

“For children, play is serious learning.  
Play is really the work of childhood.”

– Fred Rogers

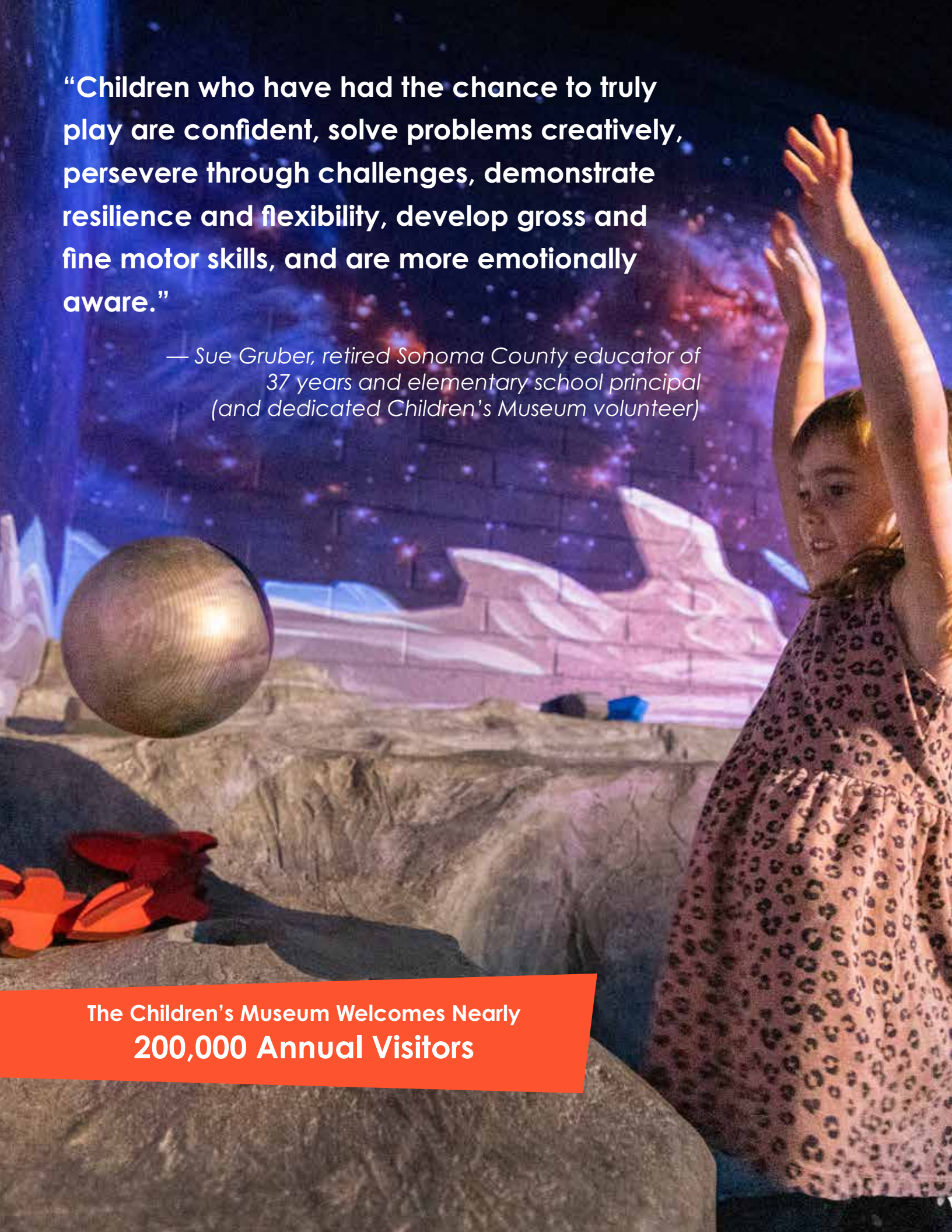


A Case for Support

**“Children who have had the chance to truly play are confident, solve problems creatively, persevere through challenges, demonstrate resilience and flexibility, develop gross and fine motor skills, and are more emotionally aware.”**

*— Sue Gruber, retired Sonoma County educator of 37 years and elementary school principal (and dedicated Children’s Museum volunteer)*

**The Children’s Museum Welcomes Nearly  
200,000 Annual Visitors**



# IMAGINE...



Blasting off into space and exploring the cosmos in your very own rocket ship.



