

# Annual Report

GCM Fiscal Year  
Oct 2023- Sept 2024

let's  
play.

Glazer  
Children's  
Museum



# Playing It Back: A Year in Review

It is my honor to present this year’s Annual Report, a celebration of a record-breaking year for Glazer Children’s Museum, where we welcomed over 250,000 guests into our world of play, learning, and discovery. This incredible milestone underscores our commitment to creating meaningful play experiences for children and families, guided by the four goals of our Strategic Plan.

## Goal 1: Ignite A Shared Passion for Play

In 2024, we advanced this goal in exciting ways, from groundbreaking research to innovative community initiatives. With the support of a prestigious research grant from the Lilly Endowment, we laid the foundation for our *Play Builds Character initiative*, creating a framework and tools that will inform our future work and shape how we support character growth through play for years to come. We also celebrated play on a national stage as our Big John exhibit, featuring the world’s largest triceratops skeleton, attracted attention from PBS’s *Secrets of the Dead* and the popular children’s YouTube show *Meekah*. Additionally, our programs continued to inspire the next generation, with teens, tweens, and young adults engaging through research and volunteerism, contributing nearly 1,000 volunteer hours over the last year.

## Goal 2: Provide Powerful Play Experiences

This year’s record-setting attendance of over 250,000 guests speaks to the impact of our exciting new exhibits and playful events. Traveling exhibitions like *Very Eric Carle* and *The Questioners* brought storybook favorites to life, and inspired creativity, curiosity, and connection for families. Events such as Pi Day, Evening of Play, and Birthday Bash offered unique opportunities for guests to celebrate the power of play together in new, memorable ways; ensuring every visit is both engaging and unforgettable.

## Goal 3: Identify & Remove Barriers

Our commitment to accessibility remains strong thanks to the generosity of our community. Our Financial Access Programs like Museums for All, Children’s Board Free Tuesday, and Title 1 School Scholarships expanded access for thousands, including nearly 7,000 students from Title 1 schools who visited on field trips at no cost to them. Additionally, our *Learn & Play Tampa Bay* program, generously funded by the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County, saw a surge in its participant completion rate thanks to our innovative new components that empowered even more families to build connections through play.

## Goal 4: Operate with Fiscal & Social Responsibility

We are proud to have achieved a year of financial stability and record-breaking engagement thanks to the trust and generosity of our community. Every contribution is an investment in a brighter future for Tampa Bay, empowering families and shaping a community that values creativity, learning, and growth.

Thank you for your continued support. Let’s make 2025 another year of meaningful impact, growth, and, of course, PLAY!

**Sarah Cole**  
President & CEO



Glazer  
Children's  
Museum

## Mission

GCM’s mission is to create and foster engaging, impactful PLAY experiences for children and families to learn and thrive.

## Vision

Our vision is a community that values PLAY as the foundation for the Learning and development of children and families across generations.

## Values

Play | Experimentation | Equity & Inclusion | Collaboration | Sustainability

### Goal 1

Ignite a shared passion for the power of play by engaging children, families, and the entire community.

**Pages 4-5**

### Goal 2

Provide powerful, playful experiences that excite and engage children, their families, and the entire community.

**Pages 6-7**

### Goal 3

Identify and remove barriers so every child and family in our community has access to powerful play and feels welcome.

**Pages 8-9**

### Goal 4

Operate a fiscally sustainable and socially responsible organization to keep GCM growing, evolving, and innovating to meet the needs of our community.

**Pages 10-11**

“

The camp offers my son an invaluable opportunity to practice and refine skills crucial for his everyday life, all while feeling included and supported.

”

**- CAMP IMAGINATION PARENT**





## National Spotlight

Our impact this year also reached a national audience. Our Big John exhibit, showcasing the world's largest triceratops skeleton, attracted attention from PBS's *Secrets of the Dead* and the children's YouTube show *Meekah*. These media programs drew viewers from across the country and emphasized the role of play in sparking curiosity and learning.

*Meekah visits with Baby John after filming a viral video with Big John, The Triceratops*

## Pioneers of Play

### GOAL 1: IGNITE A SHARED PASSION FOR PLAY

At Glazer Children's Museum, play is at the heart of everything we do. This year, we worked to expand the reach and impact of our play-based approach through innovative research, key partnerships, and new community initiatives that inspire the joy of play across all ages.

