



thinkery

Impact Report

2024



Every great movement starts with a shared belief...

At Thinkery, we believe in the power of play to transform lives. We believe that curiosity fuels confidence, that creativity sparks endless possibilities, and that every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

This past year was a testament to what's possible when a community comes together. With the opening of Thinkery – Del Valle, we took a bold step forward in expanding access to joyful, hands-on learning experiences. We deepened our impact, welcomed new families, and continued building a future where every child has the chance to reach their full potential. As Board President, I have the privilege of seeing firsthand the joy, wonder, and confidence that these experiences spark, and I know this is just the beginning of Thinkery's next chapter.

None of this happens by chance. It happens because of you. Your generosity, your time, and your belief in Thinkery's mission are what make this work not only possible but powerful. Because of you, we are building a world where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for being part of this journey. The work continues, and we are grateful to have you alongside us.

With gratitude,

Jonelle Bradshaw de Hernandez, PhD
Thinkery Board President

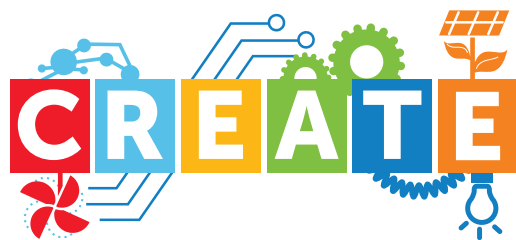




Read more
about this
inspiring
program and
partnership.



THANK YOU TO OUR C.R.E.A.T.E. (COLLABORATION TO REALIZE EQUITY AND TEACH ENGINEERING) PROGRAM PARTNERS:



Collaboration to Realize Equity and Teach Engineering

In Collaboration with



Invest in Joyful Learning for ALL

At Thinkery, play isn't just about having fun — it's how children make sense of the world. Every exhibit, program, and experience is designed to spark curiosity, creativity, and confidence, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.

In 2024, more than 250,000 visitors explored, created, and discovered at Thinkery, engaging in hands-on STEAM learning experiences that help children cultivate a life long love of learning.

Access to these opportunities is at the heart of Thinkery's mission. Through free and reduced-cost General Admission programs, nearly 80,000 children and their caregivers experienced the joy of Thinkery.

But access to these opportunities doesn't happen by chance. It happens because of generous community members, like YOU. Philanthropy fuels Thinkery's mission. When you give, you're not just supporting a museum, you're creating joyful learning spaces where ALL children can grow into confident, creative thinkers.

There are countless ways to create impact!

Whether you give, volunteer, become a member, or simply share our mission, you're helping build a community where every child has a place to play and learn.



Want to spark even more joy?

Give online at thinkeryaustin.org/support



See volunteer opportunities at
thinkeryaustin.org/volunteer



Email at **development@thinkeryaustin.org**





Become a Thinkery Innovator

Join our community of recurring donors starting at just \$10/month. As a Thinkery Innovator, you'll power sustainable impact and receive fun, meaningful perks throughout the year.

Corporate Giving

Corporate and business sponsorships power the areas of greatest need at Thinkery — creating impact that aligns with your philanthropic goals. Together, we can build something truly meaningful.

Volunteering

From engaging with families on the museum floor to helping behind the scenes, volunteers bring Thinkery's mission to life. Individual and group opportunities are available.



Meet Lynn

“Thinkery will always be **part of our family’s traditions, and we are so grateful to have the opportunity to be part of the Thinkery family.**”



A Legacy of Learning Through Play

Since her move to Austin in the early '90s, Lynn Meredith has been a dedicated community member, serving as past president of the Austin Children's Museum's (ACM) board and as the honorary chair of the capital campaign that transformed ACM into Thinkery.

Lynn's journey with Thinkery began with a desire to engage actively in her new community after her move to Austin. After speaking with different nonprofit leaders, she was introduced to Debbie Edward, co-founder of ACM. "I was taken with her vision and her understanding of the Austin community, but most important, her understanding of what was needed to help engage children and to help parents and adults learn alongside the children of Austin."

