

cMoe

KOCH FAMILY  
children's  
museum  
OF EVANSVILLE



# Play it Forward

A Case For Support



## Where can you...

Climb on an overgrown duck 20 feet tall?

Attend a field trip that is more fun than a play date?

Enjoy a special event that harnesses community energy?

Find a family-friendly destination that drives regional tourism and economic development?

Feel welcome even if you have never been to a museum before?

## Play it Forward A Case for Support

The Koch Family Children’s Museum of Evansville (cMoe) creates all of those experiences—and that just scratches the surface! The historic and stately façade of the former Central Library building disguises the wonder, color, and activity exploding inside. From the moment you walk in, you are transported to a different world, one that inspires children—and adults—to creative play that will teach them something along the way.

At cMoe, we see the spark of curiosity daily and aim to create a passion for lifelong learning in the young children who will become our future leaders!

In the meantime, we continue to be inspired by smiling faces and high fives—and we want to keep them coming. To be sure that kids and families continue to have new, dynamic spaces to explore and play, we are planning some big surprises—and we will need some help to bring them to life.

**You are a vital part of this essential asset to our community.** Together with our partners, we plan to transform the cMoe experience with new and reimagined exhibits and programs, through a \$6.5 million campaign. The following pages tell the story of the creative planning and exciting outcomes for our community.

## cMoe Mission

The Children’s Museum of Evansville creates extraordinary experiences that ignite the imaginations of children and families through the power of play.

## cMoe Vision

To be a premiere educational resource and family destination that will inspire new generations of lifelong learners.

*"cMoe is one of the best experiences I have had in this town. Outstanding place for kids and family, there is so much to do and learn there for kids and the whole family. Highly recommend this as a Top 10 spot to visit in Evansville."*

—a grateful Mom

## cMoe is where Evansville plays—and learns.

The community looks to cMoe as a fun and dynamic resource for children and families, a place to play, discover, and learn together. It is an important part of the quality of life for families—and it is *the only place of its kind in the region*.

The power of play is strong here—and we intentionally connect that power to learning! All of cMoe's exhibits and programming are designed to educate, with no resemblance to a dry, unengaging lesson. Child development research overwhelmingly supports learning through play as extremely effective, teaching students an array of important skills, including language, math, creativity, and emotional and social skills.

That is very visible at cMoe, as kids build, play with water, paint, climb, and figure out how things work.



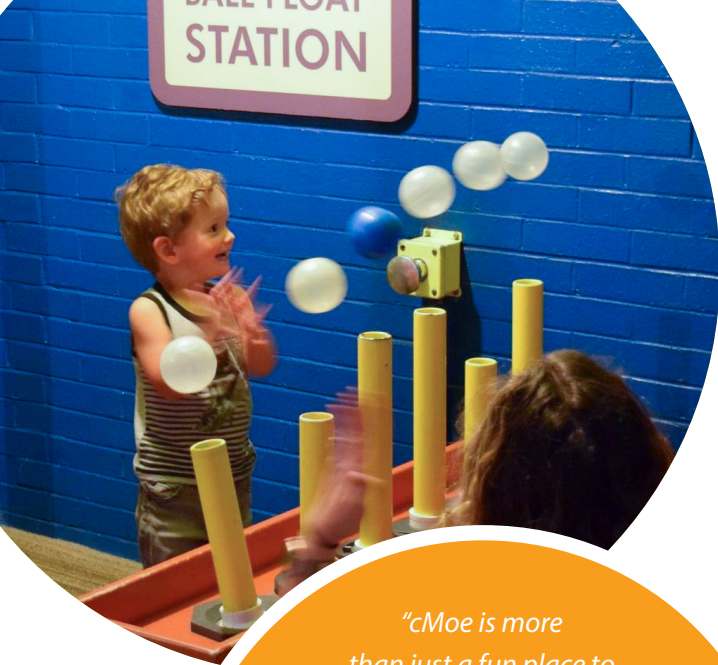
## A vital community resource continues to grow.