Climbing high into the branches of a giant apple tree and seeing the world from a whole new perspective.



Taking a fantastic train journey through landscapes of imagination, creativity, and discovery.

## Children's Museum **TODAY**

What started out of the back of a minivan in 2005 has grown into an essential community resource beloved by children, caregivers, and educators. **Families come to the Children's Museum of Sonoma County from all 50 states to experience imaginative and engaging exhibits and programs.** Some school groups travel up to two hours each way, often by bus, to take advantage of the informal educational opportunities only found here.

**The Children's Museum of Sonoma County sparks creativity, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning—laying the foundation for open minds and bright futures.**

It's more than a museum. It's a vibrant, hands-on learning environment where children of all ages and backgrounds come to explore, imagine, and grow.

Every visit brings families closer together, connects communities, and breaks down barriers to learning. Children from all cultures, languages, and socio-economic backgrounds feel welcomed, seen, and inspired here.

The demand for playful learning experiences has outgrown the available space.

**The Museum is bursting at the seams — the need for a larger indoor facility has never been more urgent.**



A young girl with her arms raised in joy is the central focus of the image. She is wearing a colorful, patterned dress. The background is a vibrant, interactive museum exhibit featuring a complex network of clear, flexible tubes and blue structural beams. A pink paper hat is suspended in the air above her. The overall atmosphere is bright and playful.

**3,500 Students**  
and Chaperones

**48,000 Discounted and  
Free Admissions for**  
Low-income families

**“When you enter the Children’s Museum of Sonoma County, you are walking into a vibrant, joyful space where children learn through hands-on, playful experiences. STEM-based exhibits, programming that engages all ages, and immersive environments inspire imagination and wonder in children and adults.”**

*– Dr. Amie Carter, Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools*



# Valued Community Asset

The Children's Museum of Sonoma County is integral to our community, partnering with schools, libraries, and other nonprofit organizations to support children and families in creative ways.

## Community Outreach

The Museum-on-the-Go outreach program reached over 13,000 individuals through 60 events in 2024-25 with a focus on serving marginalized communities who might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit the Children's Museum.



## Making Science Fun

STEM is all around us—every day, in countless ways. At the Children's Museum, interactive experiences spark curiosity and make complex ideas approachable and fun. Through hands-on programs for children from infancy to age twelve, critical thinking, creativity, and a love of lifelong learning beyond the classroom are inspired.

## Events, Summer Camps, and Special Programs

From lively community events to enriching summer camps and hands-on field trips, the Children's Museum of Sonoma County offers unforgettable experiences year-round. Sensory Friendly Afternoon, a free monthly program, offers dedicated time for children with exceptionalities and their families, including specialized therapeutic art activities.

# The Challenges

1. The Museum's current indoor space is only 7,000 square feet—far below the national average of 30,000 square feet for children's museums serving similar sized communities. The Children's Museum of Sonoma County welcomes hundreds of guests daily. During holidays and special events, that number often exceeds 1,100 guests. The Museum's popularity also means:

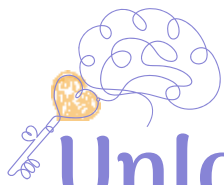
- Crowded exhibit areas
- Frequent long lines for bathrooms
- Double digit waiting lists for school field trips
- No room for additional special programs
- No room for new exhibits

2. Research shows that excessive screen time and reduced opportunities for free play are causing physical and mental health crises for children. At the Children's Museum, kids are immersed in real-world, hands-on, unstructured playful learning experiences that spark curiosity and creativity without the use of screens.

The Children's Museum of Sonoma County —where **imagination and learning come alive and children meaningfully connect with loved ones** — is needed now more than ever.

Expanding the Museum is not a luxury —  
**it is a necessity.**





# Unlock Potential *Inspiring Young Minds*

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF SONOMA COUNTY



## Vision

The Museum's focus from the beginning has been to deliver an exceptional visitor experience for every child, member, guest, student, and volunteer. The Museum board and team, as well as key community stakeholders, participated in a thoughtful planning process to inform an inclusive future visitor experience. Combining the insights gathered during these planning sessions with results from CMOSC's annual Visitor Surveys, an expansion was envisioned.