Over the course of 30 years, the Austin Children's Museum grew from a museum without walls to its first brick-and-mortar location on 5th Street, eventually landing in the iconic green building on 2nd Street. But we quickly outgrew that space. This prompted a search for a new home that led us to Mueller. This move was not just geographical but also conceptual, rebranding from a traditional museum to Thinkery – a name that embodies the mission to inspire and equip ALL children to be confident, creative thinkers. Lynn reflects fondly on the excitement of building Thinkery from the ground up, designing innovative spaces like the iconic water exhibit and engaging children and adults alike with interactive exhibits and programs. She also understands the importance of continuous evolution and community engagement, "It's time to

refresh and to dream and to think strategically about what are the needs of our community? What do our families want? What do they need? Where is education going? Where's learning going?

There are so many new ways to engage children in learning. So, it's time right now to stretch our wings and grow Thinkery into something that meets needs and will continue to grow with our community and children."

Lynn speaks passionately about Thinkery's ongoing initiatives of bringing joyful learning experiences to ALL by expanding our reach to even more communities around Central Texas, starting with our first-ever neighborhood museum, Thinkery – Del Valle. She envisions a future where Thinkery's influence extends even further, enriching more families with the wonder of hands-on learning.

For Lynn and her family, Thinkery isn't just a museum, "Thinkery will always be part of our family's traditions, and we are so grateful to have the opportunity to be part of the Thinkery family."

Lynn's story reminds us that Thinkery is more than a museum. It's a beloved community anchor that evolves with Greater Austin's children and families.

As we look ahead, Lynn Meredith's dedication and commitment to fostering a community of curious learners continues to shape Thinkery's evolution. We are grateful to have Lynn on this Thinkery journey and excited to see what the future holds!

The Power of Play

Play in Action: Thinkery's Participation in the LEGO® Playful Learning Museum Network

At Thinkery, we believe that play is the most powerful tool for learning. Thanks to our participation in the LEGO® Playful Learning Museum Network, we have deepened our commitment to bringing hands-on, child-led, play-based experiences to children, caregivers, and educators across Central Texas. Through this collaboration, we have embedded Learning through Play principles across our museum programs, transformed how we train our staff, and co-designed new learning experiences. The LEGO® Group's Playful Learning Museum Network is funded by the LEGO Foundation and hosted by the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC).

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE THAT INSPIRES INNOVATION

One of the most transformative aspects of our participation in the LEGO® Playful Learning Museum Network has been the Community of Practice — a global network of children's museum professionals dedicated to deepening the impact of play-based learning.

Thinkery team members have been active participants, learning from and collaborating with peers worldwide to reimagine how we bring play to life. Through this network, Thinkery staff have exchanged ideas on exhibit design, facilitation strategies, and training techniques that enhance learning outcomes for children.

LEARNING IN MOTION: STEAM POP-UPS AND PLAY-BASED FACILITATION

An exciting outcome of this partnership is the launch of STEAM Pop-Ups at Thinkery – Meredith Learning Lab. These engaging, hands-on activations are designed to spark curiosity and deepen play-based learning on the museum floor. Developed by Thinkery's Play and Learning Team and inspired by insights from the LEGO® Playful Learning Museum Network, these pop-ups invite children and their caregivers to experiment with physics through flying objects, learn about fractions by designing "pizza" orders, discover balance and motion through playful challenges, and exploring music and movement by putting a tuning fork in water to visualize sound waves.

Whether it's through our STEAM pop-ups, the hands-on activations in Spark Shop, or the other joyful



experiences unfolding on the museum floor every day, the impact of Learning through Play is felt across every part of Thinkery. As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing this work to ensure that ALL children can experience the transformative power of play.

THANK YOU TO THE LEGO GROUP AND THE LEGO FOUNDATION FOR MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE AND FOR CHAMPIONING THE POWER OF PLAY IN LEARNING!



