

PORT DISCOVERY
Children's Museum

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



OPTIMISM & COMMUNITY

FY2023

These have been the words in my heart as the Museum closed the 2023 fiscal year. The past twelve months have shown, to me, the critical value that a children's museum can bring to a city – as a venue for joy and learning for children and their families; a resource for parents, caregivers, and teachers; and a community anchor for the well-being of our region. I am so proud of the work of the Museum team, from our front-line Play Experts to our Board of Directors, and I am excited to share a few highlights:

- After an admittedly slow start in the fall, school field trip bookings EXPLODED in winter and spring 2023. Port Discovery hosted over 23,000 students and their teachers on an Explor-A-Tour, which connects science, engineering, art, and history to hands-on activities and Museum exhibits.
- We welcomed over 13,000 children and caregivers through the PlayMakers access program, which provides reduced admission of \$3 per person to Maryland families who present an EBT/ Independence Card or WIC ID card, available any day the Museum is open to the general public – a 75% increase from last year's visitorship!
- We expanded our Two Generations at Play programs across the region, establishing new partnerships in Howard and Montgomery Counties, to serve nearly 300 low-income parents/caregivers and their children with parenting workshops and resources to learn bonding strategies, purposeful play approaches, network, and build support systems.
- We renewed our commitment to families with special needs and disabilities with the launch of monthly Sensory Friendly Hours, dedicated staff training, and partnerships with regional children's hospitals to provide free admission for young patients.

Lastly, I am especially pleased to share that Port Discovery was featured in the New York Times in April about the important role children's museums play in childhood development and learning. The article, "[Children's Museums Are Growing Intellectually and Emotionally](#)" (April 27, 2023), highlights groundbreaking programs from around the country, with a focus on Port Discovery's very own social-emotional learning program, Ted-Dy Talks.

This is just taste of our accomplishments for the year! I invite you to review this blueprint of our successes in FY2023, so much of which could not have happened without the essential support of our advocates, champions, and allies who are listed in this report.

With gratitude,



Carter Arnot Polakoff
President and CEO

FY2023 By the Numbers

192,166

Total attendance between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023

3,668

Museum memberships sold or renewed

23,135

Students and youth who came to the Museum as part of an in-person field trip – over 60% representing Title I Schools

13,584

Playmakers attendance (a 75% increase from FY22!)

4,825

Attendance for \$5 Community Days

7,541

Military service personnel who visited as part of our reduced admission program Salute the Troops

Economic Impact

- * The Museum employs 70 staff (35 full time + 35 part time)
- * 50% of admission visitors receive free or reduced entry through our various access initiatives
- * Port Discovery invested \$1 million on goods and services in the community
- * The Museum hosted 288 corporate volunteers from 9 businesses who dedicated 653 hours to essential projects around the Museum
- * Provided unlimited free admission tickets to health partners such as Johns Hopkins Hospital's Kennedy Krieger Institute, Mt Washington Pediatric Hospital, and Ronald McDonald House as part of our Nonprofit Partner Access Fund.
- * Port Discovery serves visitors from the Baltimore region and beyond.
 - 25% Baltimore City
 - 11% Baltimore County
 - 37% Maryland state
 - 17% VA / PA / D.C.
 - 10% other states

This fund offers free Museum tickets to family clients served by our health and hospital partners. For these families, whose children have extended hospital stays, a day of play is very much desired and needed as part of a recovery plan.