## Inspiring the Next Generation

We are equally dedicated to igniting a passion for play in the next generation of leaders, inviting tweens, teens, and young adults to engage with play in meaningful ways. Through a partnership with the University of Tampa's psychology department, student researchers volunteered 127 hours to study the effects of play-based learning, deepening our understanding of play's impact on development. Additionally, our popular *Teen Play Leader* program continued to give teens aged 14-17 hands-on experience in museum operations and play-based learning. This year, we expanded the program to include *Tween Play Leaders*, empowering participants as young as 12 to become role models in our playful environment. In total, our interns and Teen & Tween Play Leaders volunteered an impressive 949 hours, contributing to a shared mission that reaches and inspires our entire community.



*Tween Play Leaders assist with a Camp Imagination program*

## Play Builds Character

Last year, Glazer Children's Museum was honored to receive a prestigious research grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., focused on fostering character development in children's museums. Through an extensive yearlong research process involving a literature review and insights from community partners, parents, and character experts, we identified four foundational traits—wonder, kindness, resilience, and self-awareness—that serve as building blocks for all other character traits. These findings guided the creation of Play Builds Character, a framework to support character growth through play that will shape the museum's philosophy for years to come.

We are thrilled to share that this work has earned us a transformative \$2.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. Over the next five years, this funding will allow us to implement our findings in groundbreaking ways across our programs and exhibits.

## Tampa Bay Play Network

We further amplified our mission by founding the *Tampa Bay Play Network*, a coalition of play and early childhood professionals dedicated to spreading a shared passion for play throughout Tampa Bay. This network brings together local organizations to create broader community awareness around the importance of play for child development and family well-being.



## Taking Play to New Heights

### GOAL 2: PROVIDE POWERFUL PLAY EXPERIENCES

This year, Glazer Children's Museum continued to create new and engaging experiences, ensuring each visit brought fresh opportunities for children and families to connect, explore, and have fun. In 2024, our focus on immersive play helped us reach a record-breaking 250,000 guests who experienced the museum's magic firsthand.

In 2024, we introduced two major traveling exhibits—*Very Eric Carle* and *The Questioners*—which brought beloved storybook characters to life. *Very Eric Carle: A Very Hungry, Quiet, Lonely, Clumsy, Busy Exhibit* invited children into the pages of Eric Carle's colorful *Very* series. Kids became the Very Hungry Caterpillar, wove webs like the Very Busy Spider, and created art inspired by Carle's collage style. Each activity inspired curiosity, creativity, and friendship by immersing families in the wonders of nature and imagination.

In *The Questioners: Read. Question. Think. PLAY!*, children joined Ada Twist, Scientist; Rosie Revere, Engineer; and their friends in an adventure through science, engineering, and design. Through hands-on experiences, kids designed with Iggy, solved problems with Ada, and imagined positive change with Sofia, empowering them to ask questions, think big, and explore their world.

Beyond exhibits, our events also brought new ways to play. *Evening of Play* invited adults to rediscover play with an open bar, classic games, and the museum's exhibits all to themselves. *Birthday Bash*, a free community celebration, marked the museum's 14th anniversary with live entertainment, food, games, and family-friendly fun in the park. And on March 14, *Pi Day* took play to a whole new level! Celebrating Einstein's birthday and the number pi, families joined in a playful pie fight in the park. With goggles, ponchos, and plenty of pies, guests enjoyed a day of messy, math-themed fun.

With these engaging exhibits and events, Glazer Children's Museum continues to make every visit extraordinary, offering something new for everyone to discover, enjoy, and remember.



Sarah cuts the ribbon at the *Very Eric Carle* opening ceremony



Families play at *The Questioners Exhibit* ribbon cutting



Guests enjoy parachute play at our adult event, *Evening of Play*

We want kids to feel inspired to read more and explore their own creativity, and the Glazer Children's Museum is the perfect place for them to do that.

