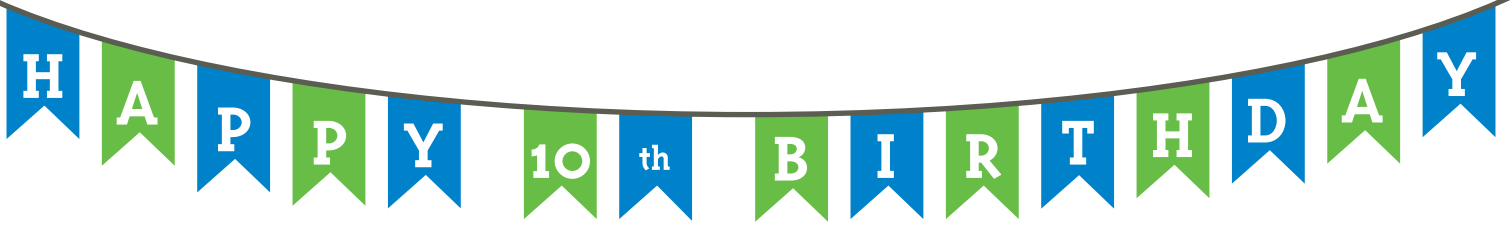


Pretend City[®]

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



2019 Annual Report
Celebrating Our 10th Birthday!



Dear Friends,

Remember when you turned **10**? You were finally a whole decade old. It was the last time you could show your age on your hands. Maybe you had a birthday party or went out for a special dinner to celebrate the milestone. It might have been the first time you felt genuinely “big”.

But now, as an adult, your viewpoint tells you that a 10 year-old is young – full of future potential and exciting times ahead. So, who’s right? Is 10 a lot of years or just starting out? What does that decade number mean? For that matter, what do any numbers mean? It’s all a matter of perspective.

From our Pretend City perspective, our first ten years have been defined by many significant numbers. **But it’s the personal stories behind those numbers that really matter to us.** To say we have served the early childhood educational needs of nearly two million visitors over the past ten years is a fact. But more important than the number 2 million is each individual’s story of why they came to Pretend City, their experience at the Museum, and how their visit(s) may have set life on a better course.



We are enthusiastically looking ahead, growing like 10 year-olds do, using the vital lessons we learned in our first decade to propel us into a bright future. Our growth will be measured in square feet and increased community partnerships, visitor headcounts and developmental referrals. In the coming years, Pretend City will move to the Great Park in Irvine and grow into Orange County’s premier hub of early childhood education and experience. We will help create the success stories that will be told in the future. But now, in celebration of our 10th year, we’d like to share some of our most significant numbers and a few of the stories that make those numbers meaningful.

Thank you for being part of our first 10 years,

Sandra Bolton
Executive Director

Erin Boyl
Chair, Board of Directors



Our Mission: Pretend City Builds Better Brains

Our Values

We believe:

- young children learn best through their play
- families are our children's first and most important teachers
- in supporting healthy childhood development
- in nurturing a passion for learning through play
- diversity enriches children's lives
- in connecting families to each other and the community
- play changes the world



Our Vision

To ensure that each child is ready for school success by providing real-world learning experiences that children need to develop essential foundational learning skills.



2019 Board of Directors

Our dedicated Board members provide guidance and leadership, serve as ambassadors, and make generous financial commitments to the Museum. Their commitment to excellence helps to ensure a positive experience, each and every day, for our members and visitors.

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*Elected 2020



In 2019, more than **1,000 young children received free developmental screenings** through Pretend City's Good to Go from Head to Toe program, helping to ensure they meet their growth milestones and get early intervention when needed. The Good to Go initiative emphasizes the importance of regular developmental checkups for young children – combining on-site health checkups, age-appropriate developmental screenings, and parent and caregiver education.

That means there are more than 1,000 kids starting school soon who are more prepared, more than 1,000 parents who are better equipped to guide their young children on a course of healthy development and growth.