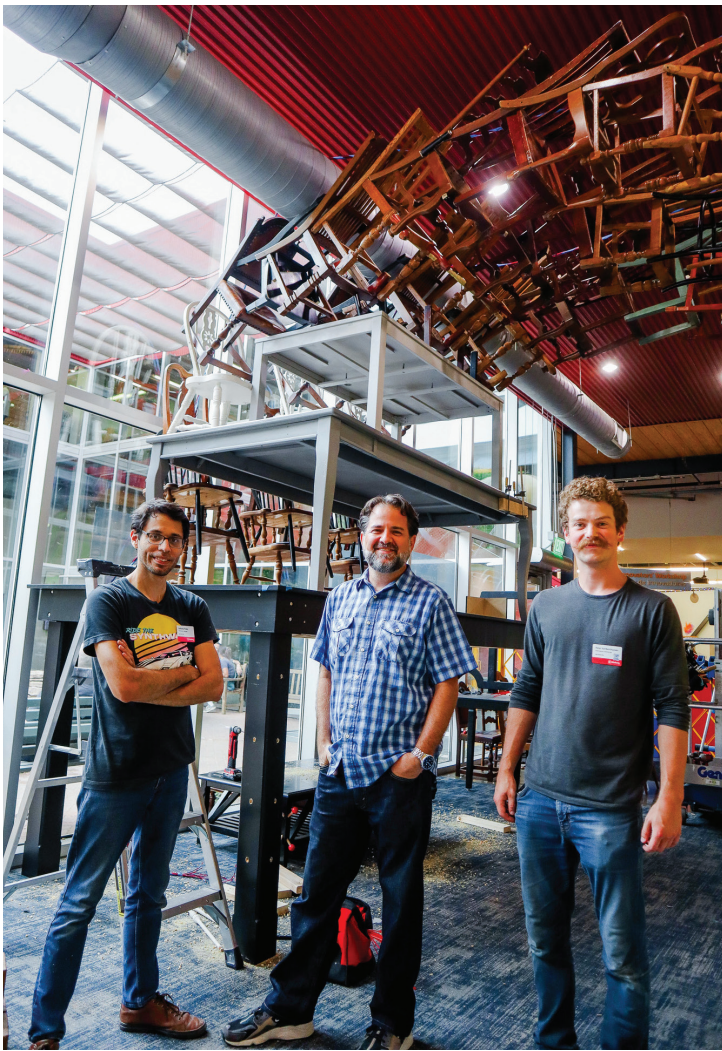
Meet Néstor



Guiding a Bold Transformation

Néstor Ho played a pivotal role in one of the most transformative chapters in Thinkery's history. As a board member during the capital campaign that reimagined the Austin Children's Museum as Thinkery, Néstor helped shepherd the organization through a bold vision, finding a new home, building a new space, and embracing a new identity rooted in playful, hands-on STEAM learning.

“The experiential learning was the biggest thing when we were designing the space. The biggest thing was we wanted kids to learn without realizing they were learning. We want them to learn through play. We wanted to have something in which every experience was part of learning.”



A Fortastic New Exhibit at Thinkery

In 2024, we welcomed our newest exhibit at the Meredith Learning Lab, *Fortastic Adventure: Imagine. Design. Build!* This hands-on, interactive exhibit encourages children of all ages (and the child inside of all of us) to discover the joy, creativity, and artistic approach to architecture and construction.

Fortastic Adventure dives deep into the engineering design process in an innovative, hands-on and play-based way. With a focus on engineering and artistic exploration, children and families engage in open-ended play and create imaginative new worlds using sheets and mounting points, a variety of repurposed furniture, and pulley systems.

This exhibit brings architecture, design, and open-ended play to life in an unforgettable way.

"This was a fun exhibit for our team to design and produce. We enjoyed the playful and creative process of designing, engineering, and fabricating this whimsically interactive experience that provides children and their adults the opportunity to use their imaginations to design and create."

– Matt Stalberger, Chief Museum Officer



Learning, Leading, and Inspiring Through Play

The Thinkery Youth Development (TYD) program provides high school students with paid workforce and leadership development opportunities, helping them build real-world skills that will serve them in any career path they choose.

Since 2022, in partnership with Breakthrough Central Texas, Thinkery has welcomed an annual cohort of 10 high schoolers to the team to gain on-the-job experience such as point of sale, cash handling, customer service, play-based learning with early learners and their families, and building collaborative and empathetic team culture. Our goal is that all those who participate in the program gain valuable transferable professional skills, pathways to future employment, and confidence to self-advocate in the workplace.

Building critical professional experience for in-demand jobs and exploring career interests at a young age in a supportive and collaborative environment is key to future success. We know that preparing the future workforce with the durable, transferable skills needed to thrive in the 21st Century will be a part of creating resilient, thriving communities in Central Texas.

