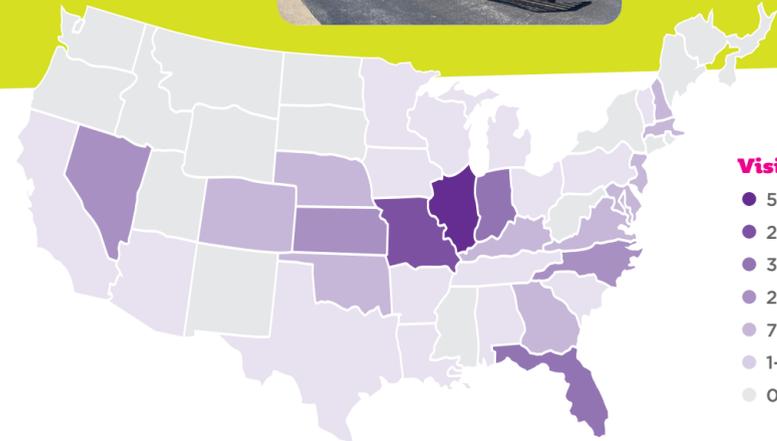


Bringing Families Together with Special Events at ECM

Our special events attract people from surrounding counties and southern Illinois, and this year, ECM's calendar was packed with fun for kids and their families!

- Fire Trucks & Fun
- Dino Night
- Kindergarten Kickoff
- Train Day
- Jingles & Jammies
- New Years at Noon



Visitors From Near & Far

- 5,000 and above
- 200-4999
- 37-199
- 20-36
- 7-19
- 1-6
- 0

Coming This Spring! Route 66 Roadway



With grants from the Rivers & Routes Tourism Board and the State of Illinois, ECM's Discovery Garden is on track to capture the freedom, adventure, and history of Route 66 and reimagine it for today's young thrill-seekers!

Kids can get their kicks by climbing into mini pedal cars at the H&F Exteriors Garage, fuel up at the Phillips 66 Filling Station, and cruise our mini Mother Road (while keeping an eye out for the stoplights!).

A special roadside attraction - the Water Play Area sponsored by American Water - gives drivers the chance to stop and play at the three-level water table

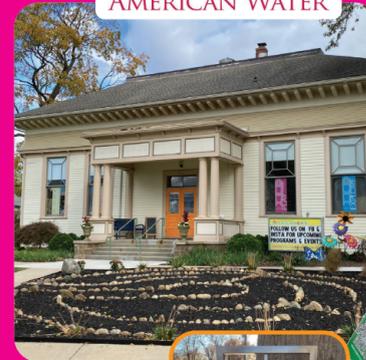
and learn how the Missouri and Mississippi River Confluence shaped travel and trade in the Riverbend area.

Peace Garden

This Spring, visitors can experience the wonder of the Museum before even stepping through our front door!

Our new Peace Garden, located on the front lawn of the Museum, features a labyrinth maze where a friendly minotaur waits amidst the twists and turns, a snake-themed pathway inspired by the exhibits indoors, and a selfie-ready giant butterfly embellished with art created by ECM visitors.

Of special importance is the new Anne Frank memorial. By peering through the metal window sculpture, guests can observe ECM's chestnut tree, the Franks' only connection to nature while in hiding and a symbol of peace and hope in difficult times.



ECM for All Program

The cost of museum admission can be a barrier for many families. Edwardsville Children's Museum is a member of Museums for All, a nationally branded access program that encourages individuals of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum habits.

Thanks to the generosity of our presenting sponsors, Kaskaskia Engineering and Revity Credit Union, and the Friends of ECM for All sponsors, ECM is proud to offer free admission to visitors presenting their EBT card and field trip scholarships to qualifying preschool programs and schools.

Presenting Sponsors



Learn More and Become a Sponsor by Visiting Our Website



2023 Annual Report

Celebrating 20 Years at the Children's Museum!

For two decades, the Edwardsville Children's Museum has been a place for families in our community to enjoy unforgettable experiences together. Like any organization, we've faced challenges and obstacles over the years, but we've always persevered. And now, we're watching our dreams come true through the eyes of our precious little visitors. This year, we're elated to celebrate our 20th anniversary and invite families near and far to come enjoy everything we have to offer!



Explore innovative exhibits that have captured the hearts of children and adults alike. Discover the wonders of our brand-new attractions, handcrafted to inspire curiosity and foster learning. Whether it's unleashing your imagination in the redesigned Makerspace or embarking from the H&F Exteriors Garage on a journey down the Route 66 Roadway, there's something for everyone at ECM!

We appreciate your support of our beloved Museum over the years, as we only dreamt of these new exhibits and expansions! While we're never done improving, we are so excited to share all that's new. So...grab your kids, grandkids, friends, and neighbors, and we'll see you soon! We know you'll make lasting memories here as you learn and play together.



edwcm.org



35,000 Visitors



25 Programs And Events



251 Birthday Parties



526 New Family Memberships



363 People Through Museums For All

Stories of the Nickel Plate

The Edwardsville Children's Museum is thrilled to present the new "Stories of the Nickel Plate" exhibit in the Windland Education Center at Nickel Plate Station.