- BHARAT CHHABRIA, DONOR

*The Chhabria Family reads the Very Hungry Caterpillar in the Very Eric Carle Exhibit*



# Play is for Everyone

## GOAL 3: IDENTIFY & REMOVE BARRIERS

Our commitment goes beyond providing exciting new experiences to keep children and their families engaged in play. We must also ensure everyone in our community can access our incredible exhibits and play-based programs. With so many families in our community facing financial hardship, we continue to prioritize our financial access programs. Here are some of the exciting strides we have made this year.



A family shops in the Publix Exhibit

## 1 in 4 Guests Visit for Free or Reduced Admission

### Museums for All

As a proud member of the national *Museums for All* initiative, Glazer Children’s Museum offers \$3 admission for up to four guests to families receiving EBT, WIC, or SNAP benefits. This year, 13% of our total visitors accessed the museum through this program—directly mirroring the 13% of Hillsborough County residents who qualify for these benefits. This significant alignment demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the museum serves the economic diversity of our community and challenges the notion that museums primarily cater to affluent audiences. Through Museums for All, we’re proud to make high-quality, play-based learning accessible to all children and families across Tampa Bay.

### Title 1 School Scholarships

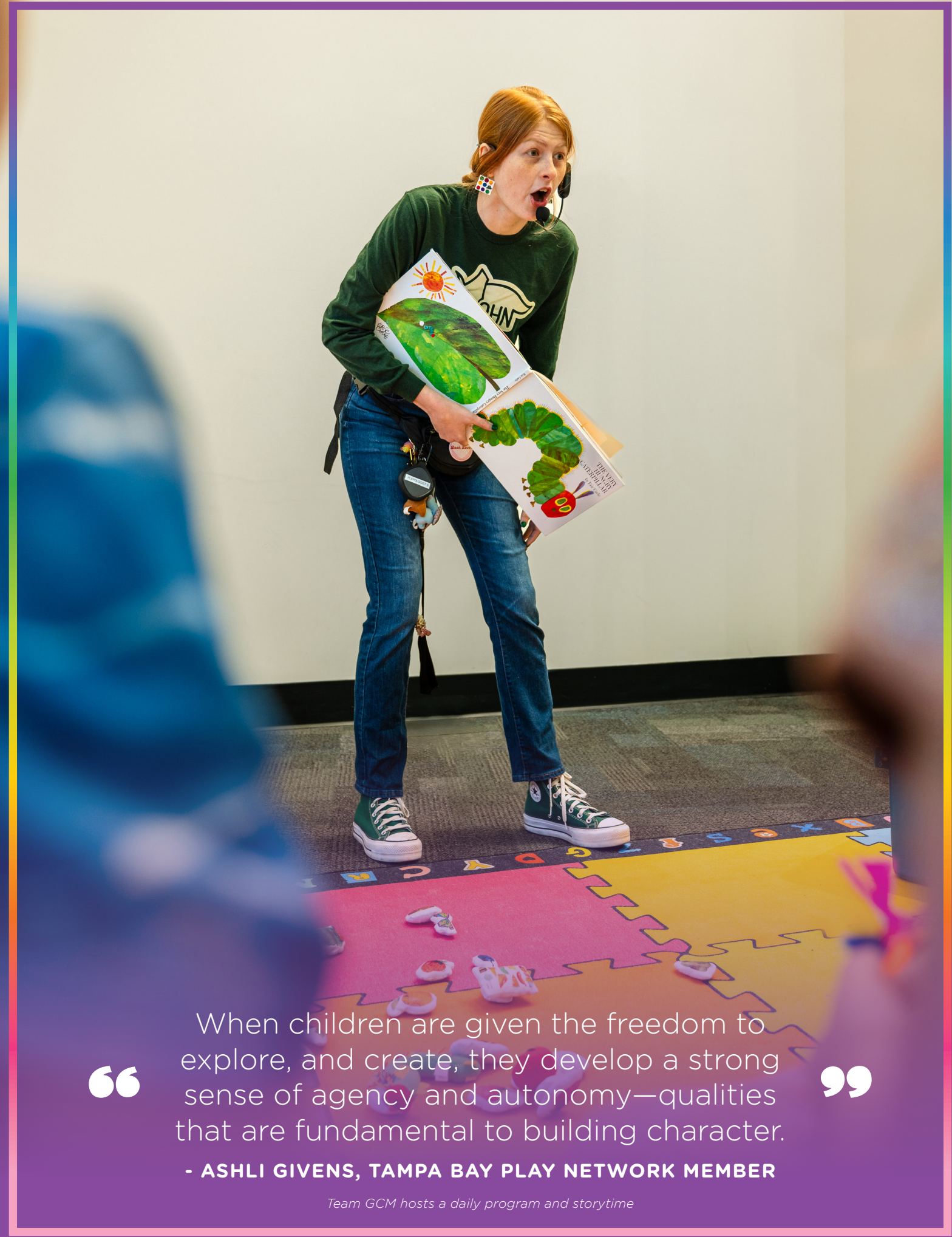
Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors, this year’s Imagination gala made an extraordinary impact by raising enough to support field trip scholarships for nearly 7,000 students from Title 1 Schools—a remarkable 65% increase from last year. This expansion demonstrates our steadfast commitment to ensuring that every student in Hillsborough County has access to transformative, play-based learning experiences that bring classroom lessons to life. By empowering students to explore, create, and grow in a space designed just for them, we are shaping the future of our community, one child at a time. Thank you to our supporters for helping us make this ambitious goal a reality.