THE THINKERY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED BY

ORACLE

Meet Joe



Joe joined the Thinkery Youth Development (TYD) program in 2024 and works as a Museum Experience Assistant at our Mueller and Del Valle locations. Through his role, he supports children and families as they explore exhibits, engage in hands-on STEAM activities, and experience the joy of learning through play.

Joe learned about TYD through the partnership between Thinkery and Breakthrough Central Texas. With a passion for STEAM, he plans to study architecture and civil engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. The TYD program offered the perfect opportunity to gain real-world experience in a supportive, playful environment.

“I get a lot of exposure to customer service and work ethics. And I like being around a really positive environment with the kids.”

His love of STEAM comes through in his favorite part of the job: teaching kids and learning alongside them. At Thinkery – Del Valle, he often builds simple structures with blocks to challenge young visitors. “Sometimes I’ll make something random and say, ‘Think you can build something like this?’ Then I help them figure out how to make it stronger by adding more blocks. Before you know it, they’ve built a house.”

Through TYD, Joe is not only gaining valuable professional and leadership skills. He’s also inspiring the next generation to dream big, get curious, and discover the endless possibilities of STEAM.

THE THINKERY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Joyful Learning for ALL

As a nonprofit organization, we remain committed to ensuring that admission price is never a barrier to families having the opportunity to experience the magic of hands-on learning through play!



In 2024, generous supporters of our Open Door Initiative allowed us to do ALL this and more!



30,563 visited through Museums for All



471 field trips from across Central Texas, including Title I schools who participated at a deeply discounted rate



\$73,215 in scholarships to Thinkery Camp and Thinkery – Little Thinkers Preschool



46,805 visits during our pay-what-you-can community hours

THANK YOU TO OUR OPEN DOOR SUPPORTERS



A Partnership Rooted in Joy and Care

Since 2014, Thinkery has been honored to partner with The SAFE Alliance, creating joyful experiences for children and families navigating incredibly difficult times. Together, we offer moments of connection, creativity, and play that bring light and relief when they're needed most.

The SAFE Alliance provides critical support and resources to survivors of child abuse, sexual assault and exploitation, and domestic violence. Through our partnership, Thinkery hosts hands-on, play-based STEAM workshops designed to spark wonder and strengthen family bonds. Whether families are exploring science experiments, building together, or simply sharing joyful moments side by side, these workshops offer a gentle reminder of possibility and hope.

“It's a small spark, but **one** that can make a meaningful difference in someone's day.”

Beyond workshops, SAFE families can also access Thinkery year-round through our Access Memberships—discounted memberships offered at flexible rates to fit each family's needs. This connection allows families to return again and again, finding joyful learning and a sense of community whenever they walk through our doors.

Together with SAFE, we're honored to provide not just playful experiences, but moments of comfort, healing, and joy that last long after the visit ends.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

SAFE | stop abuse for
everyone



Meet Omi



Guiding a Bold Transformation

At Thinkery, play isn't only for children. It's a powerful, multigenerational tool for connection, healing, and joy. For Dr. Omi Jones, a retired University of Texas professor, Thinkery became an unexpected refuge during a stressful period in her academic career. What began as a kind gesture, taking the children of former students to Thinkery, soon grew into a weekly source of renewal and reflection.

“It was so relaxing for me to play with the kids and to see children mostly unencumbered.”

She watched as young children shared toys without hesitation, delighted in story time, and explored the world with joyful abandon. “The real delight was when they were just handing each other toys without thinking about it. That kind of play is so rare in adult spaces.”

Through these visits, Thinkery reconnected Omi to something she felt was missing in higher education: the freedom to learn through movement, emotion, and joy. “I lament the lack of play in university settings,” she reflects. “There’s something supposedly adult about being still and serious, and I think it’s antithetical to being human to not use your body to understand the world.”

Thinkery became a place where Omi witnessed empathy in action, from inclusive story times to moments of spontaneous kindness among children.

Her story is a testament to Thinkery’s mission to create a joyful, inclusive space for learning and growth for ALL.

Coming Together Under the Sky

The Joyful Learning Collaborative

In 2024, Thinkery convened the Joyful Learning Collaborative (JLC), bringing together 25 community organizations with one shared goal: to make the solar eclipse an inclusive, joyful learning experience for everyone in Central Texas.

With a focus on accessibility, collaboration, and community, the JLC worked side by side to create hands-on opportunities for learners of all ages and abilities to experience the wonder of the eclipse together.

