Play Is

**Mission:**
Sparking children’s learning through play.

**Foundational Beliefs:**
- Early learning is the foundation for lifelong learning.
- Families are our children’s first teachers.
- All children deserve a time and place to be children.
- Diverse perspectives enrich children’s lives.
- Play is learning.
A child enters the anthill. She is in an ant costume and fully convinced she is one. She crawls through tunnels, finds the Queen ant, and shares the ladder with her fellow ants as they climb up, up. This child is using her imagination to connect to the natural world, one that could lead to a love of science in school, or simply hours of happy entertainment in the backyard.

This experience and hundreds like it take place daily at Minnesota Children’s Museum. Are they important? What do they add to the well-being of a child and a family?

In the past ten years, neuroscience has confirmed what educators have long contended: the first years of life are essential to future learning. Through the hands-on interaction of play, children develop important foundational skills, expand their problem-solving abilities and spark a passion for knowledge.

At Minnesota Children’s Museum, children learn in many ways. Minnesota Children’s Museum produces programs and exhibits that transcend age and experience, and empower children to set their own pace.

Minnesota Children’s Museum is uniquely positioned to help parents learn about the needs and development of their children. Our fortified relationships with external resources help further educate and care for children.

In this relaxed, welcoming environment, parents, family members and caregivers can connect with children in meaningful ways and create lasting memories. They can learn something new and enjoy the luxury of becoming part of the play.

We wish to express our most heartfelt thanks to the generous donors who understand the importance of play and support our work. By investing in Minnesota Children’s Museum exhibits, programs and outreach, you are strengthening family and community bonds. You are building on a foundation of compassion, curiosity and civic-mindedness. By celebrating the value of childhood and play, you are nurturing tomorrow’s most creative thinkers and leaders.

Martha Dayton - Board Chair

Sarah Caruso - President, Minnesota Children’s Museum
Educational
Expertise: Raising the Bar

Behind the fun and games at Minnesota Children’s Museum is the depth of the Museum staff’s educational expertise and its adherence to high standards.

Emily Beckstrom, Early Childhood Education consultant, recently completed an objective assessment of the Museum’s early childhood offerings using two objective sets of standards: Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) and the National Children’s Museum Standards.

Findings concluded that Minnesota Children’s Museum has an impressive range of exhibits, programs and partnerships that directly align with ECIP indicators. The Museum is the third major institution to use the National Children’s Museum Standards for program evaluation – placing it on the cutting edge of current practices in the field.

These findings have inspired a new vision for the future of the Museum’s early childhood programs, and identified opportunities for evolution and improvement of exhibits, programs and community partnerships. Following these initiatives, the Museum is poised to significantly increase its capacity to serve young children and their adult caregivers.

“The fact that Minnesota Children’s Museum wanted to use these sophisticated protocols clearly demonstrates its desire to go beyond excellence, to be proactive and move into a true position of leadership,” says Beckstrom.
Join the Fun:

Everyone Is Welcome

The Museum’s community outreach efforts and long-lasting relationships ensured that all visitors, regardless of ability to pay, experienced the importance of play. Through four different Access programs, 31% of all Museum visitors were admitted at free or reduced admission during fiscal year 2006.

- During Target® Free 3rd Sunday, 30,000 children and their adult guests enjoyed all the Museum’s opportunities to learn through play.

- Play is important work for 70,285 elementary and preschool students, teachers and chaperones whose visit to the Museum was made possible through reduced admission rates for schools and groups that serve economically disadvantaged children and families.

- Access memberships allowed 1,995 low-income families to enjoy free membership at the Museum. Family Nights provided a cost-free way for families participating in Ramsey County, Hennepin County and Anoka/Washington County Head Start programs to get acquainted with the Museum during an evening of play and get an Access membership.

- Passport to Play, available for check out at the Saint Paul and Dakota County libraries, provided free admission for 11,186 visitors.

With more than 1,000 volunteer hours logged, Spark Cart veteran Tom McKeever joins in the face-painting fun.
Community Faces
In August 2005, the Museum received a $150,000 grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to fund its Community Faces and Places initiative. This initiative established deep and enduring relationships with culturally rich communities in West St. Paul. Through its collaboration with the West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO), the Museum opened doors and built reciprocal bridges between the neighborhood and our organization, enabling families, projects and the value of play to move freely among the Museum and West Side community.

“They were unstoppable in their determination to develop innovative ways to diversify their audience for the greater good of the community,” says Joe Spencer, one of the original WSCO organizers. “With a population that’s 37% Latino, we saw it as a win-win situation and that’s proven to be true.”