There are more than 1,000 stories like Erin's:

“ *I have three amazing daughters, and my youngest, Stella, who is now 2, has benefitted from the Museum in ways that my older two did not. At about 5 ½ months I got the sense that something wasn't totally right for Stella. She wasn't doing things that I remember my older kids doing at her age. Through a Pretend City developmental screening my 'mom's intuition' was affirmed. Stella had severe gross motor delays. And thanks to Pretend City, with their help and support, we got connected with the appropriate resources in the county. She has been in physical therapy for several months and has made great strides.*



According to a 2019 study by Orlando Health, 40% of moms report feeling overwhelmed in the first few months of parenthood. And in a national survey by the organization Zero to Three, **54% of parents agreed that they wish they had more information about how to be a better parent.** Our expanded, twice a month Baby Steps program is here to help. We encourage parents with children under 18 months to come learn and bond in a no-pressure environment while their children start to play.

While statistics can highlight the challenges, it's easy to see how Baby Steps provides a remedy:

“ We really enjoy the singing and story times at Baby Steps. Our girls get to interact and explore with one another and other babies in a safe environment. And it's fun for us to catch up and to meet other new parents.

—Enda M. and Lia K.

“ There is such a good diversity of things to do at Baby Steps, like the water and sand exhibits. It's a safe place to learn to walk and tumble. We love getting out of the house for Pretend City!

—Autumn and Josh G.



3 out of 5

Child development professionals and educators agree—a child’s academic success is heavily dependent upon their readiness for kindergarten. Children who enter school with early skills such as basic knowledge of math and reading concepts, language, social competence, and emotional maturity, are more likely than their peers without such skills to experience later academic success and wellbeing, attain higher levels of education, and secure employment. Startlingly, according to the 25th Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County, **3 out of every 5 children** entering school in Orange County, regardless of socio-economics, are not fully ready in their communication skills and general knowledge. In response, we haven’t designed just any readiness plan—we are firm believers that playing is learning that comes to life in

exhibits, activities, and workshops that are fun and meaningful for the whole family.

It was Valentine’s Day when one of our trained volunteers presented an ‘Engaging Engineering’ activity in the Muzzy Art Studio. He immediately had four year-olds thinking about questions like “What is an engineer?” and “What kind of structure would you create?” He encouraged the kids to explore shapes and building by connecting heart shaped marshmallows and toothpicks to help design a structure. Children jumped excitedly into the challenge while parents learned how to facilitate learning like this at home. One brother and sister duo was so eager to continue the learning at home that they asked their mom if they could stop by the store on the way home to purchase more marshmallows and toothpicks.





\$185,000

Pretend City's new Screen Play and Ready (SPR) initiative targets improvement in Orange County's kindergarten readiness by increasing awareness of, and participation in, development screenings for children in their first 18 months. Screen Play and Ready was recognized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services with a **\$185,000 "Museums for America" programming grant**. This vital funding will support the SPR initiative's goals to increase our community's access to developmental screenings, increase the number of children screened, provide referrals as needed, train staff, and build new strategic partnerships with key community service providers.

By creating "Lunch & Learn" outreach events this initiative is reaching a wider audience of parents and caregivers who were previously unaware of the resources available to them and their children through our Museum. And the impact is resounding:

“ My daughter was diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder and Severe Speech Delay as a result of completing the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) and talking to experts at the Museum. Thanks to them, we are now successfully connected with Regional Center and are waiting for further assessment and planning. This is an amazing resource. I heard about it from a friend and so glad I did!





While the clamor and excitement of Pretend City is engaging and enticing to most of our young visitors, some children thrive in an environment designed to suit their sensitivities and accommodate their special needs. Last year, more than **2,000 children on the autism spectrum or with other special needs** benefitted from specialized programming at Pretend City. Our fun, free Family Autism Nights allow families to network with each other; additionally, many of our community partners who specialize in special needs are on-hand to enrich families' play experience with welcoming smiles and practical support.

