

Overview

Our Mission

As the premier children's museum in the mid-Atlantic, Port Discovery Children's Museum educates and inspires children through purposeful play.

Our educational, interactive exhibits and programs develop cognitive and life skills that open the door for children to successfully express what they know and to discover and explore the world around them.

Who We Serve

Infants through children 10 years old and their families, educators and caregivers

What Children Learn

Every experience empowers children and adults to learn about themselves, to build connections, and to learn about their community and the world around them.

Hands-On Exhibits & Learning Environments

Port Discovery features three floors of hands-on, interactive exhibits that encourage children and the adults in their lives to play, learn and engage with one another.

While children use their imaginations, ask questions, and explore how things work, they are learning, developing and figuring out how the world works.

Museum includes:

- A four-story **SkyClimber** and spiral **Storm Slide** that challenges children to build confidence
- A massive **Port** exhibit that encourages collaboration, and that teaches visitors about the Port of Baltimore – and the many jobs and products that make up one of the world's most active ports!
- **Tiny's Diner**, a 50's-style diner where pretend play rule supreme. Here, little learners play together and prepare pretend meals (and creative bills) for their friends and adults.
- An interactive Art Studio that puts real art making in the hands of children and adults through activities including painting, sculpting, and more.

Our Initiatives Include

Providing Access for All

Port Discovery is committed to being an accessible museum for all. We eliminate financial barriers by providing free and reduced admission and enrollment to Maryland school students, low-income families, and military families through our Access Programs such as PlayMakers, \$2 Community Days, and Salute the Troops. Additionally, access includes training staff and improving facility capacity to serve families with specific disabilities and educational needs.



Learning and Discovery Programs

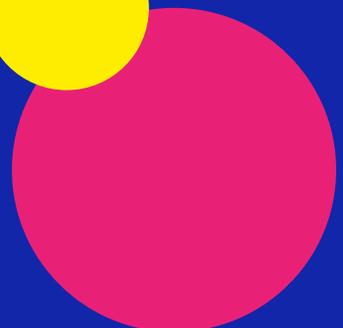
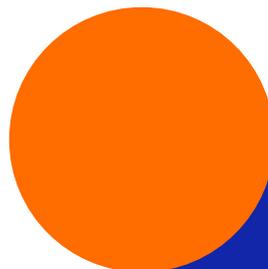
These programs are the core of Port Discovery's work. Learning and Discovery Programs include arts- and science-based workshops, nature-based learning opportunities, engagement through the arts, and virtual programs that invite children into a range of learning portals from Maryland's historic lighthouses to the life of a bumble bee. The Museum's learning and discovery programs take place on site, within school classrooms, at libraries and community partners, and online. Additional support allows us to increase the number of Title I schools (and organizations serving Title I schools) that we are able to serve with focused programming for free or significantly reduced costs.

Two-Generations At-Play

This suite of programs provides resources to those who hold the most important role in the healthy development and well-being of Maryland young children—parents, caregivers, and educators. The Museum is focusing on scaling a suite of new and enhanced programs that include Fathers at Play and Parents at Play, both of which empower parents through purposeful play strategies and peer learning; and Professionals At Play, which supports our early childhood workforce across various settings and throughout the state.

Accolades

Port Discovery is recognized as one of the top Children's Museums in the United States, and one of the top children's attractions in the Baltimore Region. Recent accolades include being named a Top Children's Museum by *Mommy Poppins* and Best Indoor Activity by *Baltimore's Child*.



Awards

2021:

Mommy Poppins, Best Children's Museum in Maryland
Baltimore's Child, Best Indoor Activity

2019:

Baltimore Sun, Critics' Choice for Best Place to Take the Kids
Baltimore Magazine, Best of Baltimore Winner for Best Kids' Activity
Family Minded, America's Best Children's Museums by State

2018:

Trekaroo, The Best Parent-Rated Children's Museums
Red Tricycle, The Best Kids' Museums
Mommy Nearest, 20 Best Children's Museums in the United States

2016:

Fodors Travel, 10 Best Children's Museums in the U.S.

2015:

Parents Magazine, The Best Children's Museums in the U.S.
Mom.com, 10 Coolest Children's Museums in the US

2014:

Destination Travel Magazine, Best Children's Museums in the Nation
Maryland Family Magazine, Best Museum for Families

2013:

Considerable, 10 best Children's Museums in the U.S.