The roots of cMoe were planted in 1990 by the Junior League of Evansville. A small startup called Hands on Discovery brought dreams of a learning laboratory for children in Evansville to reality. Our cMoe is the expansion of that creative vision that gained increasing popularity with families and schools over time, eventually outgrowing its space. Since 2006, cMoe's home has been the historic Central Library building, donated for the purpose of growing Hands on Discovery into a museum like no other in the area. The same spirit of play with a purpose drove the creative direction of cMoe that continues to serve the community with top-notch exhibits, engaging programming, and special events to delight children and engage families.

We are passionate about families playing and learning together, connecting in a fun and natural way, and creative tools are even available online to bring cMoe into your living room. Our intentional design of each activity at cMoe is attached to grade-level curriculum standards for Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, while still being accessible and fun.

*"Play is central to how children learn: the way they form and explore friendships; the way they shape and test hypotheses; the way they make sense of their world."*

Pedagogy of Play Project  
Project Zero and the LEGO Foundation



*"cMoe is more than just a fun place to play. It impacts families, education, the community. Child development is important for all of us, and cMoe's connections with social service agencies, education entities, and other arts and cultural organizations strengthen that commitment."*

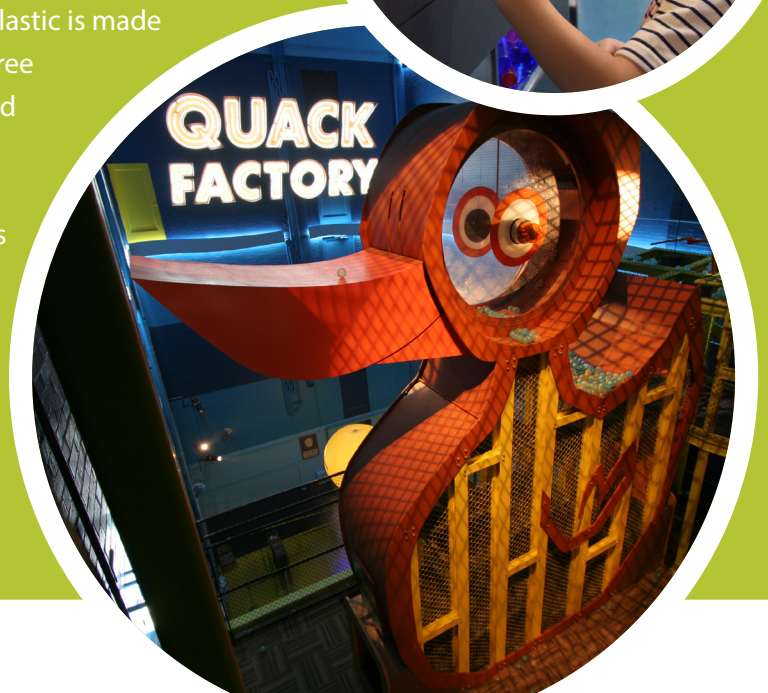
—Patricia Weinzapfel,  
Past Board Member,  
Community Volunteer

Although geared for kids, families are fully engaged at cMoe. It feels welcoming and playful—and our talented play guides are always around to help explain how to interact with an exhibit or to talk more about specific topics to visitors. Unlike a traditional museum, children and families are a part of the magic—they make each activity fun and new by how they approach it and the questions they ask.

Clearly a valued resource for children and families, cMoe's impact reaches beyond its walls. The museum benefits the region economically, bringing people into the downtown Evansville area to enjoy other aspects of our city and see the revitalization that is happening. cMoe also plays a key role in educating Evansville's future workforce, building creative, social, and problem-solving skills as kids play together and with their families. cMoe must stay fresh and relevant for the future of both our kids and our community.