## Scope & Timing

The Unlock Potential (UP!) Campaign enables the Children's Museum of Sonoma County to meet the growing community demand for playful learning experiences for years to come. The expansion features a new 7,400 square foot wing that doubles the current size of the Museum and includes:

- New 2,800 square foot exhibit hall
- New STEM-focused exhibits
- Two dedicated classrooms
- Four additional restrooms
- Relief from overcrowding

The project will break ground in late 2026 and is anticipated to be open to the public in early 2028. Current indoor and outdoor exhibits will stay open during construction.

**“To grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more.”**

*—World Health Organization, 2024*

# Worlds of Wonder (WOW!) Exhibit Gallery Overview



1. Aquatica

3. Hexlandia

5. Luminaria

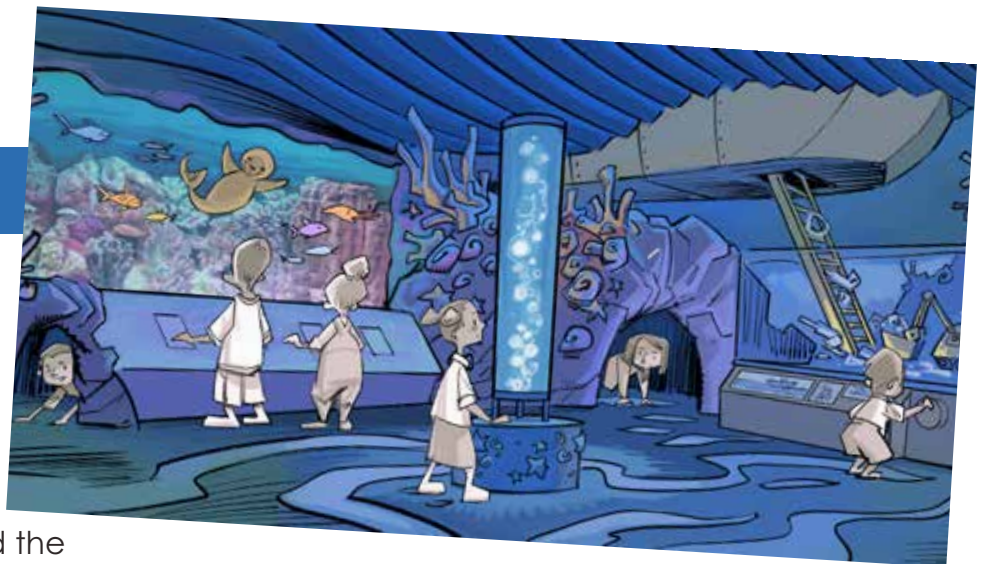
2. Motiva

4. Explora

6. Inventica

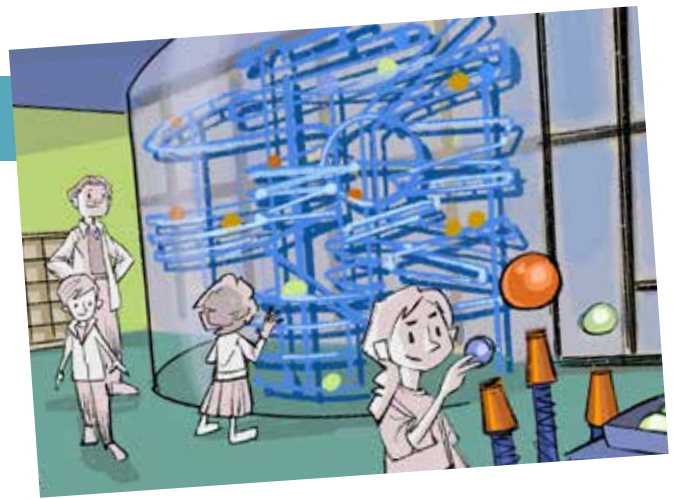
## Aquatica

Aquatica is a portal into the breathtaking world of the ocean and a launching point for children to explore the wonder and complexity of marine life. This immersive experience helps young visitors understand the delicate balance of ocean ecosystems and the threats they face, such as climate change and plastic pollution. With a coral reef, an aquarium, a deep sea cave exploration, and an ocean clean-up activity, Aquatica nurtures future generations of environmentalists and scientists.