2012:

Forbes, 12 Best Children's Museums in the U.S.
Women's Day, 10 Best Children's Museums to Visit This Summer

2010:

Nickelodeon Parents Pick, Best Museum

Other Awards Include:

The 10 Best Children's Museums in America, *Escape Here*
25 Best American Children's Museums, *Early Childhood Education Zone*
7 Best Children's Museums in the US, *Minitime*
10 Best Children's Museums in America, *US CityTraveler*
10 Best Children's Museums in the USA, *Attractions of America*
Top Twelve Children's Museums in the World, *The London Observer*

Fact Sheet

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Attendance:

On average, Port Discovery serves 270,000 guests annually through on-site visitation and community outreach.

- 28% from Baltimore City
- 46% from MD counties outside of Baltimore City
- 26% from outside the state of Maryland

Access :

We believe that every child and family should have access to powerful, purposeful play at Port Discovery Children's Museum. Through our Museum access programs, we provide free and reduced admission to families facing economic challenges, to children with special needs, to military members and their families, and more.

In a normal year, more than 33% of our visitors receives free or reduced admission through the Museum's access programs.

Funding :

Port Discovery Children's Museum is a nonprofit institution. Support comes from earned income, including admission, memberships, program and event rental income. Support also comes from contributions and grants by individuals, foundations, corporations, and local, state, and federal government agencies as well as from investment income.

Governance & Leadership:

Port Discovery is a non-profit institution with a board of directors. The Museum is led by Carter Arnot Polakoff, President & CEO and Dennis Rasmussen, Board Chair.



Background

Port Discovery opened in 1998 in Baltimore's Historic 1906 Fish Market building.

Port Discovery is an 80,000 square foot facility that offers three-floors of interactive exhibits, and is conveniently located in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

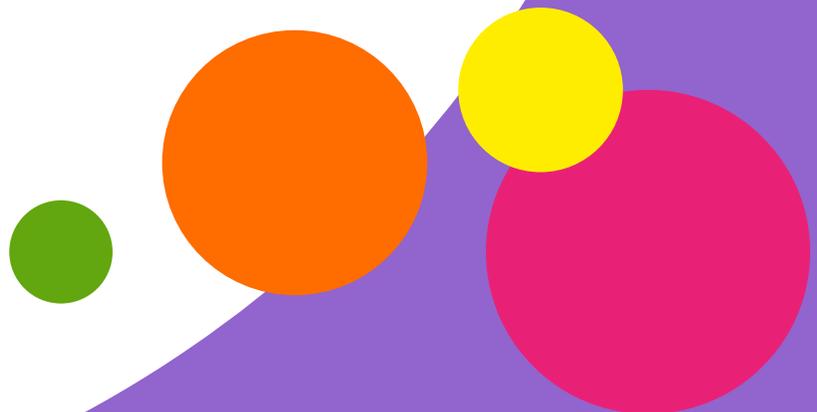
The original Baltimore Children's Museum was a Baltimore City agency founded in 1976 and was housed in the Cloisters. The Museum relocated to its current location in Baltimore's Inner Harbor in 1998, placing the Museum in a location that was more readily accessible to visitors.

2019 Improvements

In the late spring 2019, Port Discovery Children's Museum re-opened after undergoing a massive six month transformation as part of a \$10.5 Million Capital Campaign, Playing Today, Leading Tomorrow. New exhibits and improvements included a new four-story SkyClimber, massive Port exhibit, an updated lobby, lunchroom, and restrooms, along with a variety of other additions and improvements.

Economic Impact

Port Discovery employs 90 people and spends \$1 million per year on goods and services in the community.



History

1976 – The Cloisters Children's Museum, Port Discovery's predecessor, opens in Baltimore County. The Museum soon reaches its maximum capacity of serving 50,000 visitors per year.

1990 – Former Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke supports proposed move of the Children's Museum to the Inner Harbor so it can serve a larger audience. A 35 million dollar capital campaign, led by the Board of Directors, results in the renovation of Downtown's historic Fishmarket Building, which becomes the new home to Port Discovery Children's Museum.

