In August 2009, we found ourselves in the position of being the first organization to participate in the Heinz Endowments’ new “In the Spotlight” web blog. I’ll admit, it was scary to be first. But we decided to make the most of it, and for the two weeks we were “in the spotlight,” something wonderful happened. We came together, laughed a lot, danced the chicken dance and produced a look at the Children’s Museum that was uniquely ours.

You may ask, why the chicken dance? To that we say, why not? We have a chicken on the landing page of our website which, in many ways, helps us remember to not be so literal, to look at things with a child’s eye and to appreciate things for their sheer silliness. And any day you can flap your wings and “bok, bok” at your place of work is a good day.

So this year’s annual report is drawn largely from the Museum’s “In the Spotlight” material. Maybe it’s a little unorthodox – it’s definitely colorful, decidedly personal and distinctly the Children’s Museum. Many thanks to the Heinz Endowments for coaxing it out of us. We hope you enjoy it.

Sincerely,

Jane Werner
Executive Director

Chicken from the Museum’s website

Baby in a sink in the Studio

Surprises in Waterplay
Welcome

Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh experienced a tough but rewarding fiscal year 2008-09. Faced with the same economic pressures as everyone else in the country, we executed a $1 million contingency plan to help us weather the storm. It was not easy - we cut every cost we could, eliminated staff positions, cut raises, created new ways to fundraise, brought some services in-house, even taking on landscaping tasks as a team building exercise. We were determined to trim our budget without impacting the visitor experience.

But there was promising news - the Children’s Museum ended the year with record-breaking admissions in the fourth quarter and earned revenues that exceeded even our original budget goals. Our friends in the foundation community went above and beyond in their support of the Museum. The staff worked harder than ever, taking on new responsibilities, working more efficiently and finding economical ways to continue to creatively inspire, amuse and educate children and families. The Board provided invaluable counsel on weathering this economic climate and also increased its support of the Museum.

It is the stories of the Museum’s Board, supporters and staff that make up the blogs you will read as part of this annual report. As they are the people best equipped to tell what occurred at the Museum over this past year. Children know instinctively that there is nothing better than a good story, and we hope you agree.

With this past fiscal year behind us, we see that its adversity made us a stronger organization. We hope you continue to visit the Museum for afternoons of joy and discovery, and support our work in the new year. Let’s all look forward to continued growth and a bright future.

Sincerely,

Tom Mole
President, Board of Directors
Financial Information

Download the PDF below for the following financial information on Children's Museum of Pittsburgh:

- Statements of financial position
- Statements of activities and changes in net assets for the year ended June 30, 2009 with the comparative totals for 2008.

Financial Information PDF
Donors

Community support from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government enables the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh to offer quality exhibits and programs to children and families of this region. We wish to sincerely thank the contributors listed. We have included all gifts received from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009.

Many thanks to Trustee Emeritus Anne V. Lewis, whose Anne’s Superheroes donation program provided a challenge grant which inspired more than 100 people to make donations and bring more than 3,400 low-income kids to the Children’s Museum this year.

Thanks also to Trustee Emeritus Henry J. Gailliot who provided a challenge grant to the Children’s Museum’s Board of Directors.

To view the Children’s Museum Donor List for 2008-2009, please download the PDF below.

*If there is an error in a listing, please accept our apologies and notify the Museum’s Development Department at (412) 322-5058, ext. 217, so we may correct our records.*

[Donor List PDF]
Our Inspirations

We Don’t Do Cute

We don’t do “cute” at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh. We believe that children appreciate and respond to good design and art the way adults do ... they’re more likely to be stimulated, more likely to be inspired and more likely to learn in spaces filled with natural light, materials and color. The feel and look of a space sets the stage for the type of learning that occurs. By choosing design architects (Koning and Eizenberg), who intimately understood our program, and by integrating art by emerging artists throughout the building, we continue to challenge the way our visitors look at and think about the world. And that’s core to our mission of inspiring joy, creativity and curiosity.

So we don’t do cute. We will do silly. And we’re OK with that.

Blogger: Jane Werner, Executive Director

What Inspires Us?

Children really inspire us – their openness, curiosity and desire to understand and explore the world and how it works. Art and science intrigue us too. It’s pretty interesting to think about how artists and scientists also question how the world works and try to answer those questions, oftentimes through the playful manipulation of materials. The intersection of children, art and science is truly exciting!

