

Children's Museum Houston | *Annual Report 2025*



Our mission is to improve the trajectories of children in Greater Houston through innovative, child-centered learning.





A Letter from CEO Rayanne Darensbourg

Here at Children’s Museum Houston, we believe that learning must begin with belonging. This past year, we lived this belief by strengthening our role as a place where children and families feel welcome, respected, and invited into experiences that shape how they understand themselves and the world around them. This work is especially important in Houston, one of the most diverse cities in the nation, where our role must extend to help children and families build understanding, respect, and connections.

The stories in this report reflect how we listen closely to families and to partners who help drive innovation. Within our galleries and across community-based outreach programs, children step into roles as scientists, engineers, artists, and problem-solvers. Families explore friendships and Houston’s diverse faith traditions. Parents gain new confidence in their ability to serve as their children’s first and most influential teachers. Again and again, these experiences remind us that children are preparing for the future by actively developing the skills, confidence, and perspectives needed to shape it.

Throughout the past year, we also reaffirmed the importance of access. As we welcome families who have limited resources, expand community outreach, offer bilingual experiences, and provide sensory-friendly environments, we work to ensure that opportunity is not limited by circumstance. Every interaction, whether inside our galleries or in neighborhoods, becomes an opportunity to build confidence and expand a child’s sense of what is possible.

As you read this report, I invite you to see these stories as reflections of a shared belief in what children, families, and communities can accomplish together. **I am deeply grateful to our staff, board, partners, and supporters whose commitment fuels this work and gives it meaning. With your continued dedication, the spirit of discovery that takes root here will shape brighter futures far into the years ahead and strengthen our community.**



Every interaction inside our galleries and in neighborhoods, becomes an opportunity to build confidence and expand a child’s sense of what is possible.

Your Impact *Last Year*

900,000+



Children, parents and caregivers provided with high quality, hands-on learning experiences

657,125

Visitors to the museum



325

community partners



261,385

Children and parents from underserved areas participated in free educational outreach and parenting programs



49,730

students from 35 school districts participated in field trips

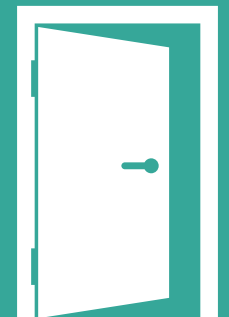
75,961

visited on Thursday Free Family Nights



127,700

Received free museum admission through our Open Doors program



Exhibits That Open *Hearts and Minds*

FAITHFUL FRIENDS

Within our new **Faithful Friends** exhibit, families find gentle prompts that encourage them to engage in conversations they may never have had before. Faithful Friends demonstrates that when children and families are given safe and joyful spaces to explore faith traditions together, they gain not only new knowledge but also form new connections.

As we created Faithful Friends, we felt both excitement and apprehension, unsure how families would respond to our invitation to explore similarities and differences among eleven faith traditions. Guiding us forward was our understanding that in Houston – among the most diverse cities in the nation – cultural understanding is a crucial component of what children desire and need to understand the world and how they can positively contribute. We learned to simply trust the process and take our cues from the twenty-two children who readily shared their stories of faith and family within Faithful Friends.

These children — **Saanvi, Ahava, Hardeep, Martín, Jidina, Simone, Gurleen, Dhruv, Arihant, Ayla, Tommy, Ember, Yusaf, Clara, Martin, Emeri, Gabriel, Max, Dylan, Spike, and Amina** — described how their faith traditions shape daily life, shared favorite activities, and invited Museum visitors to reflect on their own practices. Their stories reveal friendships that cross cultural lines and a desire to help others both understand and be understood is powerful.

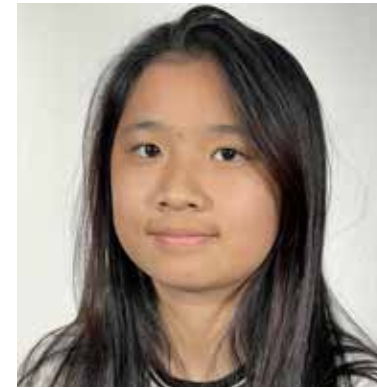


Their stories reveal friendships that cross cultural lines and a desire to help others both understand and be understood is powerful.