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Program Highlight: Two Generations at Play

Piloted in 2021, Two Generations At Play has become a core pillar of Port Discovery's work in support of the growth and development of young children in conjunction with strengthening the relationships with their caregivers. In the past year, this program's success has been measured by overwhelmingly positive participant feedback, expansion into more Maryland counties, and recognition at a national conference and by national funders. We are proud to report that, in FY2023, Two Generations At Play:

- Hosted 4 cohorts of **Parents At Play** over 16 workshops + 3 special one-session intensives
- Hosted 2 cohorts of **Fathers At Play** over 6 workshops
- Established cohorts in Baltimore City, Howard County, and Montgomery County
- Partnered with Promise Heights, Center for Urban Families, Howard County Judy Center, Sheppard Pratt Family Discovery Center, Bedtime in a Box, and Urban Strategies
- Served a total of 112 parents/caregivers and 184 children between the ages of 1 and 10

Program Highlight: Sensory Friendly Sundays

In FY2023, Port Discovery deepened its service to families with special needs by launching dedicated Sensory Hours at the Museum. Taking place one Sunday each month, the Museum welcomes families for a morning of play within a modified Museum environment (dimmed lights, no music, limited capacity) that better supports children with certain disabilities and sensory sensitivities. In FY2023, Port Discovery welcomed 486 children and caregivers to the Museum during Sensory Friendly hours.



"We were so thankful to be able to attend Sensory Friendly hours. We brought our own headphones from home, but many of the fidgets included in the sensory bag were so helpful! The staff was so wonderful and kind. Every exhibit was so much fun and joyful for our children (and adults!). I especially liked seeing braille books in the Oasis. It made my heart burst with joy at the thoughtful inclusivity."

Parent feedback, Sensory Sundays (May 2023)



On Saturday, November 19, 2022 brought the long-awaited return of one of Port Discovery's most fun signature events – Hops & Vines. This was a grown-up friend-raiser that brought together the best breweries and wineries from around the region for an evening of premier tastings and merriments.

Hops & Vines was presented by the Explorer's Council, Port Discovery's young professionals advisory board. The event brought in a sold-out crowd of partygoers who raised over \$27,000 for the Museum's educational and access programs.

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Special thanks to all 2022 Hops & Vines participating vendors!

Boordy Vineyards, Charm City Meadworks, DJ Richard Manson, DuClaw Brewing Company, Forever Cottman 360, Guilford Hall Brewery, Lytos Vodka, Mother Shuckers, Old Line Spirits, Phillips Seafood Restaurant, Pure Raw Juice, Underground Pizza Company, Union Craft Brewing, Vaccaro's Italian Pastry Shop, Wet City Brewing, The Wine Source



PLAY IT FORWARD

POWER THE FUTURE OF PLAY

On Friday, March 31, 2023, Port Discovery hosted its annual signature fundraiser – Play It Forward. This year, we invited guests to consider the Future of Play with an evening of time travel, holodecks, AI, fortune telling, and more. The Museum was thrilled to have a sold-out crowd that raised over \$250,000 for core programming.



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POWER THE FUTURE OF PLAY

PlayMakers for All

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Thank You!

Thank you to all of our supporters who gave in the past year! Your donations were essential for Port Discovery as we reaffirmed our role as a community partner, learning lab, and resource for all families, regardless of need, income, configuration, or ability. Your trust in the museum to serve Maryland's children provided our staff and board the motivation to persevere, innovate, and deliver.

The lists below represents gifts and donations made across all museum campaigns between July 2022 and June 2023

Organizations

Allegis Group Foundation
ATAPCO
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Thank You!

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Thank You!

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PORT DISCOVERY

Children's Museum

The mission of Port Discovery Children's Museum is to provide unique opportunities and high-quality experiences that make play accessible, educational, and fun for all. Our work is driven by the vision to foster joy, connections, laughter, and learning through purposeful play. We believe in a world where the value of learning through play is recognized and respected, backed by the science that demonstrates the power of play to transform the lives of children (and their families).

With 80,000 square feet of exhibits, experiences, and programs, a day at Port Discovery encourages children to use their imagination, explore how things work, build confidence, and learn and practice social and emotional skills. Since opening in 1998, the Museum has served over 5 million visitors as one of the Mid-Atlantic region's leading children's museum and is one of the top four most visited museums in Baltimore.



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