

365(*ish*) days of **PLAY IN MOTION**



GREAT RIVER CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

OPENING DAY TO TODAY IMPACT

JUNE 2025 — MAY 2026



OUR MISSION IS TO **SPARK,** **STRENGTHEN** **& BUILD**

Great River Children's Museum exists to shine a bright light on the power of play, sparking learning, strengthening families, and building community connections **throughout Central Minnesota (& beyond).**

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Countless Moments of
curiosity, creativity, and connection.

Guests from **477 MN Zip codes**
have walked through GRCM's doors!

Members have visited **23,000+ times!** **3,300 Infants**
under 12 mo. have visited!
Sparking learning from birth.

& the momentum is just beginning!

I'd like to be the first to say
WOW!
WHAT A FIRST YEAR.

If you spend even a few minutes inside the museum, you will inevitably witness something magical: a child poised over an exhibit, brow furrowed in concentration, when suddenly their face lights up. Their eyes widen, a smile breaks out, and you can practically see the spark ignite. It's the unmistakable "eureka" moment. Even more magical is watching the caring adult of that child witness the beauty of what is unfolding before them.

Pride. Gratitude. Joy.
It's all in their eyes and in their smile.

This past year, we have had the profound privilege of watching that very same spark catch fire across our entire organization.

Great River Children's Museum's first year hasn't just been about opening up our doors and exhibits; it's been about watching a community and a team grow, learn, and

connect in real time. Just like the children we serve, we have experimented, leaned into new challenges, and discovered new things about ourselves and each other. Together, we have watched a collective eureka moment unfold across Central Minnesota as families from all walks of life have found **a shared space to play, explore, and bond.**

Looking ahead, the future feels limitless. This first year is just the foundation for what is to come. As we move forward into year two and beyond, our commitment remains steadfast: to work hand-in-hand with you to foster a regional culture rooted in togetherness, empathy, and a broad perspective of the world around us.

If you look at my eyes, I'm sure you'll see the pride of witnessing every new moment of discovery. Thank you for learning with us, growing with us, and believing in **the power of play.**
We are so grateful to be exploring our potential together.



Cassie Miles, CEO

Cassie

**SEE THE INSIDE
BACK COVER
For Our a Snapshot
of Our Strategic Plan**

 **SMILE FILES**

Watch for these smile-worthy stories of impact, connection, and community we've been lucky to catch!



PLAY BY THE NUMBERS

This past year, we've been learning and growing as we capture the impact happening within our walls every day, reflecting the curiosity, creativity, connection, and community we're building together.

101,000+

Playful Guests

In JUST the first 11 months!

Including 1,200+

Community members hosted for events, tours, meetings & more!

1,264

Memberships

Enjoyed by families with

4,455

Total individuals, not including free passes for infants under 12 mo.



≈ 160

Birthday Parties

Celebrating their big day with learning and play!



319+

Sip n' Play Guests

Attended one of our two adult-night events!



1,400

MLK Day Visitors

Welcomed as our guests for a free day of play!





Schools from **40 Cities** IN 15 COUNTIES TRAVELED OUR WAY!