## Key Exhibits

The **Quack Factory** features Moe, the giant duck, that kids can climb inside and throw balls in his head, waiting for them to rain down on their friends, along with a wet deck where they can play and learn with water. The **Work Smart Gallery** shows kids how things work, such as trying their hand at building a house or a bridge. **Fantastic Plastic** teaches about how plastic is made and recycled. **Kid's World** focuses on Evansville and its three sister cities in Japan, Germany, and Mexico, comparing and contrasting numerous features, such as family life, food, language, education, government, and much more. **5th Street Theatre** encourages guests to pretend to be actors and performers. The **ArtMaker Studio** combines art and science, encouraging kids to embark on a project, creating and learning -with discovery as the ultimate goal. cMoe creates a spark for curious minds and encourages lifelong learning.



## cMoe connects.

Partnerships with local schools, community organizations, and philanthropic partners help cMoe to stay fresh and reach more people. Events like Kids Comic-Con, a flea market just for kids, and partner programs with the Mesker Park Zoo, the Evansville Philharmonic, Wesselman Woods, and other organizations provide programming and support to keep families coming to cMoe to see something new. Collaborations also benefit the community by sparking creative ideas and sharing resources to develop innovative programming or events that draw people into the city.

Field trips are a huge part of our history and kids look forward to spending learning time here. In 2019 (pre-pandemic), cMoe hosted 9,452 children through field trips and group visits. To expand its reach to families, we offer \$1 admission through Museums for All to qualifying families and provided a Helping Hands Scholarship for Title I schools for field trips. A free family night bi-monthly is wildly popular, drawing 6,994 visitors over the course of 2019. Summer camps are always in demand, providing special programming across all age groups.

During the height of the pandemic when closed to the public, kids still needed to play! cMoe continued to serve a key role in the community by providing online resources for play and ideas for parents to engage their kids, including more than 50 cMoe at Home YouTube videos. The Proud Parent video series was created to connect specifically with parents to supply resources and encouragement during that time. These creative tools are still available online to bring cMoe into your living room. Since reopening, cMoe has been happily welcoming people back into the museum with new activities and appropriate safety measures.



*"In our community, cMoe is not just a nice place for kids to play once in a while; it is a necessary place for kids and parents to connect and learn together on a regular basis. We aim to be a community hub where, with our partners, we create a fun and safe environment for our kids that promotes their healthy development and the importance of their voices to our future."*

—Stephanie Terry,  
cMoe Executive Director



# An Educational and Economic Engine

**Visitors  
since 2006  
800,000+**

In one year FY 2021,  
**\$781,964**

contributed to local economy  
through direct operational  
expenditures

In 2020, during the  
pandemic,

**34,617**  
viewed cMoe online  
educational videos  
at home



Contributed  
more than  
**\$70,000**

in Free admissions through  
access programs and  
donated passes.

## **Memberships**

Pre-pandemic: 1,385  
FY 2021: 482  
Future: 1,700+

## **Annual Attendance**

Pre-pandemic: 83,046  
FY 2021: 11,356  
Future: 100,000

## It is time for a renaissance.

It is a new day for cMoe, with great opportunity. cMoe weathered the economic downturn of 2008-09, coming back stronger than before—and we expect that same resiliency following the significant worldwide effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fact, we used that time to evaluate our operations, exhibits, and programming. We took the opportunity to listen to the voices of our visitors, volunteers, donors, and staff in a thoughtful strategic planning process.

### cMoe's strategic plan was built on the following four goals:

#### Goal 1

Maintain and enhance programming, exhibits, and the facility to provide visitors with consistently high quality experiences.

#### Goal 2

Champion informal learning, the importance of play in a child's development, and cMoe's expertise in creating meaningful play experiences

#### Goal 3

Implement a revenue model to recover, build, and sustain museum operations.

#### Goal 4

Attract and retain high-quality staff, volunteers, and board members.