We’ve embraced the concept of “Play with Real Stuff” at the Museum because hands and minds and the connection between the two is pretty fascinating. Kids want to know what adults do in the real world so we have real materials and tools such as hammers, saws and nails, paint, silkscreens, an intaglio press, a theater and lots of water, sand, mud and worms and outdoor space. Performers, artists, scientists and craftspeople and the work they do are all showcased. Children are asked to create and solve problems with real materials. It’s so satisfying to see the joy on their faces when they do. It’s nice to see the wonder on adults’ faces once in a while too.

There are a couple of quotes that capture how we feel about children and the Museum’s role in their lives. Pablo Picasso once said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” And two things Albert Einstein said that really resonated with us through the years are, “Experience is learning. Everything else is information” and “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

Blogger: Lois Winslow, Director of Education

Kids on a Mission at Children’s Museum
Exhibits

Fearless for Art

In addition to our interactive permanent exhibits, visitors had the opportunity to experience the traveling exhibits Exploring Trees Inside and Out, and Bob the Builder™-Project Build it with local presenting sponsor Mascaro Construction this past year.

I’ve always liked the way the Children’s Museum is fearless in presenting art to visitors. We rarely say no to an idea. How else do you end up with three large vats of bubbling clay slip that children dip their hands, arms and anything else into?

We are comfortable with offering unencumbered access to pots of paint, fat brushes, vats brimming with bright paper slurry, inky screens and vast amounts of paper on which visitors create their ideas of the world.

In an annual program called Tough Art, we invite four artists each summer to spend three months in the Museum getting to know us - then ask them to create a unique piece of art that will withstand the rigors of our visitors. After three years, pieces have included a stomping drum machine, giant 12-foot movable puppet, a maze made from recycled fabric, an invasive vine hut, and an LED sculpture featuring 800 twinkling lights.

This summer we began an artist series called F.I.N.E. Artists, supported by the Fine Foundation. The first artists created an art installation where visitors dressed in “imagination glasses” and cloaks, and told their memories in an environment filled with fluffy white cotton, midnight blue walls and crackling, electric orbs. The installation was called “The Library of Imagined Memories.” Other artists created speed portraits, played with a projected light spectrum and created a giant mural in the Indian rangoli style. There are more innovative artists to come.

We also commission permanent art which includes pieces where letters rain from the sky, rocks make music, mud bubbles and our building shimmers in the wind.

If I know one thing about the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh it is that we will continue to be unafraid to present art to our visitors that challenges and surprises them.

_Blogger: Penny Lodge, Director of Exhibits_
Museum Programs

Torches, Sews and Marshmallows

One of the great joys of designing public programs at the Children’s Museum is our commitment to keeping things fresh and surprising, and educating through interactive experiences. We have a great time relying on unique activities to immerse visitors in a topic. One example is our green programs. Most days you’ll find children and adults reusing materials in creative ways, like taking apart household appliances to learn about electrical circuits, upcycling used clothing into crazy costumes or building whimsical sculptures with egg cartons, coffee filters and buttons. But two of my all-time favorites are the Solar Concert Series and The DeCARstruction.

The Solar Concert Series is Pittsburgh’s first green concert series presented on a solar-powered sound system. Now in its second year, it presents 13 free, outdoor performances by local musicians throughout the summer. At an activity table nearby, visitors can make pinwheels one day as we discuss wind power or smash sunflower seeds to discover an alternative fuel. Part of the fun and sustainability of the series is working with our presenting partners The Saturday Light Brigade and New Hazlett Theater, and our presenting sponsor PPG.

The DeCARstruction was a wild project that started with a donated 1983 Jeep. After brainstorming what to do with it, we called in artist Kary Marshall and his team. They disassembled the Jeep piece by piece with torches and saws, over nine epic hours on a gorgeous November afternoon as visitors toasted marshmallows and danced to a car-themed soundtrack. Happily, Harry the Saturday Mechanic came around to talk about car parts. Then all the pieces disappeared, and the reCARstruction began. Kary unveiled a nine-foot tall outdoor sculpture that he built from parts of the old Jeep this past October, and the piece has a prominent place in our parking lot today.

Building with recycled materials in the Garage Workshop
The M.O.s perform at the Solar Concert Series
Taking apart a Jeep at DeCARstruction

Blogger: Angela Seals, Program Manager
Outreach Programs

Throwing, Hoe Downs and Laundry

The Children’s Museum brings programs beyond its four walls nearly 365 days out of the year with its Outreach program (www.pittsburghkids.org/outreach), expanding the Museum’s audience by nearly 130,000 people. Our travelling programs give us the opportunity to work closely with the community when they might not be able to travel to us or, worse yet, may not yet know about the Children’s Museum. We offer both fresh and innovative programs that push the limits and tried-and-tested programs developed over the years.