To kick off the effort, partners gathered for three pathway sessions on accessibility, storytelling, and space design. These conversations sparked ideas, built relationships, and created strategies to ensure the eclipse experience was open to all.

Carlotta Bins, Career Education Coordinator from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired shared:

“I really liked the opportunity to connect with so many organizations around Austin and see the fantastic things they’re doing in preparation for this event. It opened my eyes to new partners and resources that could support our school and community.”

TOGETHER, THE COLLABORATIVE MADE A MEASURABLE DIFFERENCE:

- 25 community organizations collaborated to design and deliver inclusive eclipse programming.
- 55 light sound devices were distributed to help individuals with visual impairments engage with the eclipse through sound and vibration.
- 25,000 solar viewers were shared across Central Texas, allowing thousands to safely observe the eclipse.
- 5,000+ community members participated in Pre-Eclipse and Eclipse Viewing events, featuring hands-on, play-based activities.
- By uniting the efforts of 25 organizations, the JLC made sure the 2024 eclipse was more than just a moment in the sky. It became a powerful reminder of what’s possible when we create together.



THE 2023 – 2024 JOYFUL LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Andy Roddick Foundation | Austin Area Urban League | Austin Astronomical Society | Austin Nature and Science Center
Austin PBS | Austin Urban Community Coalition | Autism Society of Texas | AVANCE-Austin | Black Mama’s Village
Education Service Center Region 13 | El Buen Samaritano | Girlstart | Hill Country Alliance | Joshua’s Stage | Pecan Springs Elementary
Stars and Science Austin | STEAM Kids | Texas Girls Collaborative Project | Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Todos Juntos Learning Center | Tomorrow’s Promise Foundation | Variety | Women in STEM at UT Austin

THIS WORK WAS SUPPORTED BY THE SIMONS FOUNDATION AND IS PART OF ITS 'IN THE PATH OF TOTALITY' INITIATIVE.



Bringing Play-based, STEAM learning into the Classroom

Through the Thinkery – STEAM Learning Institute, educators across Central Texas come together to explore hands-on, play-based professional development that sparks new ideas and deepens classroom learning.

By collaborating with Thinkery’s STEAM educators, subject matter experts, and each other, teachers gain the tools and confidence to integrate engaging STEAM experiences into their classrooms, helping even more children discover the joy of playful, STEAM learning.

“This partnership reminded me how important it is to give students time to build, create, and explore. We were already doing these things, but Thinkery encouraged us to go further.”

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: LEANDER ISD

In Leander ISD, Thinkery partnered with seven dedicated librarians, reaching a total of 3,780 elementary students. Together, they explored how to bring makerspace concepts into library programs in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and deeply engaging for all learners.

Through workshops, planning sessions, classroom visits, and ongoing Community of Practice meetings, educators co-created developmentally appropriate maker activities that blended storytelling, hands-on exploration, and cutting-edge technology.



SPECIAL THANKS TO SUPPORTERS OF
THINKERY – STEAM LEARNING INSTITUTE:



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: HEADWATERS SCHOOL

At Headwaters School, Thinkery partnered with seven K–5 educators helping them embed STEAM-learning practices into the Montessori curriculum. Over 130 students had the opportunity to experience this new curriculum.

Educators explored new tools and approaches, gaining confidence to integrate inquiry-based learning and technology into their daily teaching.

“I’ve never seen my whole class so engaged and focused. Thinkery’s focus on creativity, critical thinking, and following the child’s lead fits so well with how we teach.”

By supporting educators in building dynamic, hands-on STEAM experiences, the STEAM Learning Institute creates ripple effects that reach countless classrooms, inspiring confident, creative thinking for learners across Central Texas.





Thinkery – Del Valle: A Joyful New Chapter in Play-Based Learning

Through an innovative partnership with Del Valle ISD, Thinkery – Del Valle is a first-of-its-kind neighborhood museum and STEAM Learning Institute Site located within the District's Central Child Development Center. This visionary project meets a community desire and long-awaited need, bridging a learning space gap and nurturing a lifelong love of learning in every child in Del Valle ISD through the transformative power of play!