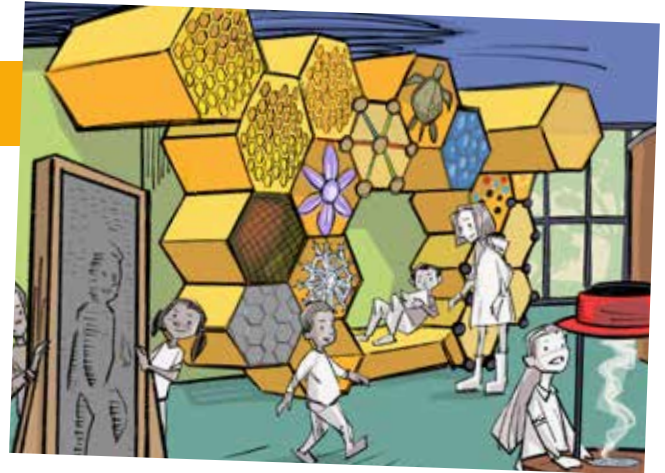
## Motiva

A large-scale Rube Goldberg-inspired ball maze, Motiva encourages children to become junior physicists as they experiment with the principles of motion, velocity, and acceleration. Curiosity and critical thinking are sparked as kids test different levers and switches, experimenting with how gravity, friction, and momentum impact their creations.



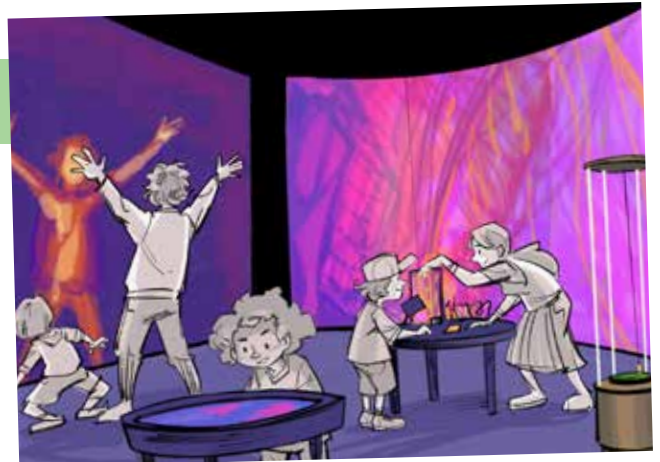
## Hexlandia

Celebrating the power and prominence of the hexagonal shape found in many natural structures from snowflakes to beehives to carbon molecules, the playful Hexlandia allows children to use their whole bodies as they navigate the tunnels. Nestled within the structure, a cozy book nook with a rotating library of science-based books encourages caregivers and children to explore big ideas together through story.



## Luminaria

Interactive exhibits in Luminaria offer opportunities for kids to explore the science of light. A projection station with colored lights and a mosaic table invite children to experiment with overlapping hues, while learning about how light travels and changes. A thermal imaging exhibit lets children see the heat their own bodies emit, revealing the invisible world of infrared light in a playful, hands-on way.



## Explora

Within Explora, children explore motion, magnetism, and air through hands-on experiments and awe-inspiring interactive displays. Young physicists can observe, manipulate and explore the dynamics of air pressure, wind currents, and magnetism or discover how rotational motion and force influence movement.



