



March 29, 2024

Ms. Rachel Dody, Founder & Board President  
Grand Haven Children's Museum

Dear Ms. Dody,

Thank you for sharing the information regarding plans to establish a Grand Haven Children's Museum. Based on the materials you provided and my previous experience with youth education and development, it is my great pleasure to provide this letter of support.

Your Mission, Vision, and Values statements clearly articulate your focus on early childhood learning using the concept of play-based experiential activities. This approach to early childhood learning and development has been acknowledged as a successful educational platform and has been widely adopted by numerous organizations. Providing youth with the opportunity to learn and develop through structured play expands a child's cognitive development, teaches problem solving skills, fosters collaboration, and creates a sense that "learning is fun."

There is also tremendous value in locating a children's museum in Grand Haven. Grand Haven is a popular destination, particularly during the summer. A children's museum will add a unique dimension to established attractions such as the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration and the Coast Guard Festival. More important, a Grand Haven Children's Museum would be an attraction in its own right, drawing school groups and families to Grand Haven for this educational experience.

I am also impressed with your emphasis on incorporating families into the play-base educational experience. Having families involved in play-base learning builds connections within families due to the shared experience and provides the opportunity for continued play-based learning within the family after a visit to the museum.

Finally, I can tell you I am very excited to know that "environmental stewardship" and water will receive special focus. As you know, the R.B. Annis Water Resource Institute is deeply committed to educating youth about the importance of water and our environment. The concept you have outlined clearly aligns with our mission and presents the real possibility for our two organizations to collaborate on a single shared goal, that is, educating youth about our environment.

In conclusion, your goal to establish a Grand Haven Children's Museum is well worth the effort and will bring a unique educational experience to West Michigan. I fully support your efforts and look forward to any opportunities to collaborate on future educational projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Mark R. Luttenton'.

*Mark R. Luttenton, Ph.D.*  
Interim Director - R. B. Annis Water Resources Institute  
Program Director, MS in Water Resource Policy  
Professor of Biology