A memorable program from 2009 was LuminoCITY, an awe-inspiring interactive family art installation created in collaboration with artist Joe Wos, which was featured at Light Up Nights 2008 and 2009. Eventgoers kicked off the holiday season by lighting up a recycled steel Pittsburgh chyscape with magnetic LED “throwies” that they assembled and tossed onto the silhouette. Another innovative program was “Running Through the Sheets” by Joann Kellar, an installation introducing kids to the joys of an old-fashioned laundry day with wash tubs, wash boards and sheets to launder, hang up and run through. It debuted at the 2009 Three Rivers Arts Festival.

Blogger: Tara Primiero, Outreach Manager

One Dirty Little Secret

I’m often asked why I continue to tell stories to children. After all, I now have a Broadway career, performing in shows such as “Finian’s Rainbow” and “A Tale of Two Cities.” My cartooning career is going pretty swimmingly as well.

But the dirty little secret is, there is nothing I love more than standing alone in front of 300-400 children and bringing them into the world that I describe. The experience remains the most enriching thing I do as an artist. The kids see this live, rather scary looking middle-aged man standing before them. What is this guy going to do? How does he expect to keep our attention? Who does he think he is? And as I begin to spin my yarn, even a group that seemed restless and uninterested slowly becomes entranced. It works because we have a mutual understanding. Children, even in this age of computer games and TV overload, have an insatiable need to have their imaginations challenged. And even at 50 years old, I have that same need. Storytelling is said to be a dying art. But the truth is, storytelling is so basic to the way children learn about this world we live in, I don’t think it’s possible for it to ever truly pass away.

What I do as a storyteller is exhausting and challenging and sometimes a little silly. But I’m too selfish to give it up. And children need it too much for me to give it up.

Blogger: Tim Hartman, Children’s Museum Outreach Performer

LuminoCITY at First Night

Running Through the Sheets at the Three Rivers Arts Festival 2009

Storyteller Tim Hartman
Youth Programs

Age Consider and Youth Ventures

The YouthALIVE program at the Children's Museum strives to involve youth, especially those in our immediate North Side neighborhood, in meaningful activities that promote growth, self esteem and job skills. In our afterschool program, we encourage responsibility and productivity that lead members to career opportunities. We aim to serve "at-risk" neighborhood youth from 11 - 18 years old through fun activities with a strong concentration in the arts and sciences. This past summer the YouthALIVE kids and the summer Volunteer program got their hands into green-themed projects – they planted a garden in the front of the Museum complete with wind chimes and bamboo, and started an herb garden in the Museum's Backyard.

The Summer Volunteer program is the shorter of the two programs, but jam packed with fun. One highlight is the students' chance to work with UNICEF and the one minute Foundation to create their own one-minute videos. Recently, videos by Noël Leasure and Matthew Rutkowski were chosen as finalists in the Strange-Festival 2009 in Amsterdam, and Nomil's video, "Alice Doesn't Live There Anymore," won in the category of (Self) Portrait. Check out all of the videos below.

Blogger: Julia Vandra Thurmond, Youth Programs Manager

My experiences were both very fun and educational with the YouthALIVE program and the Summer Volunteer program. In YouthALIVE we did lots of fun things like went on cool field trips and learned cool stuff. For example, we saw what happens to your lungs when you smoke and all of the different chemicals that are in cigarettes. It surprised me because I would have never known what is in them. Also, we learned about different robots at Carnegie Mellon University and how some went to Mars and different places.

The Summer Volunteer program has given me lots of information about jobs. It's helping me get ready for the workplace. I get to see how the Museum is everyday. The program gets you prepared for jobs and how to communicate with your employer. Also, I've never worked with younger kids, but now I know what that's like.

Blogger: Arikeela Glenn, Age 14, CAPA High School
Our Partners

One of the Children’s Museum’s defining ideas for its expansion in 2004 was that we would affordably rent office space to other organizations that work with or on behalf of children. We call these organizations our partners — currently they are Child Watch (www.childwatchpgh.org), two Pittsburgh Public School’s pre-K classrooms (www.pghpsn.org), Reading is Fundamental Pittsburgh (www.ripf.org), SLB Radio Productions (www.slbradio.org), Sense of Place Learning (www.senseofplacelearning.org) and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning in Out of School Environments (UPCLOSE) (http://upclose.lrc.pitt.edu). Recent collaborations with our partners have been fulfilling and fun, and made an impact. Just to name a few — summer camps and the Solar Concert Series with SLB Radio Productions, Read Across America with RIF, and providing snacks and activities for the waiting room of Allegheny County Family Court with Child Watch. The research that UPCLOSE has conducted here in learning in a museum setting assists us immeasurably as we develop new activities and exhibits (http://purl.org/UPCLOSEPaper).

