NATURE'S WAY
OF TEACHING**

Artists in Residence

The Museum was founded on the unshakeable belief that every child deserves to discover the transformational power of creativity and imagination. Renovated in September 2014, the Museum's *Adventures in Art* studio is designed to foster children's inherent creativity. This hands-on, multipurpose visual arts studio has welcomed two Artists-in-Residence and looks forward to partnering with other local artists to interact with young children and help them explore their creativity in working with new and different media. This year, Shannon Lee Molter worked with guests to create "*Beneath the Garden Floor*," a magical, tactile version of the ecosystem underfoot.

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We would not be able to achieve our goals without the support of our generous funders. We thank the following donors for their investment in our work and in the futures of all children.

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Emily Reynolds

Kirby Richards

Kendra Wallace

AUXILIARY BOARDS

as of June 2015

Program Advisory Council

The Program Advisory Council of Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago provides input on education issues to Museum's education and exhibit departments, facilitates collaborations with schools and other community organizations, and evaluates the Museum programs, exhibits and educational services.

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Literacy Coordinator, Academy for Urban School Leadership

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One and Only

Luz Maria Solis
Civic Volunteer and Leader

Liza Sullivan

Through Play

Sheridan Turner
Kohl Children's Museum

Kendra Wallace
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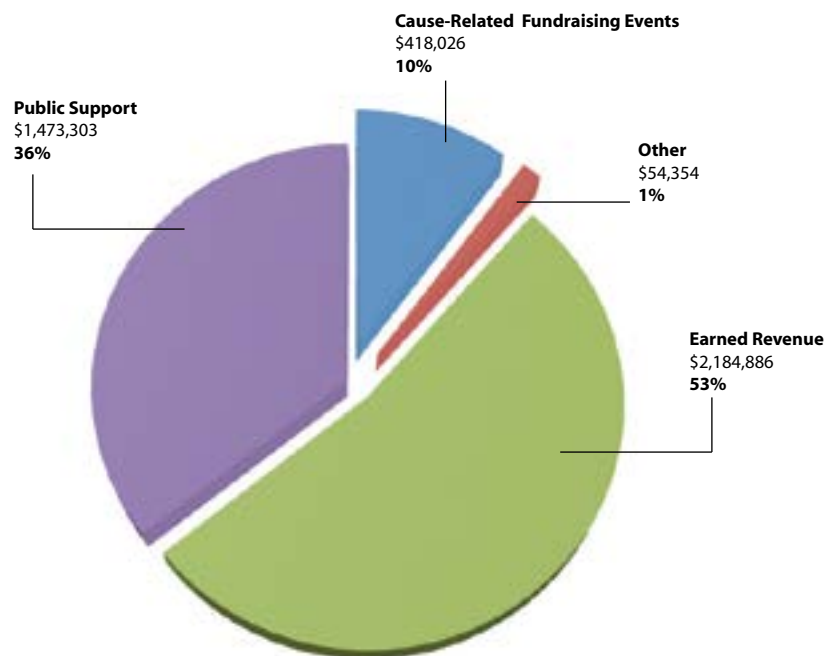
Heather Warren, Ph.D.
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Joyce Weiner
Ounce of Prevention

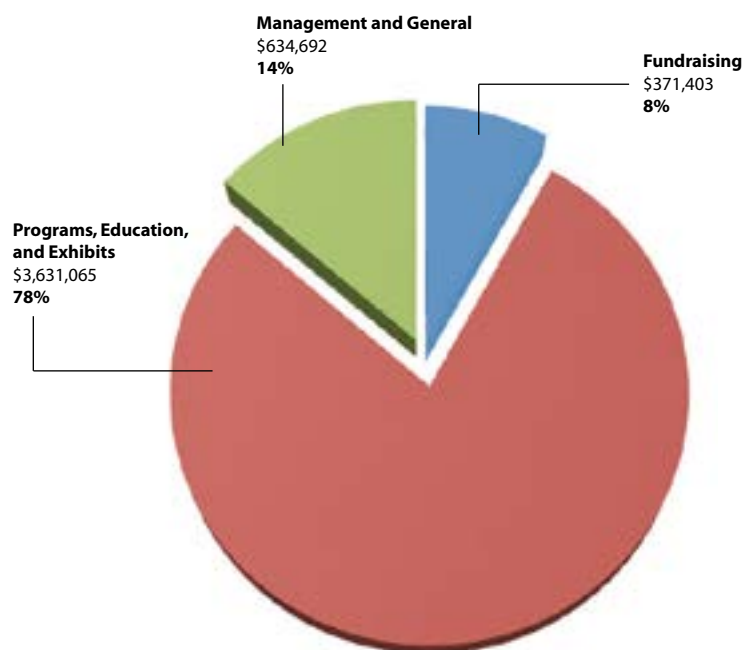
Lana Weiner
Gertrude B. Nielsen Child Care and Learning Center

Molly Witten, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist

REVENUES



EXPENSES



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 development@kcmgc.org.

CHILDHOOD DOESN'T GET A SECOND CHANCE



**KOHL CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM**

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