Building on 16 years of success, we are ready to embrace the future, using our new strategic plan and an exhibits plan that will transform spaces and experiences with new and dynamic ideas—and help with future sustainability. To bring these concepts to life, we are planning for a \$6.5 million campaign to fund significant updates and new exhibits for

the children of Evansville. Since 2004, this exciting effort is the first large scale campaign for cMoe—and with your help we will reimagine the entire visitor experience. cMoe has been a critical part of the community since its beginning and this campaign will ensure that we can meet the needs of our children and families for years to come.



## Campaign Priorities

The following campaign priorities were thoughtfully developed, driven by feedback from our key audiences. Kids and families told us they clearly want new exhibits—with specific requests for space and dinosaurs—and the following projects rose to the top. In addition, cMoe must keep pace with advancing technology to remain relevant

and exciting for years to come. And, let's face it, kids play hard. Equipment and materials experience that wear and tear over time and need to be repaired or replaced. cMoe developed the following campaign priorities to meet current and future needs with exciting new ways to play and learn for our community.

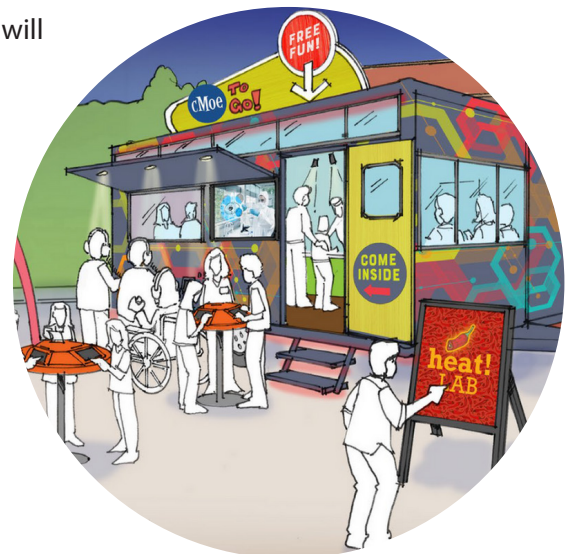


### Tot Work Zone

The Tot Work Zone is an exhibit designed specifically with our youngest guests in mind. Tots will experience the full range of sensory stimuli while creating, building, and climbing. The exhibit will employ colorful, texturally pleasing manipulatives that let toddlers explore STEAM activities designed specifically for their developmental range. Located on the main level near the entrance, this new space will be a natural spot for families to stop and plan their visit and will lead directly to Work Smart.

### cMoe to Go

An innovative mobile museum (cMoe to Go) will extend our footprint, creating equal access for all children—at festivals and fairs, schools, other youth program sites, and after-care programs. Educators can do lessons on the go as a pop-up feature that can travel around the community. Interactive STEAM activities will be a key focus of cMoe to go, bringing important content—and fun—beyond the museum walls.