In just half a school year **We Welcomed:**



65+ Schools Excited to Explore



4,200+ Students With **1,400+ Grown-Ups**

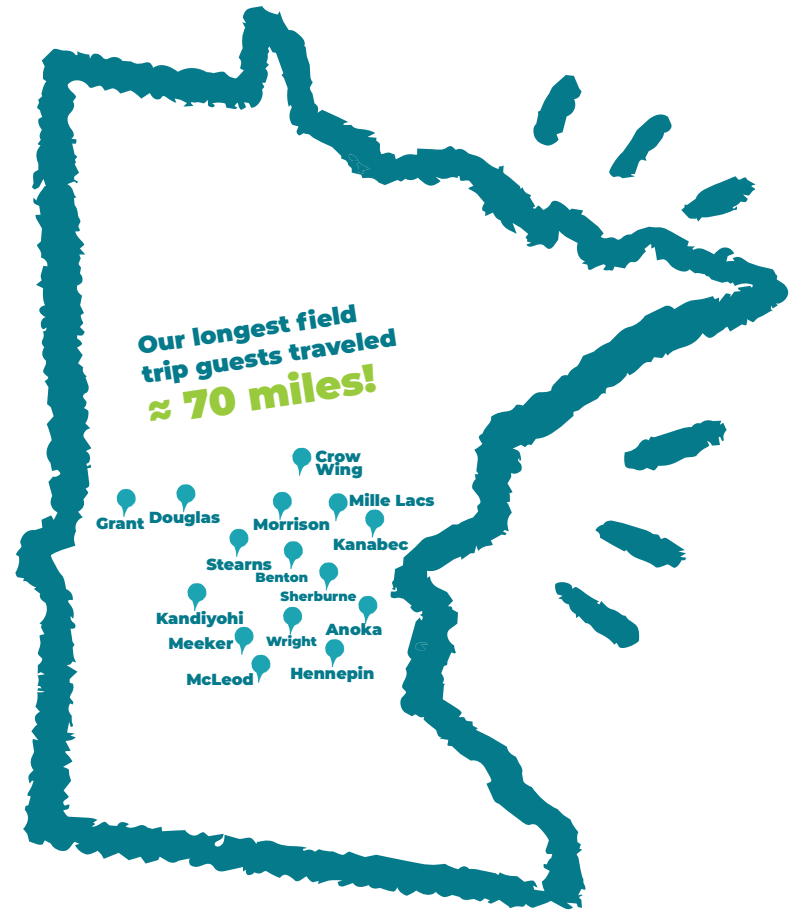
That's thousands of footsteps making big memories together!



All Field Trips are Discounted

Thanks to grant support from the Minnesota Department of Education and the generosity of donors!

Total value \$54,835



ACCESS FOR ALL

Cost Should Never Be a Barrier to Play.

Great River Children's Museum is built to be a welcoming place where all children and their caregivers can play, learn, and explore together. The **Path to Play** fund helps ensure cost is never a barrier—covering field trips, classes, camps, memberships, and day passes for families in need.

This includes

“It’s the things we play with and the people who help us play that make a great difference in our lives.”

Fred Rogers



Sensory friendly times and activities



Specially designed programs to meet the needs of our shared communities



Scholarships to offset memberships & admission costs





Opening Doors to Play

Through donor supported access initiatives, families and groups can experience the museum at free or reduced admission rates — helping ensure more children can learn, play, and explore together, regardless of financial barriers.



• Museums for All

- Through the Museums for All national access program, GRMC
- offers \$5 admission for families receiving SNAP/EBT benefits,
- helping make museum experiences more accessible.

SINCE OPENING,

12,000+

Individuals accessed the museum through this program!

Total value \$110,115

• Community Access Passes

- Provide free access to local youth and family
- serving organizations, ensuring equitable
- opportunities to learn and play.

SINCE OPENING,

275+

Tickets shared with 12 area non-profit partners.

399+

Tickets donated in support of community causes.

Total value \$9,436



Your support can help even more families experience the

POWER OF PLAY.

Scan to donate or learn more.



SMILE FILE #1

A child spent nearly an hour building a structure in the Tube Tower Teaching Kitchen activity, testing, rebuilding, adjusting.

When it finally stood tall, they turned to a caregiver and said:

“I didn’t think I could do it... but I just kept trying.”

THE PEOPLE

Who Make it Possible



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Cassie Miles

CEO

Jon Noyes

VP of Operations

Lacey Solheid

Director of Development

Dave Kaczor

Director of Education
& Engagement

Nancy Riens

Operations & Guest
Experience Manager

Cooper M.

Front of House
Supervisor

Kate H.

Play Team Lead

PLAY TEAM

Nimo A.

Amelia B.

Lex C.*

Ian C.

Samantha C.*

Violet D.

Megan F.*

Lillian F.*

Rachel G.

Tierney H.

Elliott H.

