8th BuildFest Sparks Curiosity and Wonder

The 8th Playhouse BuildFest was held on Saturday, April 1st at Watauga High School from 9 am to 2 pm. BuildFest is a free community event featuring dozens of hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) activities for kids aged 2-12, plus a giant Cardboard City, Tiny Town, Family Resource Village, Touch a Truck, and two Amazing Science Shows.

BuildFest by the Numbers
Number of hands-on activities: more than 70, 40 provided by The Playhouse
Number of attendees: 1505
Number of staff: 9
Number of volunteers: 175
Number of STEM professionals: 8

Sponsors
Skyscrapers: ECRS and OP Smiles: Adult & Child Orthodontists and Pediatric Dentists
Bridges: Moltox and North Carolina Science Festival
In-kind sponsors: Stickboy Bakery, SOS Printing, WalMart, Harris-Teeter, Hole Lotta Donuts West Jefferson, Manalalu Water, Hatchett, Lowe’s Hardware, Babcock Furniture, Ingles, Food Lion, and Lowe’s Food

Activity Partners
Twenty-nine classes, clubs, and community groups joined with The Children’s Playhouse to provide more than 70 hands-on activities.

Appalachian State University: Anthropology Club, Biology Department, Chemistry, Child Development, Geology and Environmental Science, and the Physics and Astronomy Club

Community nonprofits and local government: BuddyWalk of the High Country, Children’s Council (Circle of Parents, Parents as Teachers, Incredible Years), Children’s Developmental Services Agency of the Blue Ridge (CDSA-BR), Community Artists, FARM Cafe, High Country Doula, Parent to Parent Family Support Network, Town of Boone - Booneral Music & Arts Festival, Watauga County Public Library and Rootle Ambassador, Western TLC Head Start, and Western Youth Network

Local schools: Two Rivers Community School, Watauga CCC&TI Culinary Arts, and Watauga High School (Mountain Alliance and Watauga Robotics)

Family-oriented businesses: Committed 2 Growth, Lara’s Lactation Consulting, and the NC Medicaid Enrollment Broker
Quotes from Families

“It was all amazing! Such a well executed event!”

“That was one of the coolest kid events we’ve ever been to! We can’t wait until the next one. Our little boy loved Cardboard City, cars on the race track, Angry Birds, and the physics show. He didn’t want to leave. Even with his autistic setbacks the staff was so incredibly accommodating.”

“My son had so much fun! ...I think he learned the joy of living in a community that values children.”

“My kids enjoyed building rockets, learning about the reflection of light, static electricity, anthropology, and plants. I thought it was a wonderful setup and my family really enjoyed it.”

“Totally new sensory and play experiences for our almost-2 year old.”

Quotes from Volunteers

“I loved helping them make their ideas a reality!”

“There were a lot of kids that were excited to try to build the best boat possible to hold as many pennies as possible. It was fun to see them getting excited about trying to do better than their previous attempt and break the record.”

“The kids and parents were so engaged and enthusiastic about the entire event. They expressed their gratitude to the volunteers, and it was such a refreshing experience!”

“I loved getting to see kids’ faces light up after scoring points with our robot.”

Countdown to BuildFest Outreach at Bethel School

In February, Playhouse Director of Visitor Services and Programs, Ellen Lewis, visited the Pre-K through Grade 3 classes at Bethel School, the most rural school in Watauga County. She led a “Hide and Seek Moon” activity and distributed 64 Astronomy play kits to take home. Each kit included all the supplies to make a pretend telescope, a Junior Ranger Night Explorer booklet, badge, and stickers from the National Park Service.