

STROLL

Spring Lake



**MEET THE
BALL FAMILY**

*Welcome
Summertime!*



2.



3.



4.



Explore, Dream, Discover – Local Group Making Plans for a Children’s Museum

Spring Lake resident Rachel Dody remembers visiting the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum with her husband and young daughter for the first time more than seven years ago. “We left the museum feeling inspired and wanting more. I remember saying something like, *“How great would it be if we had a children’s museum like that close to home?”*”

The reflection seemed insignificant at the time but the idea followed her around and worked its way into conversations, first with friends and family, then with neighbors, then with community. As Rachel heard more and more support for the idea, and about the need in the community, she started meeting people who shared the vision and wanted to help.

After more than 150 conversations over nearly a year, a group formed and got to work to move the talk into action, and the Grand Haven Children’s Museum was born.

“We all agreed that the kids in our community deserve local access to the highest quality play and learning opportunities,” Rachel said. “We looked around and saw that South Haven, St Joe, Ludington, and Traverse City all had thriving children’s museums so we said, if they can do it for their kids, we can do it for ours.”

WHY HAVE OTHER COMMUNITIES INVESTED?

Play and hands-on learning have been studied a lot over the years. The result? They’re important. They’re foundational in healthy child development –

- creativity,
- confidence,
- problem solving,
- collaboration,
- and resilience

are all developed when a child plays and does hands-on learning. And children’s museums are places that champion just that. They have a positive impact in a community, creating enrichment that is wide and deep and lasts for generations. When a community invests in a children’s museum, they invest in:

- the joyful learning and development of children,
- the support of parents and caregivers,
- positive relationships between children, family, and community,
- enriched, connected learning experiences for field trips,
- the wellbeing of volunteers,
- and the attractiveness and vitality of the community as a whole.

WHAT, EXACTLY, IS A CHILDREN’S MUSEUM?

Non-profit children’s museums are community-wide investments in the development and enrichment of children and families, helping create foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

They’re open-ended environments that inspire the next generation of designers, problem-solvers, and collaborators through play and hands-on learning. These museums have exhibit and theatre spaces for pretend play and exploration, art studios and maker’s spaces for hands-on creative projects, and community gathering spaces.

“My family’s visited children’s museums throughout U.S.,” Rachel describes, “and my three kids just love them because they’re places designed especially for kids. They’re vibrant, joy-filled places for us to visit and enjoy and learn about the world together.”

SO WHAT ARE THE PLANS?

The Grand Haven Children’s Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit led by an all-volunteer board of directors, many of whom are Spring Lake residents, who recognize the enormous impact a children’s museum will have in our community.

OUR BOARD:

- President: Rachel Dody, MHA – Children’s Museum founder
- Vice President: Jennie Nowak, MSW – Director of Population Health Activation, Priority Health
- Secretary: Tiffany VanderKolk – Attorney, Scholten Fant
- Treasurer: Grant Veurink, CPA – Global Controller, Shape Corp.
- Katie Appold, MPA – Nonprofit Consultant, Nonprofit Nav; Executive Director of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems
- Martha Bottomley – Retired Executive Director, Volunteer Muskegon
- Dr. Alison Fox, MD – Pediatrician, Port City Pediatrics

Gabrielle Gerlach – CEO, Muskegon • YMCA

- Elizabeth Griffin – Youth Services Librarian, Loutit District Library
- Kelly Grimes – Retired Educator, GHAPS
- Dr. Angela Zondervan – Clinical Affiliate Faculty, Finance Department, GVSU

OUR MISSION:

We help children and their grownups build foundations for lifelong well-being through the power of play and hands-on learning.

OUR VISION:

We plan to create a high-quality children’s museum, like the Grand

Rapids or Chicago Children’s Museum, here along the lakeshore.

We’ll showcase what makes the Tri-Cities special, featuring things like the Coast Guard and our natural resources, and showcasing innovation and work of local industry, translated into play and hands on learning.

The board has yet to choose a location for the museum but is talking with the City of Grand Haven and others about the decision. We expect to have almost as many visitors as the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum and want to make sure we can serve them all while providing a high-quality, enjoyable experience. We’d like to build a new museum and anticipate it would open in 2025 or early 2026.





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Families with young children are always looking for kid-friendly things to do. A local children's museum will give our families and visitors a wonderful place to play, learn, and make connections right here in our community. It will also make the Tri-Cities area wildly attractive for families who are looking to buy a home or making other local investments, who, more and more, are considering family-friendly amenities like children's museums.

Rachel's young daughter who experienced the Grand Rapids Children's Museum with her years ago, is now eight. Just like mom, she's also making plans... to hold a lemonade stand fundraiser, with proceeds benefitting the new Grand Haven Children's Museum.



Visit GrandHavenChildrensMuseum.org for more information and ways to be involved.

Who do you know in our Spring Lake Community that is doing something to make a difference? Let's tell their story! Contact jennifer.brewster@n2co.com

PHOTOS

1. Norah Dody plays doctor at the Sandcastles Children's Museum in Ludington
2. Lauren, Beckett, and Norah Dody (pictured left to right) experiment with aerodynamics in the Tinker Lab, at the Chicago Children's Museum
3. Norah (center) and Lauren Dody learn about farming at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis
4. Norah, Beckett, and Lauren Dody (pictured left to right) play on a sailboat outside the Great Lakes Children's Museum in Traverse City
- 5) The Dody Kids in front of the USCG Cutter Spar, 2022 Coast Guard Fest

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