1998 – Port Discovery Children's Museum opens its doors.

2001 – Port Discovery is named one of the country's top 5 children's museums by *Child Magazine*. Port Discovery launches its first annual *Discovery Days* for children with special needs and welcomes its one millionth visitor!

2003 – *ArtVentures*, Port Discovery's after school enrichment program for underserved children, is recognized by "Reading is Fundamental" as an outstanding literacy model and featured on PBS.

2007 – The Fishmarket Building, home to Port Discovery, turns 100 years old and gets an exterior facelift, addressing one of the building's many needs!

2008 – The Museum makes a splash with the opening of its core STEM exhibit, **Wonders of Water**.

2010 – The Museum receives the Association of Children's Museums and MetLife Foundation "Promising Practice Award," to develop toolkits for national replication of its award-winning program for children with special needs. **Tiny's Diner** opens.

2011 – Port Discovery opens **Tot Trails**, a new early childhood exhibit for ages 3 and under.

2012 – Port Discovery is recognized as one of the Top 12 Children's Museums in the country by Forbes. Its newest core exhibit Kick It Up! opens. The unique exhibit offers hands-on programs to get children's arms and legs moving and hearts pumping.



2013 – Port Discovery celebrates its 15th birthday! And *STEMVentures* hits the road! This after school enrichment program begins to travel to schools throughout the state.

2014 – *Museum On the Road* outreach expands to include early childhood, art, and health programs.

2015 – Port Discovery opens **Here We Grow!**, an agriculture exhibit that introduces children and their caregivers to farm processes, products, and people through the themes of science and technology, history, local ecology, global economics, and art.

2016 – Port Discovery, in partnership with the University of Maryland Children’s Hospital and *Mother Goose on the Loose*, LLC, launches a groundbreaking early childhood program designed to provide developmental stimulation to infants in Neonatal Intensive Care Units.

2019 – Port Discovery completes its first major capital campaign since opening in 1998, transforming the center of the Museum with a new four-story **SkyClimber**, massive **Port** exhibit, an updated lobby, lunchroom, and restrooms, along with a variety of other additions and improvements. The American Academy of Pediatrics published a report that suggested pediatricians begin issuing prescriptions for play. The report outlined that play is a fundamental part of children’s healthy development, and suggested that pediatricians write a prescription for parents to play with their child every day and thus help children boost social-emotional, cognitive, language and self-regulation skills.

2020 – Port Discovery joins the world in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, swiftly introducing a variety of new initiatives and offerings to help serve children and families throughout the pandemic. Innovations included creating On-Demand and Live Virtual Learning offerings, creating and distributing PlayPacks filled with educational play items and activity ideas to families facing difficult circumstances, and creating and distributing Virtual Support Packs to help students, teachers and families continue learning through hands-on play.

2021 – Port Discovery launches the PlayMakers Access Program, with the goal of eliminating cost as a barrier and inviting people of all backgrounds and circumstances to visit and benefit from Port Discovery Children’s Museum. Through Port Discovery’s PlayMakers program, any Maryland family that qualifies for nutritional assistance and has an EBT/Independence Card or WIC ID can visit Port Discovery for \$3 per person on any day the Museum is open to the general public.



What Children Learn

Nothing is as natural than a child at play. Did you know that play time not only promotes bonding with parents and caregivers, but also allows children to develop key social, cognitive, and motor skills? Play is so important to child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations Commissions for Human Rights as a right of every child.

Port Discovery encourages our play-to-learn philosophy both inside the Museum, in the community and at home. We provide children and families with opportunities to play, learn, and experience moments of wonder together. A Port Discovery experience is filled with fun, playful opportunities for children and adults to explore and to:

Learn About Themselves:

We encourage children to ask questions, make observations, try something new, make believe, experiment, and discover. Why? To help children (and their adults!) discover what they are interested in - and to help fuel a life-long love of learning!

Build Connections:

We encourage children to interact and play together, communicate with one another, use-problem solving skills, and successfully navigate social situations. Why? To help children (and their adults!) become socially connected children.

Learn about the Community & World Around Them:

We encourage children to learn about the diverse community around them, understand, respect and value others, and engage with their community and people around them. Why? To help children (and their adults) better understand the world they are part of.

