



2022 Performance Report for **THE CHILDREN'S PLAYHOUSE**

400 Tracy Circle, Boone, NC 28607 ♦ goPlayhouse.org ♦ 828-263-0011 ♦ EIN #27-

History and Mission

The only children's museum based in the High Country, The Children's Playhouse offers stimulating arts and science-based programs, enticing play areas and exhibits, and informative parenting resources.

Our mission is to provide children from birth to age eight with enriching, educational play experiences while at the same time offering their parents and caregivers friendly support in the important job of raising children. Parents and caregivers stay and play with their children.

The Children's Playhouse celebrated 20 years of service in 2022.

Rebuilding Community in 1st Full Year

In 2022 the "pandemic babies" and their cautious but eager parents discovered the joy of making friends and finding support at The Children's Playhouse. The year 2022 was the first full year The Children's Playhouse open to the public since the onset of the pandemic. Our building had been closed for 26 months spanning most of 2020 and for half of 2021, time we used to create monthly play kits that were distributed free across the county and to extensively renovate our building. When we reopened in August 2021, we operated with many covid safety measures in place including timed ticketing strictly limiting the number of people in the building, masks, air purification, and our always stringent cleaning and sanitizing. As the vaccines became available for all children and local conditions improved in 2022 we were able to gradually to make masking optional, increase the available slots for visitors, and bring back classes and events that promote community among families. Families embraced the chance to come together for fun and learning and our membership and visitation numbers began to approach pre pandemic levels as 2022 closed.

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Who uses The Children's Playhouse?

Open Tuesday-Saturday, The Children's Playhouse serves both locals and out-of-towners. With an average of 4.7 stars on Google, The Playhouse fills an important niche in our tourism economy. But we also highly valued by our local members who are both stay-at-home and working parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We attract fathers as well as mothers and a wide cross-section of families representing a range of social- economic, educational, and religious backgrounds thanks to our scholarship program and welcoming atmosphere. The majority of our members reside in Watauga County and use the museum intensively, many coming more than once a week.

Despite covid precautions for most of the year 2022, we had

- 11,000 visits from adults and children.
- 338 total family memberships
- 99 sponsored memberships awarded to low-income families, first-time parents, social service agencies, and military families.





2022 Program Highlights

- 1,900 hours of play and bonding. The Playhouse is open for play Tuesday through Saturday for over 37 hours per week year round.
- **160 individual programs** in music, art, and STEM.
- **1 six week session of Brains and Babies**, parent education class for families with infants, for the first time in three years.
- **68 volunteers and 3 interns** from Appalachian State University gained service learning experiences.



Special Exhibits

- **Journey to Space** a month long exhibit that transformed a whole room into the surface of the moon complete with space ship, space suits, challenges. The exhibit was accompanied by science workshops and books about space.
- **Winter Wonderland**, also up for a month, transformed Romp and Stomp with snow-covered peaks for climbing, indoor snowball fights, carpet skating, snow forts, sledding, and a hot chocolate stand.

Special Events

- **The 7th Playhouse BuildFest**, a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) festival for kids 2-12 held on Saturday April 2, 2022 at Watauga High School. Back after a two year break, BuildFest was free community event featuring 70 hands-on activities and attracted 1400 people and 182 volunteers.
- **The Playhouse 20th Birthday Bash**, held on September 25th, 2022 at Booneshine Beer Garden. The free celebration featured over 20 hands on activities, music, and a Mad Scientist Chemistry Show.

Outreach

- **BuildFest in a Box kits** to spark curiosity and combat summer learning loss. Separate kits for preschoolers and early elementary students were designed with 6 to 8 hands-on activities. A total 150 kits were distributed free of charge to the Watauga Schools early intervention program, the Hunger Coalition, the Western TLC Head Start, and Bethel Elementary school.
- **Kids' Corner at the Watauga County Farmers' Market:** we provided nine Saturday morning activities at the Market from May to October.
- **Community Events:** We provided kids' activities at the Summer Reading Kickoff, Boonerang, Fairy Day, the Back to School festival, Boone Boo, and during vaccine clinics at Blue Ridge Pediatrics.
- **Camp Sunshine:** we provided two days of therapeutic art activities at the day camp for grieving children which is organized by Medi Home Health & Hospice and held on the ASU campus.
- **Space provided to other agencies:** the Children's Council's Babies on Blankets support group met at The Playhouse 45 times Foster Parents' Nights Out three times, and childcare was provided once for a FARM Cafe workshop.