To enable families to continue the conversations that begin in Faithful Friends, we paired the exhibit with 120 new Family Literacy Involvement Program (FLIP) Kits. These FLIP Kits are part of our collection of 2,400 FLIP Kits circulated in partnership with the Houston Public Library at 35 neighborhood branches. Families borrow the FLIP Kits, enjoy the featured books, complete themed activities for which all supplies are included, keep their creations, and then return the FLIP Kits for cleaning and restocking. *With the new Faithful Friends FLIP Kits reserved before they even reached the shelves, we have moved forward with plans to create an additional 120 FLIP Kits so that learning related to Faithful Friends can continue to flow seamlessly between homes, the Museum, and through conversations with our team of Educators.*

Within Faithful Friends and through the new FLIP Kits – which have titles such as *Can Cat and Bird Be Friends*, *The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh*, and *Who is My Neighbor* – families will continue to find the courage to talk about faith, to listen to one another, and to celebrate both differences and common ground. In doing so, parents will nurture empathy, curiosity, and inclusivity across cultures — planting seeds of understanding that will continue to grow far beyond childhood.

Families borrow the FLIP Kits, enjoy the featured books, complete themed activities for which all supplies are included, keep their creations, and then return the FLIP Kits for cleaning and restocking.



The Power Of *Early Learning*

EARLY LEARNING ACCESS FOR FAMILIES

Parents entering the Museum with little ones often feel a mix of pride and anxiety. They know that these early years are crucial but may doubt their ability to nurture connection, language, motor skills, and social-emotional growth. **Our Early Learning Access Initiative was born of this challenge, establishing our goal of not only supporting but also celebrating parents as their children’s first and most influential teachers.**

Work began in 2023 with the planning for a new 9,580 sq. ft. Gallery of Wonder that will replace our beloved but space-limited Tot*Spot. We opened the new gallery in March 2026, inviting families into immersive environments rich with stories, sensory experiences, and imaginative play.

In preparation for the new gallery, we used 2025 to pilot new programming and expand existing offerings.

At the Museum, a team of bilingual Early Childhood Educators and partners facilitated **134 workshops for 2,370 parents and 2,389 infants/toddlers.** These workshops included more than a dozen titles ranging from Ages & Stages (exploring transitions between developmental stages) to Giggles & Stories (literacy exercises) and Zumbini (combining music, movement, and play). Parents also enjoyed monthly **Fam Jam mixers at the Museum, with 937 parents and children getting to know one another** within gatherings that featured guest speakers and refreshments.



Our Early Learning Access Initiative was born of this challenge, establishing our goal of not only supporting but also celebrating parents as their children’s first and most influential teachers.

Another team of bilingual Early Childhood Educators was active in the community, facilitating **153 workshops that span 20+ titles – including *Math at Home* and *How Does It Work* – for 1,953 parents and 2,587 children at 30 locations across Greater Houston.** These Educators also provided ongoing training to healthcare and social service providers so that they could introduce new parents to the curated resources within our Welcome Baby kits. We designed these kits to provide parents with immediately accessible tools and resources so that they can positively influence brain development and language acquisition throughout babies' first year. Welcome Baby has a broad reach, with **7,220 Welcome Baby Kits distributed to parents by our partners at 35 locations across Greater Houston.** To further extend the benefits of the intro to Welcome Baby that partners provide, we have developed a new parent and baby workshop for Welcome Baby that our Educators facilitate at the Museum and in the community.

Results are best captured with a parent's words of pride and confidence. After attending an Early STEM workshop in which parents and toddlers made lava lamps, a mother touched base with our Early Childhood Program Manager, writing, *"I learned that my 2.5-year-old is more capable than I was giving her credit for... after putting my fears of making a mess aside, I watched wide-eyed as my toddler poured liquids with minimal spilling. She loved experimenting so much that later that week she asked to do it again at home. I had no idea her fine motor skills had developed to that degree, and it caused me to pause to consider what else she may be capable of doing. Such parenting paradigm shifts are powerful, and I'm indebted to you and your staff for these opportunities to reflect."*

What began with the first version of Tot*Spot created in 1992 has grown into a comprehensive initiative that now touches families inside the Museum and at outreach locations across Greater Houston. Parents are being provided with inviting spaces and meaningful resources that enable them to knowledgeably guide their infants', toddlers', and preschoolers' development and to gain confidence as they develop deeper connections to their children's growth. As they do so, they will continue to nurture kindness, helpfulness, empathy, curiosity, and creativity – ensuring that the spirit of discovery that begins at birth will flourish for all the years to come.