Funding from Best Buy Children’s Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation, together with the IMLS grant, allowed the Museum to revitalize the Our World gallery with input from its West Side partners. Our World’s Community Gallery showcases exhibited work by young residents of Saint Paul’s West Side community; artwork by students in an artist-in-residency program; and a video created by a West Side Hmong dance group. The new Studio Express sets the stage for children to explore cooperation, respect and technology as they star in their own music video.
Winning Program:

Supporting Healthy Communities

Minnesota Children’s Museum received the 2006 Association of Children’s Museums Promising Practice Award presented by MetLife Foundation for the *Wakanheza* program. The *Wakanheza* program was initiated by Ramsey County to strengthen and enhance Museum staff interaction with children, youth and families in a peaceful, supportive way. *Wakanheza* is the Dakota word for “child”—the closest English translation is “sacred being.”

Learning is easy for children when they have the opportunity for “hands-on” play.

The award honors innovative management and programming practices that support healthy kids, families and communities. Minnesota Children’s Museum’s program provided staff training to respond to and diffuse difficult adult–child situations in a non–judgmental, calming manner. The training has been so successful that the Museum and Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health continue to co–present the *Wakanheza* program to other agencies and organizations.
Exhibits: Building Fun on a Solid Foundation

Minnesota Children’s Museum is the largest producer of children’s museum traveling exhibits in the country. The Museum’s exhibits are regularly recognized in the press. The May 29, 2006 issue of Newsweek featured two exhibits built by Minnesota Children’s Museum for their excellence.

The Museum is one of a handful of children’s museums that develops, designs and constructs its exhibits in-house. In addition to our five permanent galleries, the Museum has created four traveling exhibits.

Minnesota Children’s Museum was recently licensed by Universal Studios to produce a Curious George™ exhibit. No small feat, the Museum competed against many others for the opportunity. “Ultimately, it was about their experience and passion,” says Cindy Chang, Vice President of Publishing, NBC Universal.
Duck was a neutral party, so he brought the ultimatum to the cows.
Minnesota Children’s Museum is deeply grateful for the financial contributions of its donors. Without this support, the Museum’s work would not be possible.

Martha Meyers, a donor and former Museum board president says, “Our children need champions and I’ve never been involved with any organization more dedicated to the welfare and well-being of kids than Minnesota Children’s Museum.”

It was always clear to Meyers that the Museum wanted, more than anything, to be taken seriously. “And they’ve certainly achieved that,” Meyers says. However, with this success she sees a critical need for additional funding as the Museum deepens its community partnerships, and develops cutting-edge exhibits and programs.

“Forty-two percent of the Museum’s budget is from donors,” Meyers says. She sees the importance of early childhood education and its ability to open doors in life as indisputable. “Now neuroscience has caught up with what organizations like Minnesota Children’s Museum seem to have always known and what I’ve always held as a personal belief,” she says. “There is wonderful learning that takes place by doing.”
2006 Annual Fund

Individual Donors
We thank all of our individual donors for their personal commitment and generosity to our 2006 Annual Fund. Your support is essential as we work to reach more children and families with our mission of sparking children’s learning through play.

Children’s Circle
We are especially grateful to the following individuals who formed our 2006 Children’s Circle by giving a gift of $1,000 or more to the 2006 Annual Fund.

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Minnesota Children’s Museum extends a heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers, who contributed 11,392 hours during FY06.

Thanks to the parents, children and Brian Scott Holman Photography for their time and effort during our annual report photographic session.
Statement of Financial Position June 30, 2006

**Assets**
- Cash and Cash Equivalents $1,492,547
- Accounts Receivable 62,566
- Pledges and Grants Receivable 1,147,605
- Prepaid Expenses 161,437
- Investments 4,891,338
- Land, Building and Equipment, Net 7,654,511

**Total Assets** $15,410,004

**Liabilities**
- Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses $256,167
- Deferred Revenue 685,650

**Total Liabilities** 941,817

**Net Assets**
- Unrestricted - Undesignated 905,410
- Unrestricted - Designated* 1,612,708
- Temporarily Restricted 7,761,241
- Permanently Restricted 4,188,828

**Total Net Assets** 14,468,187

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** $15,410,004

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Statement of Activity Year Ended June 30, 2006

**Support and Revenue**
- Grants and Contributions $2,561,605
- Museum Admissions 1,078,139
- Memberships 613,600
- Program Income 700,087
- Investment Income 509,878
- Other Income 449,672

**Total Support and Revenue** $5,912,981

**Expenses**
- Program $3,867,072
- Administrative 1,332,293
- Fundraising 345,473

**Total Expenses** $5,544,838

**Change in Net Assets** 368,143

**Net Assets, Beginning of Year** 14,100,044
**Net Assets, End of Year** 14,468,187

*Unrestricted-Designated Net Assets includes amounts designated by the Board of Directors for the following purposes:
- Fixed Asset Replacement 550,000
- Cash Operating Reserve 275,000
- Endowment Cumulative Earnings 787,708
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