13,000 Square Feet of Joyful Learning Space

On September 12, 2024, we officially cut the ribbon to Thinkery – Del Valle, marking an exciting new chapter for Thinkery. Located within the Del Valle ISD Central Child Development Center, this is a first-of-its-kind neighborhood museum that serves as a vibrant family learning hub with the community at its core. From the very beginning, we have actively listened to the voices of Del Valle residents to ensure that this space truly reflects their needs, dreams, and aspirations. Shaped by their feedback and inspired by the children's own creative designs, this space embodies the spirit of Del Valle while staying true to Thinkery's hands-on, play-based, STEAM-learning approach.

With 30 engaging, play-based, STEAM exhibits, an indoor learning lab, and an outdoor classroom, Thinkery – Del Valle offers a joyful environment that is used by Del Valle ISD during and after school through Stay and Play Hours for littles who attend the child development centers and ACE afterschool field trips. On the weekends, we open our doors for free to Del Valle residents, with a low ticket price for others to help sustain this commitment to be a financially accessible learning space to the community.

In 2024, Thinkery – Del Valle welcomed 3,000 visitors, filling the space with laughter, discovery, and ah ha moments. And this is just the start! In 2025, we will continue to expand our hours, providing EVEN MORE opportunities for the Del Valle community to engage in joyful, hands-on learning.

Scan here to see Thinkery – Del Valle in action and learn more about its impact!



Take a Peek at Thinkery – Del Valle

Thinkery – Del Valle features three distinct STEAM-learning galleries, two playscapes, an indoor learning lab, and an outdoor classroom.

Declan’s Garden - Named after the Del Valle Child Development Center’s mascot, Declan the Dragon, this space explores cause and effect. Whether you are watching how air moves or making gears turn in Flower Tower, this gallery is all about seeing how things work!

El Parque - With everything you need for your next cookout, imaginative play takes center stage in El Parque! This gallery space includes a paleta cart, featuring designs by local Del Valle students.

Sustainable Springs - Learn how the wind, sun, and water can become power sources in Sustainable Springs. This gallery space explores renewable energy and features a working waterfall called Del Valle Springs!



THANK YOU SO MUCH TO OUR SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE HELPED BRING THINKERY – DEL VALLE TO LIFE!





Thinkery – Del Valle: A Hub for Educator Professional Development

As a district-wide professional development hub, Thinkery – Del Valle is supporting early childhood and elementary educators as they integrate the power of play-based STEAM learning in their classrooms.

Through the Thinkery – STEAM Learning Institute, our STEAM Educators partner with Del Valle ISD teachers to provide dynamic, hands-on professional development that blends educator cohorts, workshops, and in-classroom support. Together, we're expanding access to joyful learning, building a more connected and confident teaching community, and inspiring more children to experience the power of play every day.

A Peer-Led Approach That Builds Confidence

Our approach centers on collaboration and empowerment. Thinkery STEAM Educators model how to integrate tools like Ozo Bots, Bee Bots, and other introductory coding and robotics resources directly into classroom activities. By demonstrating how to use these technologies in ways that enhance existing curriculum, coaches help teachers build confidence and encourage them to take the lead in STEAM learning.

This peer-led model fosters a spirit of teamwork and motivates educators to bring what they've learned back into their own classrooms—with creativity and confidence.



Impact You Can See and Feel

The greatest outcome of this work is clear: increased student engagement and greater curiosity. Teachers have reported that their students are more excited, focused, and motivated to learn; especially when using new technologies and participating in hands-on STEAM lessons

REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPATING EDUCATORS.

“My students were so excited to create — and kept wanting to do more.”

“I’ve never seen them this curious, especially after these lessons!”

“They’re more motivated and ask more questions now.”

“The technology-based lessons even sparked more conversations between students.”

Our Supporters



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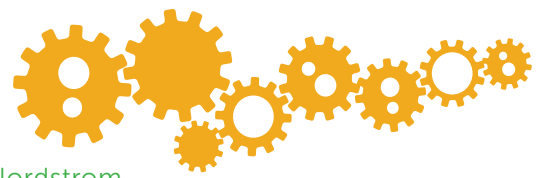
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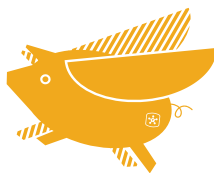
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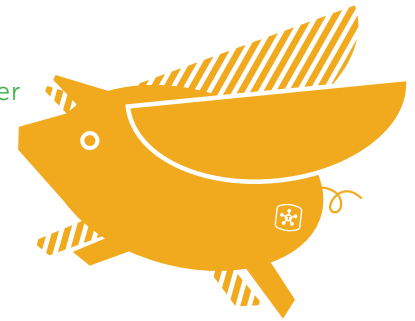
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 Anita & Scot Salmon
 Michelle Moore Smith
 & Justin Smith
 Kim Storin & Bernd Lienhard
 Jessica & Greg Weaver