What began with the first version of Tot*Spot created in 1992 has grown into a comprehensive initiative that now touches families inside the Museum and at outreach locations across Greater Houston.

Everyone Belongs Here

REACHING OUT TO ALL

When families step into the Museum, they encounter more than our galleries — they meet people who strive to turn everyday moments into meaningful experiences. **Our goal is simple yet profound: to make every visitor feel seen, supported, and inspired to be a lifelong learner.**

Every visit begins in our newly renovated Lobby, where the Box Office team welcomes families, answers questions, and guides families toward areas that match their interests. Aware that roughly one-in-six children experience sensory processing differences, this team also remains ready to offer accommodation aligned with our Sensory Friendly certification from KultureCity, helping families navigate the Museum with confidence.

Accommodation does not stop there. **We host four Sensory Friendly Days annually, inviting families of children with autism and/or sensory processing differences.** We pair these events with celebrations that children traditionally enjoy – including Valentine’s Day, Spring Break, Halloween, and the Winter Holidays – so that families can participate fully in events that would otherwise be off-limits due to high levels of sensory input. Every Sensory Friendly Day features seasonal performances and storytimes; furry interactions with therapy pets; and presentations involving Q&A sessions by groups such as University of Houston’s Cognitive Development Lab. And of course, visitors also explore our galleries, within which the intensity of lighting and sound is reduced and enhanced with visual safety signage. On average, 300 parents and children enjoy each of our Sensory Friendly Days.



Our goal is simple yet profound: to make every visitor feel seen, supported, and inspired to be a lifelong learner.

In our galleries, families meet members of a team of twelve Gallery Educators. These educators bring combinations of classroom experience and deep content expertise in fields including Early Childhood Development, Psychology, Anthropology, Biology, Environmental Science, Geology, Planetary Science, International Affairs, and more. Every day, this team of educators facilitate hands-on activities, lead workshops, and spark conversations in multiple exhibits, including Invention Convention, Maker Annex, Science Station, PowerScience Lab, and the EcoStation environmental exhibit.

Recognizing the need for more specialized perspectives for the arts, we brought in additional experts to help families. In 2025, we launched our EastArts Initiative, pairing twelve local artists with twelve public school art teachers who led ninety-six workshops celebrating East Asian arts and culture. These pairs led children in workshops that featured many artistic disciplines, including painting, pottery, paper dyeing, printmaking, mask making, calligraphy, and collage. To expand impact, we gave each teacher the supplies needed to bring featured activities back into their classrooms so that they could reach many additional children within Houston ISD. Feedback was enthusiastic: *“The teachers who taught us and helped us throughout were very helpful and super sweet.”* *“This was among the best [activities] I have done at the Museum since first coming in 2013.”* *“Thank you for a unique experience I haven’t seen offered anywhere else.”*

Our commitment to exceptional visitor engagement was recognized in 2025 when our Director of Visitor Experience received the Ed King Service Award from the Houston First Corporation — honoring leadership that sets a high bar for hospitality and inclusion across our 100+ member public-facing teams. What began with a simple belief that people make the difference has grown into a team culture that shapes every visitor’s experience. Within our team, families find not only guidance and expertise, but also the confidence builders ready to help them explore, create, and connect. **In doing so, we are committed to continuing to nurture curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking — ensuring that the experiences sparked inside our walls inspire learning and connection far beyond our doors.**



Programs *That Inspire*

CAMP ADVENTURE

For many children in Houston, summer camp is out of reach. We launched Camp Adventure in 2017 to change that — providing two-week-long camps for children who would otherwise go without meaningful summer experiences. Each year’s camps feature new activities, with the 2025 camps blending elements of literacy, forensics, and engineering. In 2025 we served 464 children while expanding from three to nine sites, including the Cuney Homes public housing complex and the New Hope Housing apartments for families transitioning from homelessness. We followed each two-week camp with a visit to the Museum to further deepen the learning.

