

Lincoln
LCM
lincoln children's museum
PLAY
report
2024



Dear friends and supporters,

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible milestones we've achieved together including, quite literally, climbing to new heights! This year, we proudly opened two new exhibits sparking curiosity and creativity in young minds. I love seeing kids playing outside with the new "Instruments on Deck" and climbing up three stories in Nebraska's first and only Luckey Climber.

Our reach extended further into the community with our Sensory Tent and additional After School Programs. The Sensory Tent was featured at a Saltdogs Baseball game, and the University of Nebraska's summer series Discovery Days, providing an inclusive space for children of all abilities to enjoy the events in our community in a comfortable environment.

Our new access program, Wednesday Mornings at the Museum, is more successful than forecasted. The Museum is bustling with energy created by caretakers with babies, toddlers, and homeschool families each Wednesday morning from 8-9am when admission is offered free.

The winning combination of community support and the Museum team's dedication fuels our mission and allows us to continue creating enriching experiences for children and families.

Thank you for making 2024 an extraordinary year. We look forward to more exciting adventures in the year ahead!

Tara Knuth, CEO



Leadership team

**Tara Knuth, Chief Executive Officer / Ken Dobbs, Chief Development Officer
Mandy Haase-Thomas, Chief Operating Officer**

thank you, 2024 board of directors

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Dear friends and supporters,

As the Board President of the Lincoln Children's Museum, I am thrilled to share the successes of the past year with you in this Play Report.

Thanks to your unwavering support, we've maintained a strong attendance, garnered significant publicity, and received generous donations that have helped fuel our mission.

This year's achievements are a testament to the power of community. Contributions from various corporate and foundation partners and individuals have enabled us to create enriching experiences for children and families.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our journey of innovation, with plans for new enhancements and transformative changes within the Museum. Our continued goal is to strengthen our connection with the community, making the museum an even more integral part of the lives of the families we serve.

Together, we can continue to inspire wonder and learning in the hearts of children.

Thank you for being an essential part of our success.

With gratitude,
Haleigh Carlson, Board President



cheers for another great year!



1,373 new museum members joined

2,849 birthday party guests



110,289 individuals came through our doors

1,297 Military and First Responder visitors welcomed

3,916 imagination station after school experiences

5,343 visitors thanks to Museums For All's discounted rate (that's a 70% increase over 2023)



2 real reindeer visited the Museum

2 new exhibits

840 glue sticks used

21 times we were in the news

1 Oscar Mayer Weinermobile sighting

3 new model airplanes added to upper floor





a season of joy and celebration

December at the Lincoln Children’s Museum was truly magical, filled with festive events that brought the holiday spirit to life. From enchanting holiday traditions to exciting New Year’s celebrations, the Museum was bustling with joy and laughter.

The season kicked off with *Storytime with Santa*, where families were delighted by a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. Children listened in awe as Santa read holiday stories, and posed for photos. Even better, they got to meet LIVE reindeer, adding an extra touch of enchantment to the event. The joy on the children’s faces was unforgettable, and the experience created cherished memories for all who attended.

We wrapped up the year with our annual *Make Believe Midnight* New Year’s Eve celebration.

Families welcomed the new year a little early with exciting bubble drops, bubble stomps, and captivating presentations by Dr. Oxygen and other hands-on, minds-on activities. The interactive science show kept children mesmerized and provided a fun, educational twist to the festivities.

Both events were redesigned in 2024 to be free for our members, moving away from the traditional ticketed format. This change increased participation and the results were remarkable, with attendance nearing 900 for each event. The overwhelming turnout and enthusiastic feedback highlighted the success of this new approach.

These festive gatherings also garnered significant media attention, further enhancing the Museum’s visibility and reinforcing our commitment to creating inclusive, joyful experiences for the community. We are thrilled with the success of this year’s events and look forward to many more magical moments in the coming year.

husker day with fnbo

In March 2024, Husker fans of all ages flocked to the Lincoln Children’s Museum for an unforgettable Husker Fan Day, presented by FNBO. The event was a flurry with excitement, featuring special appearances by Husker kicker Tristan Alvano, the beloved mascot, Herbie Husker, and members of the Husker Cheer Team.