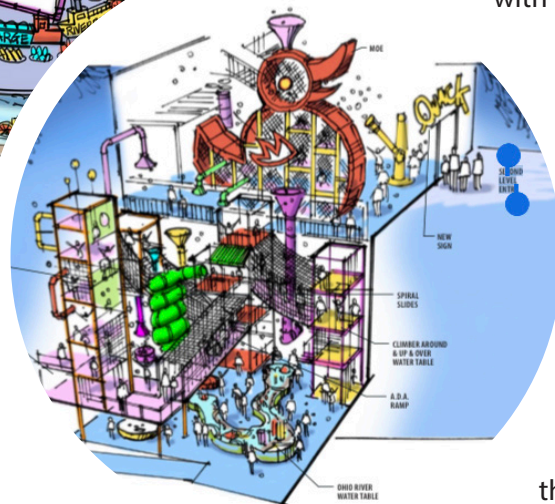


## The Rooftop Experience

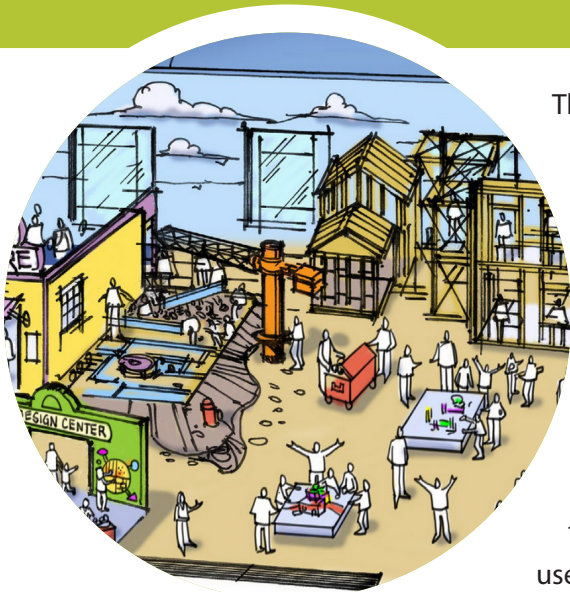
The Rooftop Experience will feature dinosaurs in a big way. Overlooking downtown Evansville, an enormous T-rex will beckon visitors to cMoe—and the previously unused space will serve as an exciting extension of the fun and learning inside. A Dino Trail through the city will tie in with this space, extending cMoe’s reach in a creative new way. In addition to excavating in a Dino Dig Pit, kids can experience a greenhouse, introducing life sciences in a fun way and helping them connect to the natural world. This dynamic new area will also serve as a unique event venue for young and old alike and generate income to help sustain the many improvements.



The new water play area, **River Adventure**, will connect visitors of all ages to the flow, force, commerce, activities, and experiences related to the Ohio River, replacing the current Wet Deck. Visitors will experience first-hand the importance the Ohio River to the Evansville economy both in the past and today. The experiences will include STEAM activities such as: locks and dams, bridge building, loading and unloading barges, changing current flow, fishing, boat building and boat racing, along with the sheer fun of playing with water!



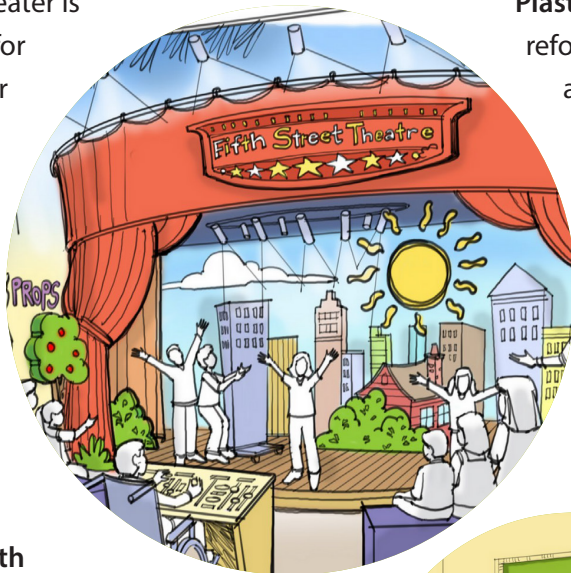
River Adventure will also be connected to a new climbing structure that will act as a bridge over the water table, connecting it to the existing Quack Factory. This structure will incorporate interactive STEAM activities connecting every level to the water table below, creating an integrated educational and play experience for visitors of all ages. Still higher up slides will connect to the second floor (Upper Quack), adding to the fun factor of our beloved Quack Factory.



The new design for **Work Smart** includes multiple areas resembling actual work spaces where children and their families can use their hands and feet to create. Because manufacturing has such a

significant place in the lives of Evansville residents, cMoe wants to show children how various work places operate, with activities in bridge building, a design center, an auto care shop, and a construction work site.

Our interactive theater is the perfect place for kids to fire up their imaginations. Guests can slip on new costumes designed to go along with pre-set scripts to become someone they never thought they could be at **5th Street Theatre**. Young actors can also create their own play and novice theater techs can take charge of updated props and improved scenic changes, stage lighting, and sound.