In a major expansion of scope, we piloted new approaches in summer 2025 so that we could serve PreK children (three- and four-year-olds), in addition to our ongoing engagement of children in K-2 and grades 3-5. And while some may assume PreK children are too young for STEM learning, our experience resoundingly proves otherwise, with three- and four-year-olds remaining enthusiastically engaged in two-hour sessions throughout the entire two weeks.

A couple of factors contributed to our success. First, we had our Early Childhood Educators build a curriculum based on our expertise of having children learn through playful and meaningful experiences and then serve as facilitators. Second, we made sure that the activities would be totally fun, with an emphasis on experimentation. Third, we provided costumes for the children so that they could engage with their imaginations in roleplay. The little ones played right along, “doing” science even in cases where their fine motor skills may not have been 100% up to the task, learning and applying new STEM vocabulary, eagerly proclaiming themselves to be scientists and engineers, and returning home to proudly tell their parents what they accomplished within the roles they had taken on.



In 2025 we served 464 children while expanding from three to nine sites, including the Cuney Homes public housing complex and the New Hope Housing apartments for families transitioning from homelessness.

Hanah was among the standouts at the Chinese Community Center. After one of our Early Childhood Educators read aloud a board book featuring a sailing voyage, they put a collection of supplies on the floor and asked a group of three- and four-year-olds to build boats that would float in a container of water. As is typical at this stage of development, the children worked independently, gravitating to building supplies like paper, aluminum foil, popsicle sticks, and a variety of fasteners. Most of the children made simple paper boats and then watched with surprise as they became waterlogged and sunk – after which they tried other materials and built boats that would float. **But Hanah used the foil first and created a boat outfitted with a mast, sail, and captain.** She seemed to be operating in two spheres simultaneously, dealing with the limitations of foil while also proclaiming “I’m an engineer and I will build a boat I will sail through the oceans.”

We highlight careers within Camp Adventure because children cannot aspire to roles they may not know exist. This approach benefits more than just the youngest participants. Derek, a fifth grader from Cuney Homes, initially believed forensics was limited to police work. As he learned how forensic professionals use science to solve crimes alongside law enforcement, his perspective broadened to include career paths he had never imagined, including several STEM fields that were new to him and even teaching. While Derek now dreams of joining our team – following the path of the STEM Educator who inspired and mentored him – he may one day pursue other options ranging from teaching and other forms of public service to the STEM careers he continues to explore. His enthusiasm and desire to learn more about science fields reflect the importance of career exploration we see throughout Camp Adventure.



Campers like Hanah and Derek have confirmed what we already knew – that when children are given safe and welcoming spaces in which they are supported by content-knowledgeable Educators, they can strengthen their literacy skills, take on the roles of STEM-aligned professionals, and gain the confidence to imagine bright futures in which they will work as members of teams. **The results speak for themselves: 90% of PreK children enjoy the reading activities within Camp Adventure, 96% of 1st and 2nd graders find that doing science is fun, and 94% of 2nd–5th graders enjoy collaborative engagement in STEM experiments.**

Within Camp Adventure, children will continue to discover the courage to explore questions, to see themselves in roles they had not previously known existed, and to celebrate both their own potential and that of their peers. In doing so, they will nurture resourcefulness, creativity, and friendships — ensuring that the spirit of discovery they experience during the summer shapes the opportunities they will then pursue.



As is typical at this stage of development, the children worked independently, gravitating to building supplies like paper, aluminum foil, popsicle sticks, and a variety of fasteners.





Thank You **CMH Supporters!**

Children’s Museum Houston gratefully acknowledges the donors of gifts totaling \$5,000 or more received between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Generous donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, and public agencies provide funding for the Museum’s outreach and free admission programs, operations, exhibits, program development, and endowment with \$7,883,062 contributed for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.



\$1,000,000+

John P. McGovern Foundation
Lilly Endowment Inc.

