

# the children's museum

## ANNUAL DONOR REPORT

2008 - 2009

### Friends of The Children's Museum:

All across America, this has been a tough financial year. That's why friends like you are so important to us at The Children's Museum. Thanks to you, we had a good year promoting science and nature education through fun, hands-on learning at our Preschool, Museum, Roaring Brook Nature Center, and schools all across Connecticut. What we do for children is more important than ever at a time when schools are cutting back on science in the classroom and this year's statewide science assessment for 5th graders shows that most are still falling short. So our success in the face of real financial and operational challenges matters – especially for younger children who only The Children's Museum serves in this way.

Thanks to a very dedicated staff, we are doing an amazing job in difficult times even while paring our expenses. Just as important, we have really strengthened institutional fundraising – including an annual gala that matched last year's record success and an excellent year in terms of corporate and foundation support. Of course, The Children's Museum still operates without any of the big taxpayer subsidies that go to other science centers.

The heart of support for The Children's Museum remains our members and individual donors – people like you. Today, that support means everything to us and to all the children and families we serve.

This year, we will continue our focus on renewing our programs and exhibits. We will also do more to support science teaching, as we did in a very successful program for elementary school teachers this past summer. We will reach out to more of our neediest schools. And, while we will remain where we are for the next few years, we will begin the process of finalizing relocation plans within West Hartford and the capital campaign to make it a reality at last.

For The Children's Museum, we sincerely thank our donors, members, visitors, and other friends who make it all possible.

Elaine McDonald  
Chairwoman

Kevin Sullivan  
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Grateful thanks to all the individuals, corporations, foundations, and government and community organizations who made a generous gift to The Children's Museum between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. Gifts to the Museum touch every part of the institution and enable us to serve our community's youngest residents, their families, and their schools each day.

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### Our Year in Review

#### HANDS-ON SCIENCE & NATURE FUN

The Children's Museum uniquely continues to offer an amazing range of teaching, learning, and activities for younger kids. The past year's poor performance on the statewide science assessment shows why we are needed now more than ever. And the National Research Council's report on science education makes it very clear that we make a real difference at a time when our schools cannot do it alone.

#### CYBER SAFARI

The Children's Museum opened an exciting new exhibit: *Cyber Safari*, a computer lab just for kids. Computer workstations, located in a completely renovated exhibit space in Kids' Corner, offer children the chance to use science and nature-related educational software and explore computers in a safe, age-appropriate atmosphere. The new activity area was made possible by the Ahearn Family Foundation and computer hardware was donated by KeyLynx Technologies. This new resource is also being used in our classroom programs.

#### CHANGING LAND & CHANGING WILDLIFE AT ROARING BROOK NATURE CENTER

This was the third and final phase of a major exhibit upgrade. Created by the renowned artist Ted Esseltyn, the exhibit completes the presentation of Connecticut's changing ecosystem by showcasing man and nature 500 years ago.

#### MAJOR GRANTS FOR MAJOR INITIATIVES

While The Children's Museum struggled just like everyone else in the big economic downturn, our donors made it a banner year for us. Grants donated for science and nature education, onsite and in classrooms across the state, totaled nearly \$500,000 – 25% more than the goal for the year. New initiatives included elementary school teacher professional development funded by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, collections assessment funded by the Connecticut Humanities Council, and financial management and technology improvement grants from the Nonprofit Support Program at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Thank you to all!

#### A CHILD'S WORLD FUNDRAISER A HUGE SUCCESS

Over 250 guests had a world of fun at *A Child's World*, our 13th annual fundraiser, held in May at Tumble Brook Country Club in Bloomfield. The Hartford was presenting sponsor with Kara Sundlun and Dennis House from WFSB Channel 3 as our celebrity hosts. We raised over \$200,000 (matching last year's support) for the wide array of science and nature education initiatives offered by the Museum in West Hartford, at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, and in preschool, elementary, and middle school classrooms statewide.

#### STEVESONGS

Connecticut native and PBS KIDS television personality Steve Roslonek, aka SteveSongs, held benefit concerts for The Children's Museum and Roaring Brook Nature Center. The concerts were sold-out hits. Kids and families enjoyed singing along to their favorite SteveSongs tunes. Steve also met with his fans and signed autographs after the shows. Thank you Steve!

#### WILD THINGS

Our Wildlife Sanctuary welcomed several new residents this year, including Stanley, a 10-foot Burmese python rescued from abandonment in a three-family house in New Britain. Later in the year, he was joined by a new frog exhibit. A collection of illegal and exotic arthropods, including scorpions, millipedes, hissing cockroaches, and a tarantula, was seized by animal control from a private owner and brought to the Museum. And in the spring, all eyes turned to FalconCam, a website where two live webcams monitored the birth and fledging of peregrine falcons nesting high over downtown Hartford. FalconCam is a partnership between The Children's Museum, Travelers, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

#### AROUND THE MUSEUM *As always, there was a lot going on!*

Dr. Ronald Mallett, a prominent African-American Professor of Physics at UConn and author of "Time Traveler: A Scientist's Personal Mission to Make Time Travel a Reality," spoke to kids for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Special performances of PBS' *Between the Lions*. A new show at the Traveles Science Dome theater and exhibition of galactic art by amateur astronomer, artist, and planetarium staff member Rick Costello. New dinosaurs at *Excavation Station*. Another great season of folk music at Roaring Brook Nature Center. And, thanks to Hoffman Auto Group, our newly decorated education outreach van. Just follow Conny the Whale to The Children's Museum!

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# ...where science and nature are fun

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