### Learn & Play Tampa Bay

In 2023 and 2024, we enhanced our free, bilingual Learn & Play program with a range of thoughtful additions that have transformed the experience for families and yielded exceptional results. By introducing Neighborhood Play Squads to foster connections, establishing Family Focus Areas to reinforce learning, and expanding our curriculum to promote home play, we created a more comprehensive support system for families. These changes have led to an impressive increase in our completion rate from 29% to a staggering 74% in 2024. Funding for this program is generously provided by the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County.

### Children’s Board Free Tuesday

The museum offers free admission for all on the first Tuesday of each month. In 2024, we are proud to have welcomed over 20,000 guests for free during these events, an impressive 23% increase from last year.



“

When children are given the freedom to explore, and create, they develop a strong sense of agency and autonomy—qualities that are fundamental to building character.

”

- ASHLI GIVENS, TAMPA BAY PLAY NETWORK MEMBER

Team GCM hosts a daily program and storytime



# Playing the Long Game

## GOAL 4: OPERATE WITH FISCAL & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our commitment to fiscal stewardship and community impact continues to drive every facet of our work, making 2024 a record-breaking year with over 250,000 guests joining us in play and discovery. Transparency, accountability, and real, impactful change remain at the core of our organization. We're grateful for the trust and support of our community, whose contributions fuel the programs that make a real difference in families' lives. Every dollar is an investment in a brighter future, creating meaningful change and empowering families across Tampa Bay. Thank you for joining us in this journey and making these accomplishments possible.



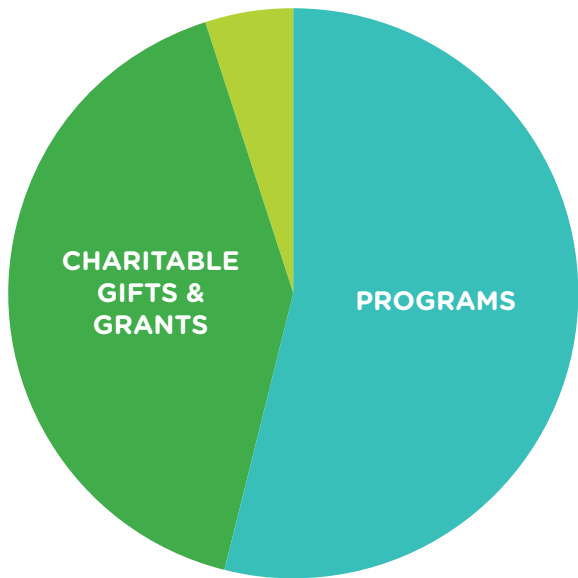
The Kairos Exchange generously presents a check to GCM