Families had the chance to meet and take photos with Herbie, capturing memorable moments of Husker pride. Tristan Alvano delighted fans by signing autographs, creating a unique opportunity for young sports enthusiasts to connect with a Husker athlete.

Children also got in on the action by practicing their football skills, kicking field goals, cheering each other on, and interacting with the FNBO fan photobooth exhibit.

This fan-tastic event exemplified the Museum’s mission to create engaging, community-centered experiences, bringing families together for a day filled with fun, sportsmanship, and Husker pride.



Speaking of Huskers, we held Game Day Play Dates during each home football game. Kids enjoyed a tailgate at the Museum, while their parents went to the game.

nebraska's FIRST **three-story lucky climber**

In 2024, the Lincoln Children's Museum opened two new unique exhibits. The first exhibit, the Lucky Climber, debuted in August and created a jaw dropping focal point for visitors of all ages. The Lucky Climber is a one-of-a-kind, three-story climbing structure that captivates the imaginations of children and adults alike. As the first one ever installed in the state, this towering, plant-like structure invites children to climb, explore, and play like never before.

The Lucky Climber is a part of the museum's "Here We Grow" exhibit and features a unique design reminiscent of a tall plant with "leaves" shaped like Pringles.

These curved, colorful platforms encourage children to ascend through the structure, all within the safety of protective netting that spans the Museum's three stories.

Tara Knuth, Chief Executive Officer of the Lincoln Children's Museum, shared her excitement about this groundbreaking addition:

"We are incredibly proud to bring Nebraska its very first Lucky Climber. This exhibit is not just a climbing structure; it's an experience that fosters creativity, physical activity, and a sense of adventure in every child who visits. We love to see the joy it brings to families as they explore the Lucky Climber together."

This new centerpiece of the Lincoln Children's Museum offers a dynamic, interactive play experience that has become a fan favorite and is the perfect complement to the already popular "Cuckoo Construction Clock Tower."

instruments on deck ring out downtown

The second new exhibit to open at the Lincoln Children's Museum in 2024 was the rhythmic, "Instruments on Deck." Partnering with the world's leading outdoor musical instrument manufacturer Percussion Play, the all-season outdoor play structures provide children and adults alike the opportunity to literally beat to their own drum with playful interactive percussion pieces.

"Instruments On Deck" is permanently located outside on the Museum's upper deck, where kids' musical creations can chime through the air. Percussion pieces represented in the exhibit include Tropical Cyclone, Bongos, Penta Post, Cavatina, Chimes, Sansa-Rimba, and Metallophone.

"Instruments On Deck" is open year-round and has seen constant engagement from visitors, regardless of rain, shine or even snow! This dynamic, interactive musical experience has become a favorite for children and families alike.



celebrating agriculture at the museum

On March 21, 2024, the Lincoln Children's Museum, in partnership with the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation, hosted a special event to celebrate National Agriculture Day. This free evening welcomed families to explore the museum's exhibits and engage in activities led by real Nebraska farmers.

The highlight of the evening was the museum's newly opened exhibit, "Here We Grow," which offers a wide range of entertaining and educational activities for children to explore the world of agriculture.

Children had the opportunity to learn about farming and ranching through interactive displays, fostering a deeper understanding of where their food comes from.

The event was a resounding success, with families expressing appreciation for the hands-on learning experiences and the chance to connect with local farmers. The collaboration with the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation was instrumental in bringing this event to life, aligning with the museum's mission to provide educational and engaging experiences for children.

The Lincoln Children's Museum is committed to offering programs that enrich the lives of children and their families. By hosting events like the National Agriculture Day celebration, the museum continues to be a place where learning and play come together, inspiring the next generation to appreciate and understand the vital role of agriculture in our daily lives.



Photos by Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation

see you at sunrise: mornings at the museum brings joy to early risers

In 2024, the Lincoln Children's Museum launched *Mornings at the Museum*, a new program offering free admission every Wednesday morning from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. This initiative has been a resounding success, welcoming over 2,000 visitors and quickly becoming a favorite among families in our community.