Cynthia W.

C.J. L.*

Eva M.*

Milo R.

Macy R.

Theresa S.

Mary O.*

Hailey S.*

Shukri S.

Najmo T.

Kendal T.

Annabelle T.

Natalie S.*

Leah S.*

Emily V.*

Mason W.

CeCe W.

Cherie Y.

*Supports

Admissions &
Guest Services

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2025)

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Cultural Sensitivity & Health
Equity Supervisor, CentraCare

Becky Coborn

Community Advocate &
Former Parent Educator

Jane Ellison

Early Childhood Mental
Health Specialist

Heidi L. Everett

Retired
Professor of Strategic
Communications, St. Cloud
State University

Kelly Gully

CPA, Central Minnesota
Diagnostic

Sahur Hussein

RN, St. Cloud Hospital

Dr. Vince Miles

Licensed Psychologist, Miles
Psychological Services, LLC

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Pediatrician, CentraCare

Mardi Noyes

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Bid Specialist, Entrust Corporation

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Attorneys at Law

John Waletzko

General Manager, Rice Companies

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Buddy King

Community Outreach Manager,
Paramount Center for the Arts

Sara McKeever

Parent Educator, Early Childhood
and Family Education, District 742

Glen Palm

Professor Emeritus of Early Childhood &
Family Studies, St. Cloud State University

Tom Groner

GeoComm, Founder & Board Member

INCOMING (2026) BOARD MEMBERS

Vicky Welty

Office Manager, SCR, Inc.

Brady DeGagne

Director of Training &
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Clubs of Central Minnesota

Tyrone Reynolds

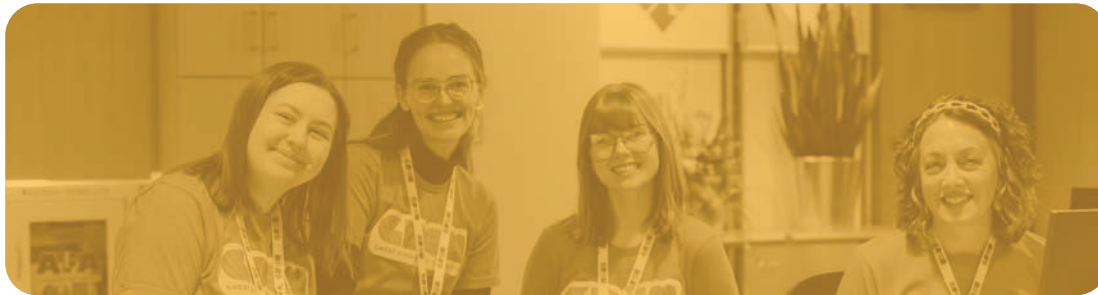
Executive Director, YouthSet

Lacey Lokken

Director, American Indian
Center at St. Cloud State University



**WONDER
GROWS WHEN
WE BUILD
TOGETHER.**



GLEN PALM POWER OF PLAY AWARD

CONGRATULATIONS GLEN PALM, OUR 2026 RECIPIENT!

The Glen Palm Power of Play Award, named after and first awarded to Glen Palm in 2026, honors individuals who **embody the spirit and vision** of Great River Children's Museum by championing the transformative role of play in building strong children, families, and communities across Central Minnesota.

We are honored to recognize Glen as the inaugural recipient of this award and celebrate his passion, vision, and lasting impact in **inspiring the power of play.**



OUR Capital Donors

Supporting GRM with
start-up costs from 2020
through December 31, 2024.