\$150,000- \$500,000

Chevron
City of Houston through
Houston Arts Alliance
ExxonMobil
The Freeman Foundation
Phillips 66
Samuels Family Foundation
The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
United Way of Greater Houston

\$149,999- \$100,000

Laura and John Arnold
Bank of America
CenterPoint Energy
ConocoPhillips
Ginny and Jason Endecott
The Hamill Foundation
The Henderson-
Wessendorff Foundation
HESS
INVISTA
PNC Foundation
Powell Foundation
Valero Energy Corporation
The David and
Jean Wiley Foundation

\$99,999- \$50,000

Barbara Bush Houston
Literacy Foundation
BASF
The Brown Foundation, Inc.
The Cullen Foundation
H-E-B
Houston Livestock
Show and Rodeo
Oxy
Kitty and Richard Rabinow
Sarofim Foundation
Scurlock Foundation
The W.T. and Louise J. Moran
Foundation
The William Stamps Farish Fund

\$49,999- \$25,000

Julie and Drew Alexander
Nancy Allen
Dana and Jonathan Applegate
Jessica and Michael Bertuccio
Kathryn and Travis Boeker
Center for Houston's Future
CFP Foundation
Champion Energy
The George Foundation
Kate and Steve Gibson
Holthouse Foundation for Kids
Houston Astros Foundation
The Junior League of Houston, Inc.
M.D. Anderson Foundation
Niko Niko's
Sue Payne
Reliant Energy
Ashley and Jonathan Sloan
Sterling-Turner Foundation
Vivian L. Smith Foundation

\$24,999- \$10,000

Veronika and Marc Adler
Chinhui and Eddie Allen
Randy Allen Family
Laura Bellows
Leslie and Jack Blanton
Lane and Jeb Bowden
Shelley and Geoffrey Bracken
Charlotte Christman
Cassandra and Ryan Dalton
Erika and David Frankfort
George and Mary Josephine
Hamman Foundation
Halliburton
Hines
Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation
Institute of Museum and
Library Services
Investment & Development
Ventures, LLC
Ann and John Johnson
Leigh and Chris Joseph
JP Morgan Foundation
Devorah and David Krieger

Allison and Geoff Leach
Elizabeth McIngvale-Mackey and
Matthew Mackey
Palmer Moldawer
Memorial Hermann
Dottie and Bob McCallister
Rishma and Akbar Mohamed
Lauren and Brad Morgan
New York Life Insurance Company
Robert R. and Kay M.
Onstead Foundation
Eva and Jordan Pawelek
Asasia and Jerod Pierce
Susan and Michael J. Plank
Monica Hoz de Vila and Bradley Radoff
The Sarofim Foundation
Kelley and Jeff Scofield
Strake Foundation
Heather and Mark Teshoian
Claire and Ian Virga
Whalley Family Foundation

\$9,999- \$5,000

The Stanford and Joan Alexander
Foundation

Katie and Scott Arnoldy

Lisa Barksdale

Caroline and Andrew Bean

Liz and Steven Bender

Whitney and Ryan Burns

Laura and John Chapman

Allison and Iván Chávez

Dr. Kelly Coleman

Natalie and Rodolpho Cooper

Andrea Elliott and Shaw Cranfield

Deloitte

Sabrina and Rich DiMichele

Lydia H. and David J. Drutz

Sarah Ebrahimi

Jimmy Erwin /

Chicago Title Commercial

Cheri and Jim Flores

John Gaylord

Lacey and Matt Goossen

Susan and Jeff Gray

GWR Equities, LLC

Courtney and Tyler Hassen

Rana and Todd Hassen

The Albert & Ethel Herzstein
Charitable Foundation

Morgan and Chris Hollins

Houston Junior Forum

Houston Rockets

Kinder Morgan Foundation

Shelli and Steven J. Lindley

Michael Mahlstedt

Kim and Scott Martin

The McBride Family

Diane and David Modesett

Winnie and Nic Phillips

Kristhy and Brad Pollack

Polycarp Foundation

Maya and Matt Pomroy

Carolyn and Jake Sabat

Betsy and Ed Schreiber

Ellen and Charles Sheedy

Susan and Steve Solcher

Anabella and Saul Solomon /

Berkeley Research Group LLC

Susser Bank

The Tapeats Fund

Mehgan and Randal Wichuk

Special Thanks to our O-PreK Gallery Campaign Donors

Sarofim Foundation

Lilly Endowment Inc.