TECO helps cut the ribbon at The Questioners exhibit opening

## Financial Stewardship and Community Impact

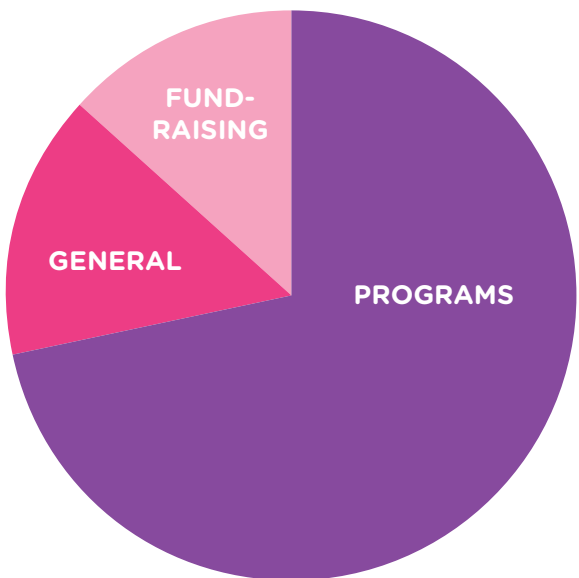
**Revenue:**

Programs	54%	\$2,866,194
Charitable Gifts & Grants	41%	\$1,464,034
Other Revenue	5%	\$225,954
Investment Income	0%	\$225,954
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4,571,404</b>



**Expenses:**

Programs	71%	\$3,208,574
General	16%	\$738,365
Fundraising	13%	\$583,375
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4,530,314</b>



“

GCM’s focus on play as the cornerstone of their museum and its development provides a fresh feel in supporting the learning of curiosity, honesty, and the like.

”

- DR. JENNIFER S. BLESSING, UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA



**257,735**  
**Guests**

Visited GCM in FY 2024



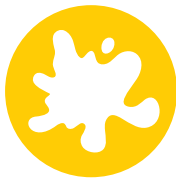
**24,085**  
**Students**

Visited GCM on a Field Trip



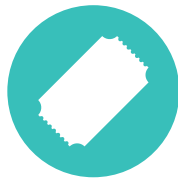
**20%**

Guests were  
Annual Members



**960**  
**Campers**

Attended GCM’s Camp Imagination



**28%**

Guests visited through  
Financial Access Programs



**25%**

Campers during Neuro-Affirming  
Camp identified as neurodivergent



**78,764**

Guests participated in  
our Daily Programs



**5,746**  
**Participants**

Served through Learn & Play





“ I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the dedication, innovation, and expertise that the team at GCM brings to their mission of education and inspiring the children our community. ”

- BLAINE J. FLOWERS, PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

*Imagination Gala is the largest single fundraiser for the Glazer Children's Museum*

# Partners in Play

## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 DONORS

As a 501c3 non-profit organization, GCM is community-funded by our generous donors. Together we break down barriers to ensure all children have access to brain-building play.

- Play**  
Ellison Companies  
Glazer Vision Foundation  
Lilly Endowment Inc.  
National Science Foundation | UT  
RIPA & Associates and the LaFace Family  
Shanna and Bryan Glazer  
Sidd and Ami Pagidipati

**Discovery**  
BayCare  
Mosaic Fertilizer  
PNC Bank  
Publix Super Markets Charities  
Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers  
TECO Energy  
The Ball Foundation

**Curiosity**  
Ameriprise Financial  
Anonymous  
Bharat Chhabria Family  
Deirdre and Joseph Colucci  
Elan Group  
Florida Department of State  
Lockton Insurance  
Shanna & Bryan Glazer  
Suzy and Mark Mendelson  
T. Sean and Megan Lance  
The Shilen & Parita Patel Family Foundation  
Trademark Metals Recycling  
Triad Foundation  
Vinik Family Foundation

**Connection**  
Adams and Reese LLP  
American Momentum Bank  
Bert & LeeAnn Kreischer  
Charles S. Ellison  
Coley and Matthew Simmons  
Corporate Interiors of Tampa Bay  
Dairy Joy | Xtreme Juice  
Fifth Third Bank  
Heads Flags  
Helios Education Foundation  
Isabel and John Dewey  
Jessica and Paul Dolcimascolo  
Kelli Pierce  
Legends Hospitality Group  
Mastercard  
Michael Powers  
Port Consolidated  
Robert and Nancy Cole  
Ryan Companies US, Inc.  
Sam Linsky  
Shumaker  
Sunbelt Rentals  
Suzy and Mark Mendelson  
Tampa Bay Water  
Tampa General Hospital  
Tony Clayton  
TVS Design  
Visit Tampa Bay

