

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

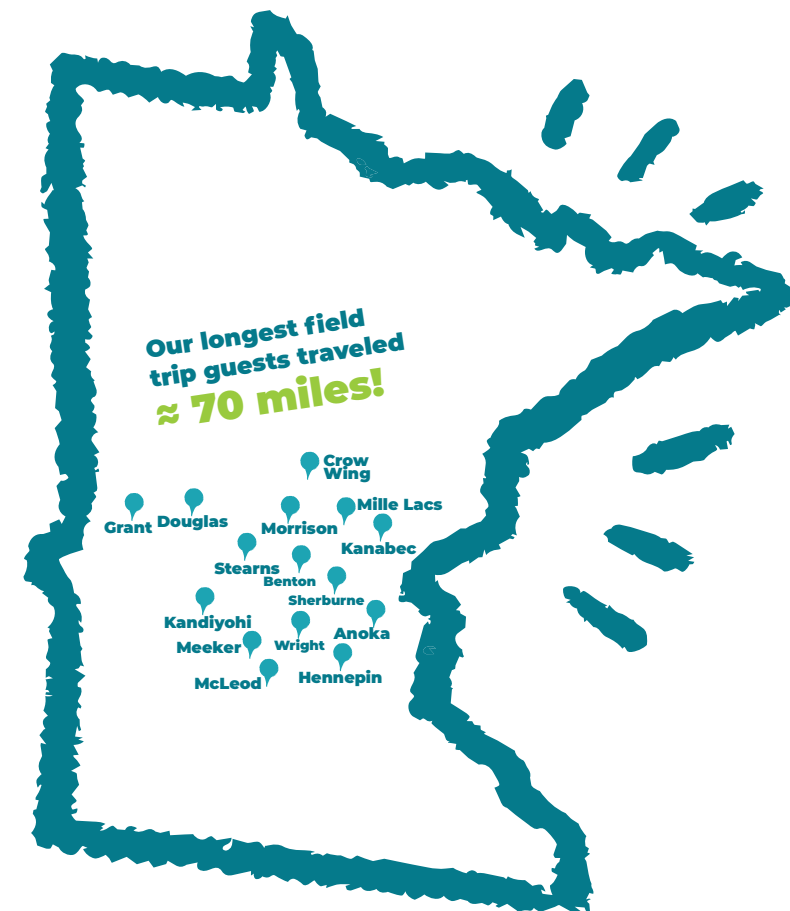
That's thousands of footsteps making big memories together!



All Field Trips are Discounted

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

Total value \$54,835



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, GRCM 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



Your support can help even more families experience the **POWER OF PLAY.** Scan to donate or learn more.

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



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.	Cynthia W.	Annabelle T.
Amelia B.	C.J. L.*	Natalie S.*
Lex C.*	Eva M.*	Leah S.*
Ian C.	Milo R.	Emily V.*
Samantha C.*	Macy R.	Mason W.
Violet D.	Theresa S.	CeCe W.
Megan F.*	Mary O.*	Cherie Y.
Lillian F.*	Hailey S.*	*Supports
Rachel G.	Shukri S.	Admissions &
Tierney H.	Najmo T.	Guest Services
Elliott H.	Kendal T.	



BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2025)

Gina Acevedo
Cultural Sensitivity & Health Equity Supervisor, CentraCare

Becky Coborn
Community Advocate & Former Parent Educator

Jane Ellison
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Kelly Gully
CPA, Central Minnesota Diagnostic

Sahur Hussein
RN, St. Cloud Hospital

Dr. Vince Miles
Licensed Psychologist, Miles Psychological Services, LLC

Dr. Jessica Najarian Bell
Pediatrician, CentraCare

Mardi Noyes
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Greg Reigstad - Retired Administrator, St. Cloud Technical & Community College

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Jerry VonKorff
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Community Outreach Manager, Paramount Center for the Arts

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

Sara McKeever
Parent Educator, Early Childhood and Family Education, District 742

Tom Grones
GeoComm, Founder & Board Member

INCOMING (2026) BOARD MEMBERS

Vicky Welty
Office Manager, SCR, Inc.