When asked why they are dedicated partners in Family Autism Nights, the Center for Autism explains,

“Children and families that experience a medical or developmental diagnosis can feel isolated. The connections with other families, as well as the resources and programs Pretend City provides, lessen the feelings of isolation and give rise to more confident and happy parents, while ensuring optimal development for their children.”



You don't need to have a child or be a child to find your place at Pretend City. In 2019, **671 individual volunteers clocked 7,159 recorded hours, and an additional 35 corporate and organizational groups dedicated nearly another 400 hours of their time to us.** These dedicated volunteers represent a wide range of people, each with their own backstory and personal interest in building better brains through our multifaceted programs. In fact, without our volunteers, those programs would only be ideas; volunteers help bring every Pretend City program and initiative to life.

Representing our most seasoned volunteers, Kathie Wolin received our 2019 Jacqui Fairchild Award for Excellence in Volunteerism. First presented in 2013, this auspicious accolade is bestowed in memory of Pretend City's original and most dedicated volunteer.

“After I retired to Laguna Woods Village, a friend suggested I volunteer at Pretend City,” Kathie says. “I feel appreciated for my various abilities and incredibly lucky to be a volunteer! I particularly enjoy seeing the joy as children learn by doing, and I spread the word about this special organization wherever I go!”



As a youth-centered organization, Pretend City values the ideas and enthusiasm of our teen volunteers, our Youth Leadership Council. In the insightful words of council officer Kelly Gee,

“Looking for a good volunteer opportunity when I was in seventh grade, I discovered Pretend City. From the moment I stepped on the Museum floor as an exhibit volunteer, I knew that I wanted to volunteer here forever...As I move on to college, I look forward to staying in touch with the Pretend City community and seeing the next great things that it will accomplish. No matter where I am, I know I will be supporting the Museum any way I can!”





Orange County is uniquely full of community-minded corporations that contribute time, talent, and finances to help ensure the area's nonprofit resources are readily available. In 2019, Pretend City was fortunate to partner with **45 diverse corporations** – welcoming teams of volunteers, generous donations, and new sponsored exhibits into the Museum.

In December, a holiday group of volunteers from Pacific Life helped keep our season bright during our Breakfasts with Santa. Team leader, Christina Wu recalls,

“Pretend City provided a meaningful and fun opportunity for the Pacific Life Good Guys to help out. Our volunteers got to interact with young families in our community and see the impact of their volunteer efforts in real time.”

Other 2019 corporate efforts included the introduction of the Museum's UPS Store. With the support of The UPS Store and UPS Foundation, Pretend City transformed our post office exhibit into a new favorite. When asked “Why Pretend City? Why early childhood?” Ashley Haluck, a Pretend City member and marketing director for The UPS Store shared this.

“Early childhood development has lasting effects long into adulthood. By helping to support and provide an interactive exhibit we are helping young minds grow confidence and empowerment in real world situations. We feel honored to help support a program that is shaping our future community.”





70,000

Our Welcome Families program works in partnership with social service agencies throughout Orange County to help ensure that all children and families have access to Pretend City's resources and interactive play spaces. Over the past ten years, Pretend City has given away nearly **70,000 tickets to our community collaborators** who have in turn given those tickets to the families they serve. The impact is best understood through the experiences of our partners and their clients:

“ Thank you so much for the Pretend City tickets. Ethan and Andy did everything they could: play musical instruments, play in the sand, dress up in various costumes, drive

cars, work as a construction worker, plant veggies, paint, read, and cook! So many fun opportunities that they never would have had in such a safe, fun learning environment.

—Regional Center of Orange County

“ My foster son's first experience at the museum was phenomenal. I watched him come out of his shell and become interested in what was going on for the first time since he had been placed with me four months prior. Pretend City gave us a chance to connect and bond that might have taken months longer.