**Imagination**  
Aakash Patel  
Bailey Family Foundation  
Bloomin' Brands  
Cole Pudenz  
Cory Ellison  
Florida Farm Bureau Women's Fund  
Harvey Schonbrun  
Heights Pediatric Dentistry  
Joe Fronzaglio
- Johnson Jackson LLC  
Joshua Layton  
Kaley and Brad Abbey  
Len Perna  
Marsh McLennan Agency  
Meghan Carter  
Michael Garcia  
Nick Friedman  
Sandra and Jim Murman  
Sarah Stage  
Taylor Muller  
Trenam Law

**Adventure**  
Aegon Transamerica Foundation  
Alex Chang  
Alexandria Ayres  
Anitra Pavka and Joey DeVilla  
Beth and John England  
Brandan Lingle  
Brian Ford  
Bryan Brown  
Casey Ellison  
Cathy and Grayson Kamm |  
Ambersey Foundation  
Dan Reeves | DRI  
Elizabeth Lifsey  
Hilary O'Brien  
Hill Ward Henderson  
India Witte  
Insero  
James Schmidt  
Jessica and Erik Neander  
Karen Alsept  
Lauren Menendez  
Marsh McLennan Agency  
Maulik Bhalani  
Meena Shah  
Merritt Mosley  
Michael Bradner  
Monroe & Suzette Berkman  
Nicholas Blades  
OAI  
PAR, Inc.  
Patricia Cahill  
Patrick Fuller  
Raquel Ayres  
Ross Hays  
Stacy Baier  
Steven Oscher  
Travis Jennings  
Trenam Law  
Turnkey ZRG  
Virginia Garcia

**Enjoy**  
Aakash Patel  
Abigail Eastridge  
AECOM  
Alison Brett  
Alyssa Long  
Amanda Armstrong  
Amanda Griffin  
Amar Dalsania  
Amber Peirce  
American Online Giving Foundation  
Amy Lewis  
Amy Sanford  
Andres Alonso Contes  
Andrew Zapf  
Ashleigh Sheehy  
Ashley Steele  
Association of Children's Museums  
Austin Gappelberg
- Autumn Etheredge  
Ayden Donald  
Barrios  
BDG Architects  
Blair Branch  
Brandy Carr  
Brenda Burnette  
Brian Grimm  
Bruce Faulmann  
Bryce Alley  
Candice Briggs  
Cari Ellison  
Catherine DiPaolo  
Cindi Jacobsen  
City of Tampa Parks & Recreation  
Contemporary Services Corp. Sidders  
Cynthia Holloway  
Danny Ford  
David Taccetta  
Davina Ghivoni  
Delotto  
Diana Dore  
Drew Brown  
Drew Brown IV  
Dylan Meisner  
Ed Mowatt  
Ed Thomas | Amazing  
Athletes of Tampa  
Eric Savage  
Essence Malveau  
Francis Davanza  
Frank Bonsack  
Franklin Floyd  
Friends of the Hammock of Dunedin  
Gege and Al Kreischer  
Gina Barry  
Helen Dosis  
Ilana Greenberg  
India Witte  
James Chao  
Jeff Skowronek  
Jeffrey Rudd  
Jeffrey Sheloske  
Jennifer Fraga  
Jerilys Flowers  
Jessica Toledo  
Jill Jones  
John Ohara  
Jon Paul Bacariza  
Josh Kantor  
Jovanny Ruiz  
Justen Donald  
Justin Batton  
Justin Menendez  
Kaitlyn Brown  
Kara Arnold  
Karin Hotchkiss  
Karrie Mueller  
Kate Roth  
Kelsey Spaulding  
Kenneth Curtin  
Kerry Falwell  
Kurt Saban  
Lana Lutz  
Laura Byrne  
Laurel Ginn  
Lauren Anderson  
Lauryn Ortiz  
Leah Forsberg  
Linda Spurgeon  
Lisa Gabler  
Lori Colbert  
Mai Tran
- Maniseng Sengsourichanh  
Marsha Welsh  
Maryam & Safiya Ghabra  
Matt Muller  
Matthew Perry  
Matthias Hamaker  
Max Coberly  
Megan Norrell  
Meghan Boetje  
Meghan Carter  
Melissa Golombek  
Melissa Ward  
Michael Cross  
Michael Junkerman  
Michael Morris  
Michael Panzner  
Michael Robbins  
Michelle Day  
Monica Barber  
Nicole Boza  
Niki Pasek  
Pam Hillestad  
Peter Lopez  
Preston Rudie  
Ralph Belfatti  
Rob Ledford  
Robert Burkhart  
Ryan Martin  
Sally Maristany  
Sami Wilensky  
Sara Balzer  
Sara Murphy  
Sarah and Annie Cole  
Scott Anderson  
Sebastian Rivers  
Stephanie Davenport  
Stephanie Gordon  
Tellie Settimi  
Todd Curci  
Tom Jones  
Vanessa Steele  
Virginia Garcia  
Whitney Marrs  
William Montoto  
Yerika Ramirez



