



## 2010/2011 Performance Report for

# THE CHILDREN'S PLAYHOUSE

400 Tracy Circle, Boone, NC 28607 ♦ [www.goPlayhouse.org](http://www.goPlayhouse.org)  
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## I. Background and Mission

The Children's Playhouse was founded over eight years ago by a group of local citizens. We sold or granted our 1,000 family membership in February 2011.

The mission of The Children's Playhouse is to provide a fun, enriching play environment for children while at the same time offering parents and caregivers friendly support in the challenging job of raising children.

Because the facility is open 37 hours per week, Tuesday through Saturday, 50 weeks a year, families have ample opportunities to meet and form supportive relationships among both adults and children. Research reported by the Search Institute shows that community assets like The Children's Playhouse help strengthen families, promote warm parent-child relations, and users report more positive parenting behaviors.

## II. Major Activities

### Facility

We continued to make improvements to our facility to better meet the needs of visitors. Two window air conditioning units were installed in July 2010 to combat the hot summer weather and in Spring 2011 we secured funding from our landlord and the Helen M. Clabough foundation to build new fences and shade structures as part of major redesign of our outdoor play spaces.

Using volunteers and donated materials we created two new temporary exhibits this year. A pretend farm stand taught children about nutrition and the basics of money and simple math through role playing. A winter exhibit invited kids to be physically active indoors while celebrating the winter sports by offering carpet skating on a pond, "snowball" fights, snowman and igloo building and more.

*"You have built an amazing refuge for children and a strong, enduring community. We miss you. You and your program have made a lasting impression on my life and the lives of my children."*

*—email from a former member whose family had used The Playhouse frequently while the father was stationed in Iraq.*



### *Children's Programming*

The Children's Playhouse was open for over 1,800 hours of open play. Over 7,000 visitors explored our art, constructive play, gross motor and pretend play areas. Four to five open-ended art activities were available daily and changed weekly.

The Playhouse offered free or low cost music, science, and art classes such as Musikgarten, Backyard Bug Safari, ceramics, and batik with the help of volunteer teachers and a modest grant from the High Country Water Media Society.

### *Programming for Parents*

The Playhouse provides a free lending library of parenting books and "Play Together Kits." In our annual survey of visitors, 79% reported using these parenting resources.

A seven week Parenting with Love and Logic class was offered in February-March 2010.

Monthly visits from a child development specialist were offered monthly as part of Wonderful Wednesdays and nutrition workshops focusing healthy lunches and snacks for picky eaters were offered in Spring 2010. Parents' Night Out was offered six times in 2010/2011.

### *Networking to Reach Low Income and At-Risk Families*

We provide free memberships to low income families and children with developmental delays. More than 25% of Playhouse members receive scholarships. In the past three years we have seen our United Way funding for this program declined from \$3,000 to only \$800 this year, which is only enough to provide eight memberships. In the same time period, the demand for scholarships increased 65% and has remained at a high of over 40 membership applications

a year. We have made up the difference through individual donations and small grants from the Valle Country Fair and Kiwanis.

Passes and memberships are also available to social service agencies. Pre-school interventionists and therapists use agency memberships to work one-on-one with children tackling developmental delays in an

*"[The best things about The Playhouse are] support, smiles, a warm fun place when the weather is yucky."*

*"It gives me a safe place to get out of the house when I feel depressed."*

*"It's one of the most wonderful community centers/resources."*

**—survey comments**





enriched play environment that offers many friendly cognitive, motor, and social challenges.

The Playhouse facility is also used afterhours monthly for foster respite care offered by Department of Social Services and the Church of the Holy Cross. Parent to Parent uses the facility monthly to provide childcare during their monthly support and education meeting for families with special needs children.

#### *Community Outreach*

The Playhouse organized the first ever juried exhibit of children's art at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts in February 2011. Close to 100 High Country children were represented in the six week exhibit.

Created by The Children's Playhouse in 2009, The Great Friend to Families Award honors individuals who have made sustained contributions to helping High Country families. We received 20 nominees in 2010 and the winner was Pat Morgan. Nineteen individuals were nominated in March 2011 and Dick and Joan Hearn were the winners.

The 5th annual Playhouse Baby and Parenting Fair, held in March 2010, attracted over 300 visitors. This year's fair will be held on April 16, 2011.

The 4th annual Playhouse Family Music Festival, held in August 2010 in Sugar Grove, brought world class performers to Watauga County. The number of sponsors, however, dropped sharply in 2010 due to the difficult economy and the Playhouse board has decided to suspend the festival in 2011 in order to concentrate on other fundraisers.

### **III. Outcomes**

The following outcomes are correlated to the Playhouse mission and measured in our most recent survey conducted in March-April, 2010.

***Mission for Children: To provide an enriching, educational play environment for young children.***

*Social/Emotional Outcomes:*

- Majority of parents/caregivers will report that their child interacts with others at the PH. Current survey: 97.5% strongly agree or agree



*"My children loooooove The Playhouse. It is obvious they enjoy the activities and learn and have fun. We cannot drive past without the kids asking to go to the Playhouse!"*  
—survey comment

- Majority will report improved social skills (sharing, taking turns, inviting others to share in play) have improved since attending the PH.

Current survey: 97.5% strongly agree or agree

#### *Cognitive Outcomes:*

- Majority will report that activities at PH support child's ability to think creatively. Current survey: 100% strongly agree or agree

- Majority will report that activities at PH support child's ability to solve problems. Current survey: 95% strongly agree or agree

#### *Physical Skills Outcomes:*

- Majority will report that activities at PH support child's fine motor skills. Current survey: 100% strongly agree or agree
- Majority will report that activities at PH help child develop physical coordination and balance. Current survey: 95% strongly agree or agree

### ***Mission for Parents: To offer parents and caregivers friendly support in the important job of raising children.***

#### *Parent Education, Social Networking and Support Outcomes:*

- Majority will report consulting parenting books and brochures at the PH. Current survey: 79% respond often or sometimes.
- Majority will report talking to other parent/caregivers when visiting the PH. Current survey: 100% strongly agree or agree
- Majority will report feeling that the PH helps them to be a more effective parent or caregiver. Current survey: 92.3% strongly agree or agree.



"In our crazy life The Playhouse has allowed my child to just go be a child and forget about 'Big People' problems."

—comment on survey