\$100,000+

BCI Construction
Bremer Bank
Capital One
Charlotte Stephens
Country Hearth Breads
Don Helgeson & Sue Shepard
Dr. John & Joyce Matsuura
Main Street Economic
Revitalization
Minnesota Arts &
Cultural Heritage Fund
Minnwest Bank
Norman C. Skalicky
Foundation
Pat & Carrie Lynch
Sysco
Zaun Family Fund

\$20,000+

Anonymous
Bob & Lysa Neitzke
Central MN Community
Foundation
Charles Ehlen
David Mohs
Dick & Mimi Bitzan Family

Farmers & Merchants
State Bank Fund
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GLT Architects
Jeff & Melinda Gau
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Margie Schlangen
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Michael & Paulina Coborn
Microbiologics
Minnesota Department
of Education
Morgan Family Foundation
Ruis Consulting Group
Scheels
Stearns Bank
United Way of
Central Minnesota
Xcel Energy Foundation

\$10,000+

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Dorothy Gorecki
Greg & Janet Reigstad
Heidi Everett & Emil Towner
John & Mary Weitzel

Louise Muggli
Optimist Club 35130
Central Minnesota Noon
Robert Keck
St. Cloud Ear Nose
& Throat Clinic
St. Cloud Area Golden
Gloves Boxing Inc.
Ted & Andrea Truitt

\$5,000+

Albertville Lions Club
Cathy & Darren Juilfs
Central Minnesota Arts Board
David & Gay Noack
Deb & Larry Campbell
DLMC Foundation
Erickson Electric
Janet & Tim Wensman Family
JoAnn & Bob Thueringer
Lions Club Sauk
Rapids Tinville
Lions Club Monticello
Nicholas & Bernice Reuter
Nurturing Possibilities
Optimist Club 35131
Saint Cloud
Stephen & Beth Cragle
Vicky & Pat Welty
Vince & Cassie Miles
Western Pacific John
Palm Family

\$1,000+

Joel & Aimee Miron
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Lathrop GPM
Linda & Jim McNelly
Lyndsie & Matthew Erlandson
Lynn Miller
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Norie and Bob
Mahowald Fund of
Central Minnesota
Community Foundation
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& Toni Reif
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Sahur Hussein
& Mohamed Hagi Abdi
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Sandra Reese
Scott & Reyne Roeder
St. Cloud Reading Room Society
St. Cloud Surgical Center
Steve & Joan Vincent
Tom & Sandy Lanz
Triple Crown Gaming
Warner Family Fund
Wolters Kluwer



\$500+

Anonymous
Beaver Island
Brewing Company
Bob Caddy
Bonita & John Benschoter
Brian & Diane Smith
Centrasota Oral Surgeons
Charity Clients of
The Giving Block
Cheryl Running
Cindy Lanoue-Sauer
& Steve Sauer
Clare & Brandon
Richards
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Design Electric

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Santiago Lions Club Inc.
Sara & Darren McKeever
Stearns County Soil & Water
Conservation District
Steven & Linda Saupe
Stuart Rothenberg
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Tony Jarousek Agency
Trobec's Bus Service

Two Men & A Truck
W | R Home Company
Walmart
Whitney & Josh Orn
Zimmerman American
Legion 560

\$200+

Aloysius & Mary Quick
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American Legion 292
Richmond
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DeGraaf Financial
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Ellory Hollingsworth
Farmings Lions Club
Home School Association
Hour Glass Cleaners
In memory of Sean Zadoo
Jake Anderson
Jaycees Saint Joseph
Jayne & Tommy Balicky
Terry & Karen Bobeldyk

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Joan Blaska
Joel & Susan Shobe
John Miller &
Sandy Bot-Miller
Jon & Joy Ruis
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Norton Dando
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Kimberly Kron
Kyle & Natasha Chapman
Laure Fuerstenberg
Laurie & John Tritabaugh
Lexann Reischl
Lindsey Kramer
Lions Club Saint Cloud
Marcia Summers
Mary Gilles
Melrose Lions Club
Mike & Judy Murray
Moose Lodge 1400 St. Cloud
New Munich Lions
Paige Christensen
Patrick Henry & Pat Welter
Phillip & Rose Kunkel
Rice Area Sportsmen
Rick & Joanna Harig Fund
Robert & Karen Bellmont
Rockville Lions Club
Ronald & Barbara McKeever
Sandra Hansen
Sara & Richard Deering
Sarah & Stuart Young
St Cloud Area Retired
Educators
Sue & John Weitz
Thomas Allen
VFW 6992 Rapids