Mornings at the Museum was designed with accessibility in mind, ensuring that all families, regardless of income, can enjoy our interactive exhibits. The morning hours are perfect for caregivers with children under school age, as well as homeschool families. The welcoming environment provides another great opportunity for these groups to explore, learn, and play.

The feedback has been nothing short of incredible, with families praising the opportunity to engage with the museum in a stress-free setting. And for those early risers—both kids and adults—we've added a little extra perk: free coffee to keep parents energized as they chase after their little ones!

This program is not only fulfilling our mission to invite children to create, discover, and learn through the power of play, but it's also fostering stronger connections between caregivers creating a supportive community for one another at the Museum. As we look to the future, we are excited to continue expanding this program and providing even more opportunities for families to enjoy everything the museum has to offer.

small contributions, big impact in 2024

In 2024, Lincoln Children's Museum showcased how collective small donations can bring significant change. A heartwarming example is "The Magna-Tile Lady," who asked her friends to donate new Magna-Tiles or provide monetary donations for her birthday, resulting in numerous sets for day camps and after-school programs and a rotating exhibit of oversized tiles. Additionally, a gift of model airplanes and a monetary donation enhanced the aviation exhibit, sparking curiosity among young visitors. These stories illustrate how every gift, no matter the amount, can create meaningful experiences for museum guests.



community partnerships: supporting the museum

The Lincoln Children's Museum participated in Give to Lincoln Day, receiving \$13,590.14 to support the Museums for All initiative. The Museum also partnered with U-STOP and Zen Coffee Co. for kickback programs, raising additional funds and awareness. U-STOP's November gas purchase initiative raised \$7,067.79, while Zen Coffee's Gingerbread Latte sales in December contributed additional funds and promoted the Museum's annual fundraiser Candy House Kits. These efforts highlight the power of community collaboration, with contributions supporting the Museum's exhibits and programs.

Know a business that would like to partner with the Lincoln Children's Museum? Contact kdobbs@lincolnchildrensmuseum.org.

Consider Lincoln Children's Museum during Give to Lincoln Day on May 25!

workin' on the railroad: summer camp at LCM



In August 2024, the Lincoln Children's Museum again hosted a week-long summer camp dedicated to the theme "Workin' on the Railroad." This unique camp provided 22 young participants with hands-on experience in model train building, sparking their creativity and interest in railways.

Volunteer Charlie, a passionate contributor to the museum's model train exhibit, generously dedicated his time to guide the campers through the intricate process of creating their own train models. His expertise and enthusiasm inspired the campers as they crafted detailed models.

The highlight of the program was the opportunity for the campers to showcase their hard work at the Lancaster County Super Fair. Their models were proudly displayed in the large LINCOLN AREA RAILWAY HISTORICAL TRAIN DISPLAYS, allowing the community to appreciate the campers' creativity and dedication.

This camp was so popular, Charlie lent a helping hand again at a shorter day camp over Christmas break, which was themed, "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles." Families can register now for the "Workin' on the Railroad" summer camp.

PLAY

report 2024

see what we've
been up to and
what you can
expect in 2025!

402.477.4000

lincolnchildrensmuseum.org

time to play!

hours

mon - closed
tue - closed
wed - 8am to 5pm
thurs - 9am to 5pm
fri - 9am to 5pm
sat - 9am to 5pm
sun - 11am to 5pm

mark your calendars for four super saturday events:

● **march 1**
read across america

● **june 28**
red, white, and boom bash

● **august 2**
back to school bash

● **december 20**
storytime with santa

● **plus, ring in the new year
before bedtime on 12/31 at
Make Believe Midnight!**

make time for play with fake snow

2 1/2 c of baking soda
1/2 c of white hair conditioner
stir ingredients in a large bowl
until well combined



Here are some easy ways to incorporate learning through play with fake snow:

- Use your senses! The snow has an interesting texture and pleasant smell and can be cool to the touch. Ask your kiddo what they are feeling, smelling and seeing.
- Exercise fine motor skills with utensils to scoop the snow and your hands to make small snowballs for a snowman.

Other ways to use fake snow:

Create a habitat with tall "hills" and flat "land" for small play animal figures — add a few drops of food coloring during the mixing process to make your kiddo's favorite colors.