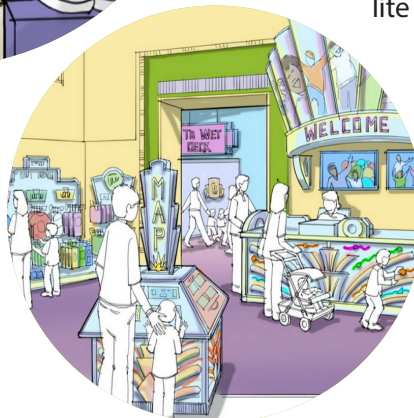
As guests enter **Live Well**, they will notice several different zones that feature how a healthy lifestyle is maintained, from physical exercise to growing, harvesting, and preparing healthy foods, to visiting a doctor's office. Kids can role play as a doctor or nurse, check their patient's vitals, and explore anatomical models selected for every age range. These changes will create a more cohesive story about health and wellness.



Our current **Fantastic Plastic** exhibit will be refocused to provide additional interactivity and expanded information about recycling. It will encourage groups to work together to solve simple STEAM questions and activities, including a new and much larger two-sided lite brite-style pin wall.



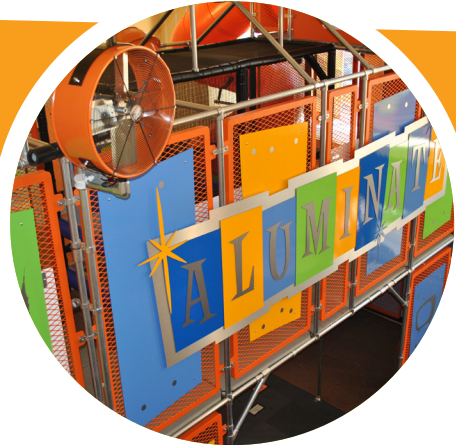
**Our Gateway to Learning** will usher guests into our learning environment with improved guest services and interactive elements to kick off the educational journey.



## Annual Fund

**\$900,000**

Ongoing annual support is vital to cMoe and will need to continue during the campaign to support our operations while we work to fund and implement these important improvements to our space. The annual fund portion of the campaign includes an average of \$300,000 per year over the proposed three-year timeframe for the campaign.



## Maintenance

**\$500,000**

The maintenance fund will ensure the museum has funds to update exhibits as needed and keep them current, vibrant, and in good repair. We want to ensure that cMoe has the funds necessary to meet the needs of our guests and ensure a high quality experience on every visit.

## Campaign Expenses

**\$250,000**

These funds will support our professional staff's efforts to grow fundraising capacity to advance our mission without affecting our annual budget. Campaign expenses, such as staff time, production of materials, and other support will be covered by a \$250,000 investment over the three-year period of the campaign.



### Campaign Priorities

Tot Work Zone	\$135,000
cMoe to Go	\$175,000
The Rooftop Experience	\$1,950,000
River Adventure and Water Table	\$375,000
Quack Factory upgrades / climber	\$900,000
Work Smart	\$750,000
Theater update	\$170,000
Our Gateway to Learning	\$255,000
Live Well - Be Well Clinic	\$75,000
Fantastic Plastics - Lite Bright City Scope	\$65,000
Annual Fund	\$900,000
Campaign Expenses	\$250,000
Maintenance	\$500,000
<b>Campaign Total</b>	<b>\$6,500,000</b>

## Investing in the Future together.

We owe it to our community and region to provide rich experiences to play, discover, and learn—in a place that is dedicated to the power of play and its importance to child development. cMoe is your place, the community's place . . . and we are passionate about providing fresh and exciting facilities and programs to nurture kids and families.

cMoe has grown into a treasured community asset—and we would not exist if not for generous supporters like you who have stood by cMoe, knowing how essential our mission is to our city and region. Beyond the clear impact on children today, our leaders of tomorrow are being shaped as they play and learn.

It is time to refresh our special place for play. **We invite you to join us.** You can help provide new opportunities for kids and families to not just play, but also learn and grow together through the cMoe experience.



*"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."*

—Mr. Rogers



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