# Partners in Play

## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This distinguished group of community leaders volunteer their time, professional counsel, and monetary support to help further GCM's mission within the community.



GCM Board Members help raise funds at our Imagination Gala and Evening of Play events

## Board of Directors

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Board Chair</b><br>Suzy Mendelson    | Linaea Floden    |
| <b>Vice Board Chair</b><br>Grayson Kamm | Alison Fraga     |
| <b>Treasurer Chair</b><br>Brad Abbey    | Bryan Glazer     |
| <b>Secretary Chair</b><br>Erin Jackson  | Melissa Golombak |
| John Astrab                             | Patrick Mosley   |
| Nadia Combs                             | Sandy Murman     |
| Isabel Dewey                            | Sara Murphy      |
| Cat DiPaolo                             | Parita Patel     |
|   | Anitra Pavka     |
|   | Kelli Pierce     |
|   | Eric Savage      |
|   | Jeff Skowronek   |

## Executive Team

- Sarah Cole**  
President & Chief Executive Officer
- Sarah Bou Zeidan**  
Chief Human Resources Officer
- Suzanne Delaney**  
Chief Development Officer
- Carolee Eason**  
Chief Financial Officer
- Pam Hillestad**  
Chief Play & Learning Officer
- Kristen Nieves**  
Chief Operating Officer
- Kate White**  
Chief Marketing Officer



GCM Staff and Board celebrate 14 years at Birthday Bash



Team GCM accepts a Hermes Marketing Award for Big John



“ I love having my kids come to the museum because they experience hands-on learning and have nice opportunities to connect to the real world outside of the classroom. ”

- MONICA BARBER, PRINCIPAL BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY

Kiddos steer the firetruck in the Fire House Exhibit



Glazer Children's Museum  
110 W Gasparilla Plaza  
Tampa, FL 33602

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**Email** [giving@glazermuseum.org](mailto:giving@glazermuseum.org)

## A Moment of Play

Thank you for going on this journey with us. Grownups need play too, so give yourself a fun little brain break!

C	O	M	M	U	N	I	T	Y	U	A	P	Z
L	I	H	D	N	T	M	A	E	B	O	I	M
D	V	C	I	F	B	A	F	I	G	R	J	E
X	O	U	S	L	N	G	M	T	Y	Y	O	F
P	C	R	C	A	U	I	M	P	A	C	T	A
C	R	I	O	E	R	N	K	S	A	P	K	M
Q	S	O	V	G	X	A	R	R	E	B	S	I
M	U	S	E	U	M	T	P	L	A	Y	A	L
W	B	I	R	T	B	I	G	J	O	H	N	Y
F	U	T	Y	D	E	O	X	A	B	F	M	R
S	W	Y	O	E	S	N	K	U	P	Z	G	P
A	P	X	B	Y	D	P	I	Y	E	U	Q	V
H	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	L	X	D	E	W



### WORD BANK:

Big John | Community | Curiosity | Discovery | Family  
Imagination | Impact | Mission | Museum | Play | Tampa Bay