Thanks for
your support
**FROM
SPROUT
TO FINISH!**



OUR 2025 ANNUAL Donors

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community organization, we rely on donations and support from individuals, corporations, and foundations like these to **keep our mission alive.**

3M

- Addie Mohler
- AIS Planning
- Alecia Miller
- Alex W. Bigley
- Amanda Strobel
- American Legion 261
- Frederick A. Metcalf
- Andrea Lundeen
- Angela Dunn
- Ann Daniels Healing Salon
- Anonymous
- Ash & Ryan Diaz
- Automotive Parts Headquarters Inc.
- Backwards Bread Baking Co.
- Barb & Rollie Anderson
- BCI Construction
- Beaver Island Brewing Company
- Becca & Ben Gill
- Ben & Kylie Jacobsen
- Best Western Kelly Inn Plus
- Beth Lovdahl
- Bill & Edward Martin-Chaffee
- Blackberry Ridge Golf Club
- Blacklight Adventures

- Blattner Company
- Blue Line Sports Bar & Grill
- Bonita & John Benschoter
- Bonita & Tom Stachowski
- Bonnie Wenker
- Bradbury Stamm Construction
- Brittany and Tom Walter
- Brittany Haugen
- Bruce Broman & Evelyn Erickson
- Carol A. Hamilton
- Cassandra Novak
- Cathie & Fred Wemlinger
- Cathy & Darren Juilfs
- CentraCare
- Central Minnesota Community Foundation
- Chanhassen Dinner Theater
- Charlotte Stephens
- Cheryl Running
- Chris Reicher
- Christopher & Jasmyn Rice
- Coborn Family Foundation
- Costco Wholesale
- Country Hearth Breads
- Cross Works Foundation
- Cynthia Laudenbach

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- David Ellison
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- Debra Carlson & Rick Wittwer
- Delta Kappa Gamma Society
- Desi & Nicholas Murphy
- Desiree Fleck-Caruthers
- Diane & Brian Smith
- Diane Decker
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- Dick & Mimi Bitzan
- Docia Hogan
- Donna Kuhl & John Mahowald
- Donna Scholer
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- Eileen Bitzan
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- Forever Young Two Wellness + Skincare
- Gabriel Media
- Gary & Jane Marsden
- Gerhardson Chiropractic
- Gilleland Chevrolet
- Glen Palm & Jane Ellison
- GLTArchitects
- Grand Casino Mille Lacs
- Granite Financial LLC
- Granite Partners Foundation of MN
- Great Lakes Aquarium
- GREAT Theatre
- Greater Saint Cloud Development Corporation
- Green Thumb Etc.
- Greg & Janet Reigstad
- H & S Heating & Air Conditioning
- Hailey Thielen
- Hands on Healing Massage Therapy



SMILE FILE #2

At closing time, a dad shared something simple, but powerful...

“That ‘Hooray and Away Parade’... that’s the nicest way anyone has ever asked us to leave anywhere.”

Handyman Hardware
Hanna Lord
Hansen & Company Woodworks
Heidi Everett & Emil Towner
Hibaaq Ibrahim
Holiday Inn & Suites
Iron Street Distillery
J.F. Kruse Jewelers
Jack & Wanita Parker
Jan Friederichs
Janell & Morris Kurtz
Janet & Andy Ruth
Janet and Tim Wensman
Family Fund of CMCF
Jason Miller
Jayson Samson
Jeanne Hoodecheck
Jeff & Melinda Gau
Jennifer Bibeau
Jennifer Thompson
Jerry & Connie Von Korff
Jesse Lipson
Joan Blaska
Joanne & Chris Kudrna
Joel & Susan Shobe
Joel R. & Debra Duray
John & Cherie McDowall
John & Joyce Matsuura
John E Palm
Jon & Mardi Noyes
Jon Monsour
Jonathan Fribley & Mary Dwyer
Judith Lyons
Jules' Bistro
Julian & Susan Luetmer
Karen Durant
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KAREN KRUSE
Kathy Gerdts-Senger
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Kinder Coffee Lab LLC
KJohnson Construction Inc.
Knead Relief Massage
Korppi Coffee + Bakeshop
Kron & Erlandson Family Dentistry
Kwik Trip
Lacey Schirmers
Landwehr Construction Inc.