We found that by sharing office space with like-minded organizations in an incubator-type setting, we don’t lose needed space, privacy or control — we gain valuable collaborations and unique ways to benefit all of our audiences. And that adds to the fun and unpredictability of working at the Children’s Museum each day.

Blogger: Suzanne McCaffrey, Associate Director of Marketing and Multimedia Communications

Moving Out of My Parents’ Basement

One of this year’s successes was the maturation of one of our former partners, ToonSeum (http://www.toonseum.org), a museum of cartoon art. ToonSeum came out of Woo Stridio, which became our partner in 2005. ToonSeum created its own gallery in a hallway of the Children’s Museum in October 2007, and moved into its own venue in the Pittsburgh Cultural District in October 2009. This is an excerpt from ToonSeum founder Joe Wos’ experiences as a Children’s Museum partner:

...Two years ago I approached the Children’s Museum with a proposal to create a cartoon art gallery at the museum. It was a museum within a museum, a ToonSeum, one of only four museums dedicated to cartoon art in the nation. (The others are in New York and California.)

The Children’s Museum acted as an incubator space for our museum. Don’t let the venue fool you — we presented some pretty grown up exhibitions too, from Zippy to MAD Magazine...I like to think we brought a little older, and perhaps odder, audience to the Children’s Museum. We view ourselves as somewhere between The Warhol and the Children’s Museum, both physically and aesthetically. We present the most Pop of all Pop Art, and present it to kids and their families.

And now the ToonSeum has grown up too. We [moved] into our own space in downtown Pittsburgh’s Cultural District...I know we will continue to work closely with the Children’s Museum, and I will continue to perform there as well.

The Children’s Museum was a teacher, and in many ways a parent to a new organization. And now, like so many comic book geeks who have gone before us, it’s time to move out of our parents’ basement and get a place of our own.

Blogger: Joe Wos, Founder of ToonSeum and Children’s Museum performer
Our Work in the Community

Outside Our Walls

The Museum's work in the community is part of our strategic plan to strengthen our neighborhood for all children and families. Here are two of our initiatives:

Building on the success of the Family Waiting Room at the Allegheny County Jail that the Children's Museum helped design in collaboration with the Child Guidance Foundation and the jail's warden, the Museum is now involved in an effort to create a family reunification center within the jail.

The district-wide program known as the Charm Bracelet Project has combined our sister and brother organizations on Pittsburgh's Northside in inventive partnerships outside of their walls and into the streets. Through open dialog and cooperation, organizations have implemented creative projects such as Serve & Project (matching neighborhood youth with neighborhood seniors to record and share each others stories), Fresh Fridays at the Northside Farmers Market, kayaking in historic Lake Elizabeth and Community Art Labs.

These projects are having an impact on non-profit institutional advancement, neighborhood revitalization, public/private ventures, artistic and design excellence and community development. Collectively, through a density of activity, public programs and forward thinking initiatives, the institutions of the Northside are truly building community and making a difference.

Bloggers: Jane Werner, Executive Director, and Chris Seifert, Deputy Director

Chalk art at a family event outside of the Allegheny County Jail

Kayaking on Lake Elizabeth, West Park

Art activity at Fresh Fridays at the Northside Farmers' Market
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For me, having the honor of being invited to serve on the Board of the Children’s Museum was such a great fit. I essentially have three children less than three years of age and we spend countless hours at the Museum already. When a Board member that serves currently asked me if I’d be interested in getting involved, an enthusiastic YES was my response. When I met with the executive team, I was sold immediately…not that I needed to be. It is rare when it comes to Board support to truly feel like you are appreciated and that everyone really wants to make a difference.

Being on the Board for a little bit under a year, I’ve already started working with the Director of Marketing to brainstorm new ideas and I truly feel like part of a team. With Jane Werner’s leadership, the strategy that goes behind every decision at the Museum also attracted me to the organization. Some places I’ve worked with in the past have a bit more lax attitude about decision processes, which never fares well. What makes the Children’s Museum such a well-oiled machine is the relentless commitment, dedicated staff time and effort and sheer ingenuity that all starts with Jane. I am so happy with ‘my place’ at the museum and I hope to continue my work with them for a long time. A unique organization that makes me feel welcome all the time: whether I am walking into a Board meeting, or visiting for fun with my family.

Blogger: Georgette Pascale, Board Member