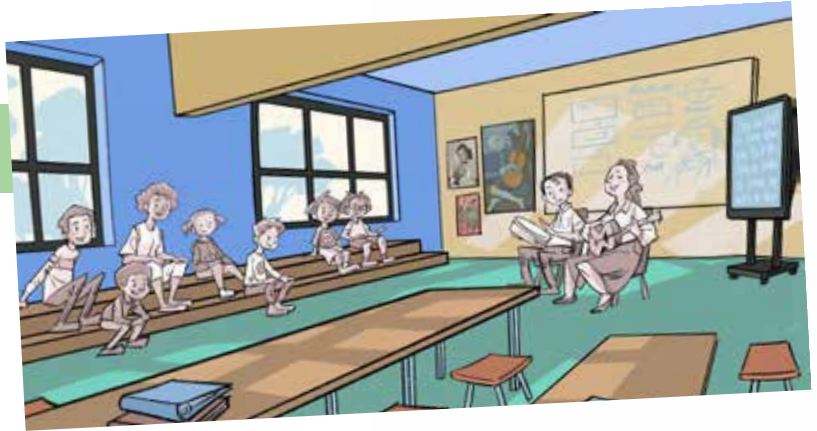
## Inventica

Inventica invites children to step into the roles of both inventors and explorers. Rotating pop-up programs spark curiosity, whether through coding, circuitry, and sustainable design projects or nature-based investigations like examining plant structures and identifying local wildlife. This engaging space encourages collaboration, problem-solving, and an appreciation for both human ingenuity and the marvels of the natural world.



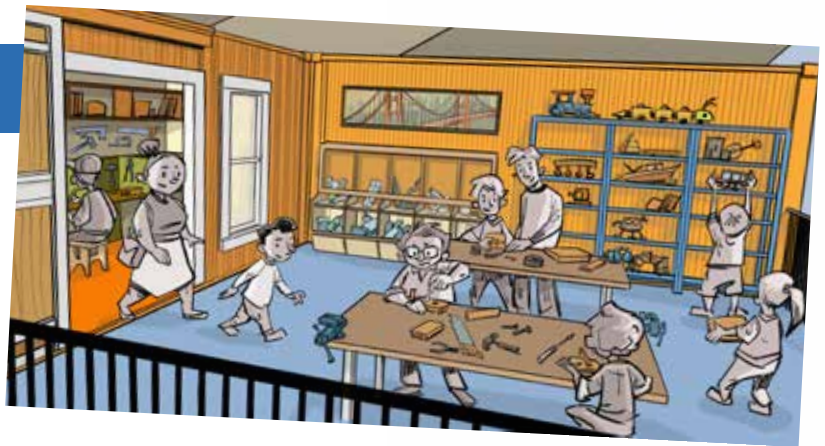
## Learning & Idea Labs

The Learning & Idea Labs on the second floor doubles the Museum's capacity to host school field trips while providing more space for workshops and enrichment programming. Additionally, the Learning and Idea Labs provide essential space for summer camps, birthday parties, and private events.



## Hammer and Saw Shed

While open and fun for kids of all ages, the Hammer and Saw Shed outside in the Wild Zone is specially designed for older children, ages 8-12. This dynamic space invites budding builders to engage in real-world problem-solving through construction of imaginative projects. Children work with wood and upcycled materials and use real tools – saws, hammers, pliers, and screws/nails – to bring their creations to life.



**“Play is not just about having fun but about taking risks, experimenting, and testing boundaries. Doctors should be encouraging playful learning for parents and infants by writing a ‘prescription for play’ at every well-child visit.”**

*–American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021*



## Inspiring Play and Purpose, Together

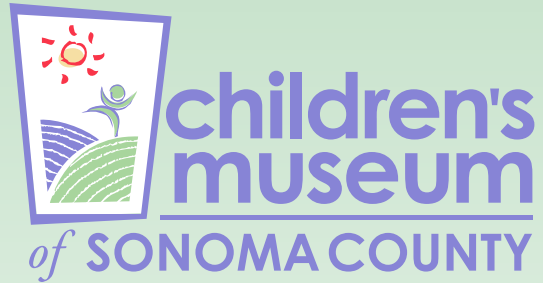
The Unlock Potential! Campaign is a bold opportunity to build on the Children's Museum's success and make an impact on even more children—with exciting new exhibits, programs, and events that will inspire curiosity and creativity.

- More room for families to engage and connect
- More STEM-inspired hands-on experiences
- More opportunities to transform futures

Your investment today ignites the imaginations that will shape a brighter tomorrow.

**Unlock the potential  
in every child!**

Join us on the journey.



[www.cmosc.org/upexpansion](http://www.cmosc.org/upexpansion)