—Foster Care Auxiliary



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Similar to children who experience great physical and intellectual growth in their first 10 years, Pretend City is delighted to expand from our original 1.5 acre space into a **5 acre** early childhood hub of activity. It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a new Pretend City that puts early childhood at the heart of Orange County. By creating gathering space for organizations such as First 5 Orange County, Orange County Association for the Education of Young Children, Early Childhood Orange County, and Association of American Pediatrics the new Pretend City will serve Orange County's families through a one-of-a-kind physical hub for early childhood resources. The move will also allow the Museum to expand and add outdoor exhibits. This is a chance to take one of our community's best ideas to a whole new level of impact—with the power to make a lifetime of difference.

“*Play isn't just for kids. Engaging parents, caregivers, and the community in play is a fundamental requirement of a child's healthy development—and the new Pretend City will make that possible.*

—Kim Goll,
Executive Director of First 5 Orange County

The success stories in our past and all of the stories to come are the result of abundant

community support. **We could not have accomplished our mission without the generosity, passion, and dedicated involvement of our supporters.** From our recurring monthly “Play Builder” patrons to enthusiastic first-time donors, event attendees, and generous grantors, contributors continue to connect with our mission and provide the financial scaffolding on which we've built every program and playtime.

Like so many of our supporters, new donor Dixie Martin was motivated by her family's enjoyment over the years.

“*Dylan is my grandson, and he loves Pretend City. We have been visiting since he was two years old. As a family, we have watched the museum's progress over the years. And we are always grateful for the friendly staff who play with us and are so helpful. When Pretend City reached out in a general email for support, I thought, 'Why not give back?' This was a perfect time to make a donation in his name.*

In 2019 alone, Pretend City was honored to receive financial support from **over 400 donors**, listed below. We are grateful for every donated dollar that makes it possible for us to continue promoting healthy development and early learning well into the next decade.

We are Grateful

Investing in the healthy development of our children benefits all of us. We could not accomplish our mission without the generosity, involvement, and enthusiasm of our 2019 supporters listed below. We thank each and every one of you for your generosity throughout our 10 years of Building Better Brains at Pretend City Children's Museum.