 = **Thinkery Innovators**

2024 Financial Summary

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

Cash & cash equivalents	1,207,139
Investments	3,326,440
Accounts receivable	66,483
Contributions receivable, net	1,833,479
Prepaid expenses & other assets	82,850
Property & equipment, net	3,405,722
Operating lease right-of-use assets, net	1,265,294
Finance lease right-of-use assets, net	85,045
Loan receivable	1,700,000
Total assets	\$12,972,452

Liabilities & Net Assets

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	398,711
Deferred revenue	673,325
Operating lease obligations	1,267,545
Finance lease obligations	85,839
Notes payable	4,850,000
Total liabilities	\$7,275,420

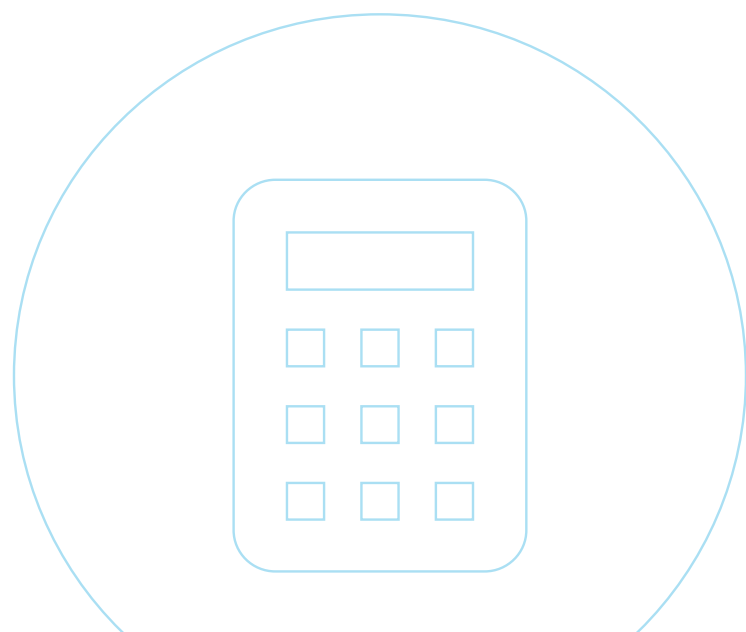
NET ASSETS

Without donor restrictions:

Undesignated	481,299
Board-designated	763,288
With donor restrictions	4,452,445









Total net assets **\$5,697,032**

Total liabilities & Net assets **\$12,972,452**



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenue

Grants & contributions	3,219,976	 35.7%
Admissions	1,836,930	 20.4%
Program fees	1,772,301	 19.7%
Membership fees	772,020	 8.6%
Investment income, net	658,463	 7.3%
Special events	273,497	 3%
Contributed goods & services	238,646	 2.6%
Other revenues	244,179	 2.7%

**Total revenues & net assets
released from restrictions** **\$9,016,012**

Expenses

PROGRAM SERVICES

Exhibits	3,587,997
Classes/events	2,638,487
Store	134,869

Total program expenses **6,361,354**  83%

MANAGEMENT & GENERAL **754,969**  10%

FUNDRAISING **537,966**  7%

Total expenses **\$7,654,288**

Change in net assets	1,361,724
Net assets, beginning of year	4,335,454
Net assets, end of year	5,697,178

**Thank you for making this year full of joy,
learning, and impact! We're excited to
keep growing together in the year ahead.**



2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President - KC Barner

Past President - John Antonelli

President-Elect - Jonelle Bradshaw de Hernandez, PhD

Treasurer - Jason Green

Secretary - Jessica Guerra Reynolds

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Karen Plotkin | Chris Rios | Mark Steiger | YiShaun Yang



Our mission is to lead the future of play-based STEAM learning experiences that inspire and equip ALL children to be confident, creative thinkers.



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