Lathrop GPM LLP
Leah Stanton
Leyda Antunez
Libbie Brunsvold
Lions Club Becker
Lions Club Monticello
Lisa Plzak
Liz Madsen
Louise Muggli
Lumber One
Lynn McClelland
Macy Grace McDowall Fund
Mantra Salon
Margaret Pryately
Mary Ann Padgett
Mary C. Ness
Mary E. Gilles
Mary Erickson
Mary Goenner
McDowall Company
Melisa Tenvorde
Melrose Lions Club
Microbiologics
Mike & Karel Helgeson
Minnesota Historical Society
Minnesota Timberwolves
Minnesota Twins Baseball
Minnesota Zoo
Minnwest Bank
Minser Chiropractic
Mónica Segura-Schwartz
& Troy Schwartz
Moose Lodge 1400 Saint Cloud
Natasha & Kyle Chapman
Nicholas & Bernice Reuter
Olde Brick House
Opal Mattila
Optimist Club 35130
Central Minnesota Noon
Optimist Club 35131 Saint Cloud
Ozzie Mayers
Pantown Brewing Company
Paramount Center for the Arts
Patricia Dorsher
Patty Dockendorf
Patty Gaetz
Paulette Benson
PCI
Phillip & Rose Kunkel
Phyllis & Bill Lacroix

Poppy Salon
Proviant Group
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Rice Companies
Rick and Helga Bauerly
Foundation
Robert & Mary Karen Bellmont
Robert Willhite
Rockville Lions Club
Ronald & Barbara McKeever
Saint Cloud Area Convention
& Visitors Bureau
Saint Cloud Refrigeration
Saint Cloud State University
Saint Paul Saints
Sandra Q. Williams
Sandy Bot-Miller & John Miller
Sara Grachek
Sara Lipsiea
Scheels
Science Museum of Minnesota
Scott Klettke
Shanti Yoga
Shauna & Darin Seaman
Simonson Lumber
Skatin' Place
Skip Kern
Spice of Life Tea Shop
Split Rock Studios
St. Cloud Area Family YMCA
St. Cloud Country Club
St. Cloud Rox Baseball Club
St. Cloud Subaru
St. Cloud Surgical Center
Stacy & Jake Miller
Starbucks
State Farm Kyle Hedtke Agency
Stearns Bank
Stearns History Museum
Steve & Linda Saupe
Steve Kivisto
Sue Shepard
Sue Wahl Storbeck
Taryn Weibel
The Mexican Village
Thomas Allen
Todd & Kyoko Zaun
Tom & Janet Grones



SMILE FILE #3

A grandmother shared that her granddaughter, a young girl on the autism spectrum, visits the museum weekly and often struggles to make it to the top of the climbing area. But one day, surrounded by strangers cheering her on, she did it.

The room erupted in celebration.

“I’ve never seen anything like that... people just came together for her.”

Tom & Joyce Schlough
Tom & Sandy Lanz
Toni Reif & Paul Wenner
Triple Crown Gaming
Troy Cameron
UBS Financial Services Inc.
Rivier Advisors
United Way of
Central Minnesota
VFW 6992 Rapids
Vicky & Pat Welty
Vince & Cassie Miles
Wells Fargo Community
Care Grant Program
Zimmerman American
Legion Post 560

**DONORS
HELP OUR
MISSION
GROW.**



Say “Hey!”

To these GRCM Members!



MEET A MEMBER

That's amazing! →

Fun Fact Alert!