Tyrone Reynolds
Executive Director, YouthSet

Brady DeGagne
Director of Training & Development, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota

Lacey Lokken
Director, American Indian Center at St. Cloud State University

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

\$100,000+

BCI Construction
Bernick Family Foundation
Bremer Bank
Capital One
Charlotte Stephens Country
Hearth Breads
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Dr. John & Joyce Matsuura
Main Street Economic
Revitalization
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Cultural Heritage Fund
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Foundation
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Dick & Mimi Bitzan Family

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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
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John & Mary Weitzel

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Optimist Club 35130
Central Minnesota Noon
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& Throat Clinic
St. Cloud Area Golden
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\$5,000+

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Lions Club Sauk
Rapids Tinville
Lions Club Monticello
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Nurturing Possibilities
Optimist Club 35131
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Vince & Cassie Miles
Western Pacific John
Palm Family

\$1,000+

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Tom & Sandy Lanz
Triple Crown Gaming
Warner Family Fund
Wolters Kluwer

\$500+

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Brewing Company
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Brian & Diane Smith
Centrasota Oral Surgeons
Charity Clients of
The Giving Block
Cheryl Running
Cindy Lanoue-Sauer
& Steve Sauer
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Trobec's Bus Service

Two Men & A Truck
W | R Home Company
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Zimmerman American
Legion 560

\$200+

Aloysius & Mary Quick
American Legion 261
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American Legion 292
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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
Jerry & Karen Bobeldyk

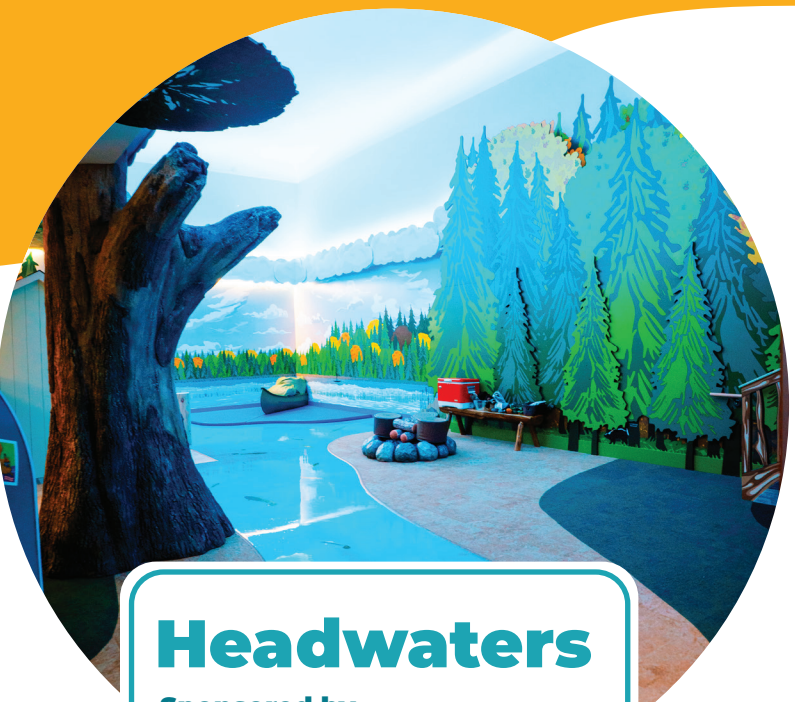
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Joan Blaska
Joel & Susan Shobe
John Miller &
Sandy Bot-Miller
Jon & Joy Ruis
Kendra & Michael
Norton Dando
Kim & Duane Koepp
Kimberly Kron
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Laure Fuerstenberg
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Lexann 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 Exhibit Sponsors

These businesses, family foundations,
organizations and leaders contributed

**MORE
THAN \$500,000**
to sponsor exhibits and help bring the power of play to life
from the very start.



Headwaters

Sponsored by
Cross Works Foundation



Tinker Workshop

Sponsored by SCR, Inc.



Climber to the Clouds

Sponsored by
Coborn Family Foundation



Great Big River

Sponsored by Barbara & Rollie Anderson



Great Explorations

Sponsored by John & Cherie McDowall



Community Connections

Sponsored by Mike & Karel Helgeson



Everyday Engineering

Sponsored by Tom & Joyce Schlough



Oxbow

Sponsored by Granite Partners



Rooftop Plaza

Sponsored by Tom & Janet Grones



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

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Cassandra Novak

Cathie & Fred Wemlinger

Cathy & Darren Juilfs

CentraCare

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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

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.”

- D.J. Bitzan Jewelers

Dan Christianson & Julie Menken

Darren & Sara McKeever

David & Janet Tilstra

David Ellison

Deb Hofmann

Deborah Bechtold

Debra Carlson & Rick Wittwer

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GLTArchitects

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Great Lakes Aquarium

GREAT Theatre

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Hands on Healing Massage Therapy

- Handyman Hardware

Hanna Lord

Hansen & Company Woodworks

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Holiday Inn & Suites

Iron Street Distillery

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Lions Club Becker

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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 Ten Voorde

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

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Patty Dockendorf

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Regional Diagnostic Radiology

Rice Companies

Rick and Helga Bauerly

Foundation

Robert & Mary Karen Bellmont

Robert Willhite

Rockville Lions Club

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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

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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