This interactive exhibit uses visuals and audio to introduce children and their families to four storytellers with a special connection to the station. From Phillip Schaefer, who boarded a train for boot camp during World War I, to Mildred Shaw who taught for more than 20 years at LeClaire Kindergarten, "Stories of the Nickel Plate" fuses the stories of the station with defining moments in our region's history.

Children can also create their own train-themed memories by experiencing the exhibit's hands-on activities. By climbing aboard ECM's new eight-foot wooden replica train, they can imagine having a meal in the dining car or play the role of railway post office clerks by using their speed and skills to collect mail bags along their journey. Nickel Plate Station has played a significant role in the development of Edwardsville, and we're proud that it continues to make a positive impact on our community as an education center through ECM.



Family Firefly Nights for the Micro Forest Citizen Science Project

Funded by Phillips 66, the Micro Forest Citizen Science Project let kids get their hands dirty and perform real-world research on the ecological impact of the ECM Micro Forest, our two-acre urban woodlands featuring more than 300 native trees and plants.

We hosted a series of firefly nights where young scientists counted lightning bugs for the Mass Audubon national Firefly

Watch database. The goal of this project was to help kids learn how the Micro Forest is enhancing local biodiversity and share their data with scientists from across the country who are tracking the fireflies' geographic movements.



See What's New Dreams do come true!

INSIDE THE MUSEUM

RP Lumber Observation Deck

From our new wooden deck off the Canopy Treehouse, little bird-watchers can strap on their binoculars to search for feathered and furry friends hiding out in the Museum.



Goshen Market

Thanks to the Bank of Hillsboro, kids can learn how local producers bring their fruits, vegetables, and breads to Edwardsville's beloved farmers' market, and their families can get the scoop on upcoming market events.



Animal Hospital

Hawthorne Animal Hospital has reinvested in their popular pet-care exhibit with a new grooming station, boarding area, and examination tables to provide today's animal lovers and tomorrow's vets with engaging, hands-on learning.

Makerspace

With a grant from Cardinals Care, ECM installed a new light board for an illuminating approach to freestyle art and upgraded to a museum-quality ball wall that lets young engineers tinker and creatively problem solve.



IN THE DISCOVERY GARDEN

Secret Garden & Farm to Table Kitchen

Handcrafted by landscape architects Envisioning Green, our new outdoor patio is designed for downtime when kids - and caregivers - need a quick break from the excitement of the Museum. Envisioning Green also constructed a kid-sized outdoor kitchen and dining table alongside our garden beds to introduce kids to the "farm-to-table" dining concept, giving them the chance to play chef for the day.



Sensory Garden

Guests are also encouraged to wander the tactile path that meanders through the Sensory Garden. Along the journey, kids can ignite their five senses, whether touching the fuzzy or prickly leaves, listening to sounds from the wind chimes, or tasting fresh herbs from the garden.



Letters from Our Leaders

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to first recognize the outstanding efforts of the museum staff. Kristen Fries has led the museum through its largest transformation to date. Her passion and love for our organization inspire us all, and we are so grateful for her and her team.

Next, I want to thank our community, donors, members, and sponsors. Your generosity has been integral to our growth this year, and your contributions will impact generations through joyful learning experiences.

And to my fellow Board members, thank you for all your efforts in 2023. With new funding and growth comes new challenges for leadership, and I'm so blessed to be surrounded by such a talented group of people.

Sarah Wells
ECM Board President

2023 was a year of growth. Our visitors and memberships increased. We grew organizationally, promoting our talented team. We added new exhibits inside and outside the museum. It was a very busy, but very exciting year!

The Discovery Garden expansion project seemed like only a dream, yet incredibly became a reality in just one year.

The Windland gift in 2022 provided the means to collaborate with SWT Design, whose comprehensive plan was the foundation for ECM winning two state tourism grants. Many thanks to Dr. Abby Schwent, Cory Jobe, and the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau for their assistance securing these funds for our Discovery Garden expansion project.

We are thrilled to see our dreams become a reality, and we invite you to visit the Edwardsville Children's Museum to experience all that is new in 2024!

Kristen Fries
Executive Director



Meet the Dream Team

In 2023, our focus was on strong leadership and the health of our organization. Through the restructuring of job duties, we were able to take ECM in an exciting new direction!

We are extremely thankful to our incredible employees for their dedication, eagerness to step up into new roles, and willingness to share their talents with us. With their support, our Executive Director focused on securing game-changing grants and donations, while managing the design and build of our new exhibits. This wonderful team effort allowed us to accomplish several expansion projects and upgrades at the Museum.