Our most active member family has visited the museum

60+ TIMES

SINCE OPENING

The V. Family

The V. family became members as soon as the museum opened, and it's **quickly become a favorite place for quality time together.**

Whether they stop in on a rainy day or make a spontaneous visit while driving by, their two kids love the **hands-on play, creative freedom, and nonstop smiles.**



The N. Family (in their own words!)

“From our first visit, I knew that the Great River Children’s Museum was **going to be an important part of our lives.** The space is safe, clean, and cheerful every time we visit, and the **staff has never been anything but excellent.**”

The incredibly thoughtful design makes each room accommodating for the different developmental stages of our kids, and it has been a joy to watch them play with familiar exhibits in new ways as they grow and learn. I will be forever grateful to have access to a space like this so close to our home.”

PROGRESS In Motion

Our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan



This three-year strategic plan reflects Great River Children's Museum's commitment to strengthening community, deepening belonging, and creating meaningful experiences for children and families. Scan to watch our progress unfold on our website.

Growing Roots For Tomorrow

Financial Sustainability

A museum built to last. Just like a tree needs deep roots to grow tall, we are focusing on building a rock-solid foundation for the museum's future. By reducing old debts, opening up creative new ways to fund our mission, and growing a healthy rainy-day reserve and endowment, we are making sure the doors of wonder stay open for your children and your children's children.

A Place for Everyone to Belong

Community

Reflecting the beautiful tapestry of our community. Every child and caring adult should walk through our doors and feel a warm sense of belonging. We are actively cultivating a culture where all identities, cultures, lived experiences, and abilities see themselves reflected in our staff, our volunteers, our leadership, and our exhibits. By building intentional tools for inclusivity, we are ensuring Great River Children's Museum is a safe, joyful, and welcoming home for every single family we serve.

Creating Unforgettable Moments

Guest Experience

Delivering joy, discovery, and value at every turn. Our truest measure of success is a child who doesn't want to leave at the end of the day, and a caring adult who can't wait to come back. We are obsessed with making your time at the museum seamless, interactive, and deeply meaningful. When our members utilize their passes and our guests are connecting through play and leaving with smiles on their faces, we know we are delivering exactly what matters most to our community.

Playing with Purpose & Connection

Deepening Programming

Bringing exhibits to life through shared values. An exhibit is just the beginning; our programming is where the magic truly sparks. By partnering with local organizations, schools, and cultural groups who share our core beliefs, we are and will design activities and programs that deepen community connections. Every event and activity will breathe life into our values of empathy, togetherness, and a broader perspective of the world.

Learning, Growing, & Getting Better Every Day

Excellence in Operations:

A culture of continuous, mindful improvement. Children learn through trial, error, and joyful repetition...and so do we! We are committed to building an organization that always strives for excellence. By polishing our internal processes, finding smart efficiencies in our daily workflows, and upgrading our systems, we run a tighter, more effective museum. Best of all, we do it in a way that never sacrifices the heart, soul, and values of Great River Children's Museum's mission.

OUR BELIEFS

- **Play is a powerful factor** in children's healthy development, connection with others, and learning
- Caring adult-child relationships support children and youth while **strengthening families**
- **Access and inclusion** are vital in providing children and families of all backgrounds opportunities to play and engage their potential
- Diversity and differences **enrich lives**, expand understanding, and build a more connected region
- Community engagement, partnerships, collaborations, and networks build regional capacity to **address complex issues**
- The natural world serves as a source of **inspiration, knowledge, and self-discovery**
- Childhood is a time for children to grow, discover themselves, and **have fun**
- **A strong sense of place** deepens attachment, grows shared traditions, and strengthens community

OUR VISION

The Museum, its partners, and stakeholders envision a welcoming, flourishing Greater St. Cloud where all children look forward to a future filled with expanding opportunities because:

- The community **values play** as essential to all children's learning and wellbeing
- Families of all backgrounds connect around **shared interests** in their children
- The community prepares its children for a more **culturally diverse world**
- The community recognizes that it thrives when its **children thrive**



**GREAT RIVER
CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM**

110 8th Avenue South • Saint Cloud, MN 56301

GreatRiverCM.org