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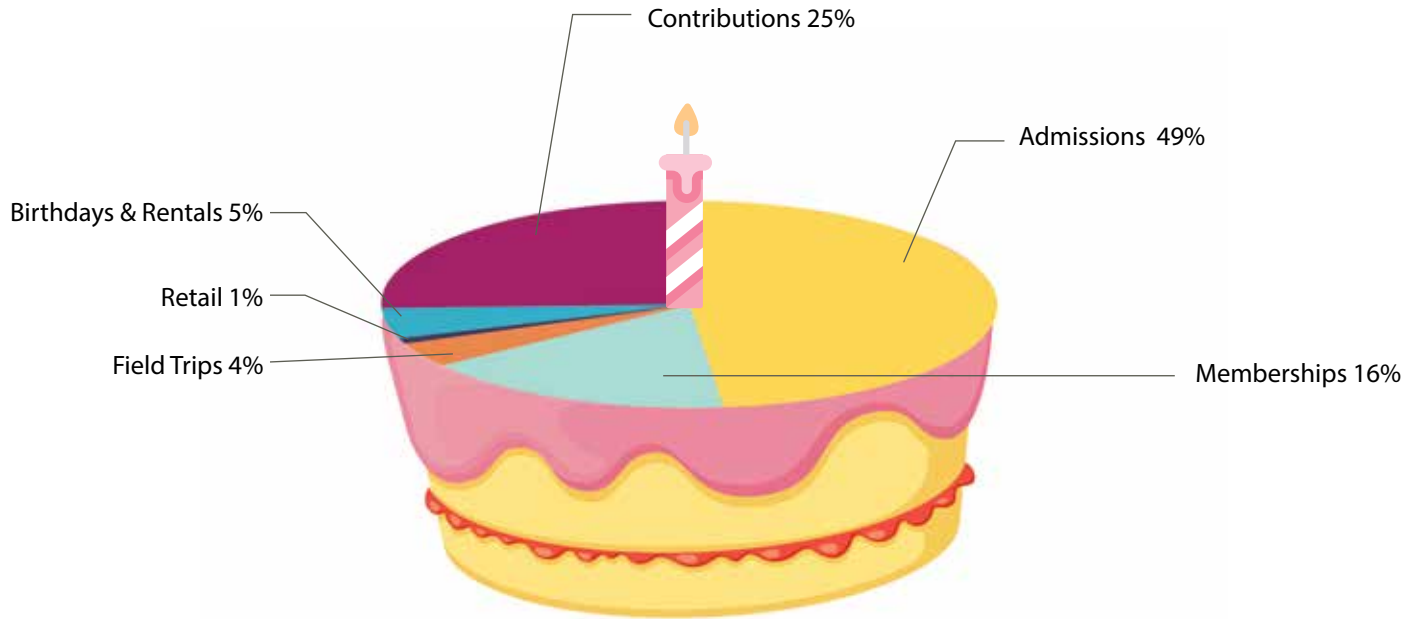
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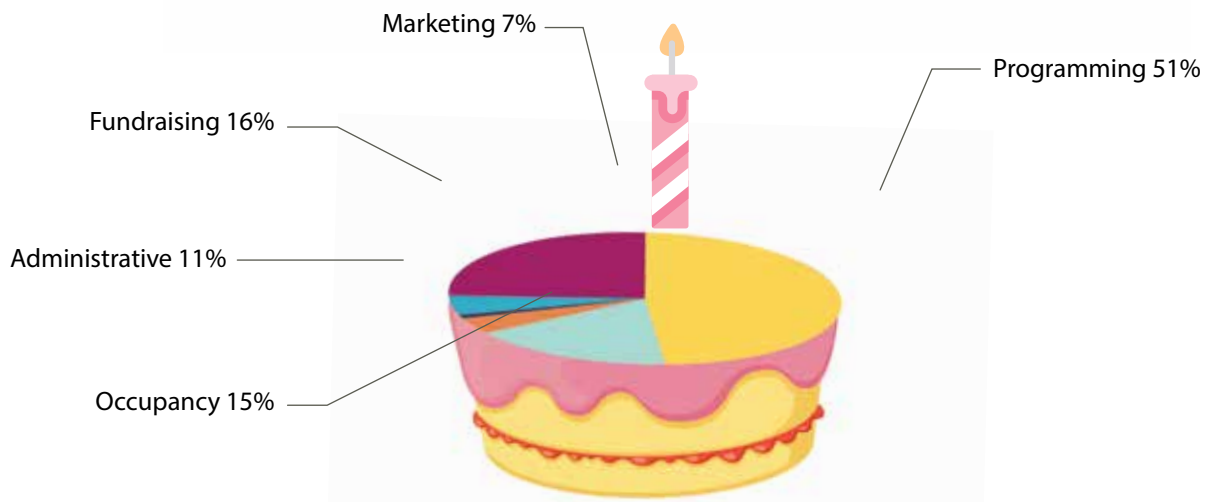
In honor of Pretend City's 10th year, we acknowledge and thank our donors who have given 10+ consecutive years as noted with !

This report lists donors who contributed between January 1 – December 31, 2019. Every effort has been made to assure the accuracy of donor names. If a name has been misspelled, omitted, or listed improperly, please accept our apology and contact monica.rodriguez@pretendcity.org so we may correct our records.

Early Childhood... An Investment Certainly Worth Celebrating



Revenue \$2,964,718



Expenses \$2,918,330

* Includes individual, grant, and events gross revenue.

NOTE: Based on unaudited financials and does not include in-kind services or depreciation expense.