Samuels Family Foundation

Mona and Andrew Sarofim

The Brown Foundation

The Hamill Foundation

CFP Foundation

Radoff Family Foundation

The Powell Foundation

Mabee Foundation

Kelley and Jeffrey Scofield

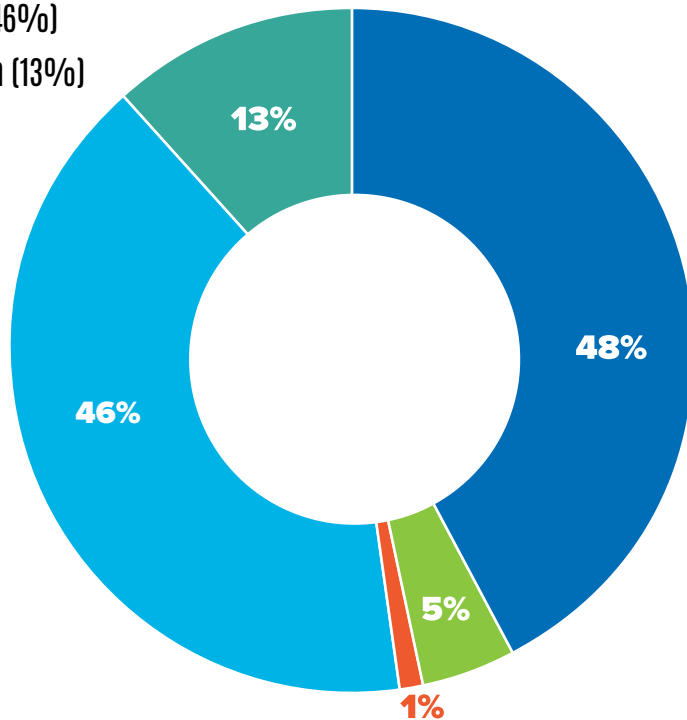
The Elkins Foundation

Herman H. Fleishman Foundation

The total operating revenue and releases from restrictions for the 2024-2025 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) fiscal year was \$26,572,466, up \$8,107,397 from the prior year. Total expenses for the same period were \$19,504,214. Year-end assets totaled \$63,742,300.

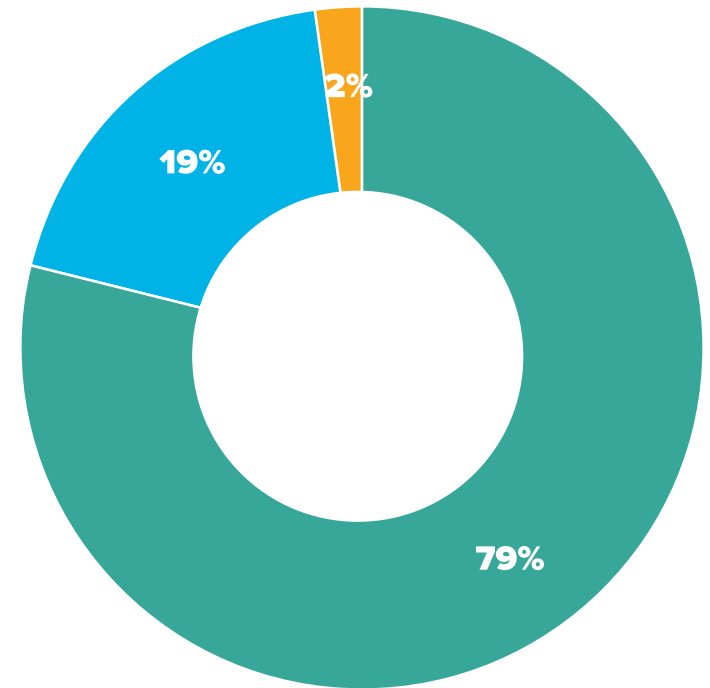
FY25 Revenue

- Contributions (48%)
- Fundraising Events (5%)
- Government Grants (1%)
- Earned Revenue (46%)
- Investment Return (13%)



FY25 Expenses

- Education, Visitor, and Program Services (79%)
- Supporting Services (19%)
- Advertising (2%)



Thank You to Our Boards!

2024-2025 Executive Committee

Jonathan Sloan
President

Jason Endecott
Past President

Saul Solomon
Treasurer

Paula McCann Harris
Secretary

Andrew Sarofim
V.P. of Board Activities

Rodolfo Cooper
V.P. of Contributed Income

Dr. Catherine Horn
V.P. of Education

Pamela Davis
V.P. of Operations

Charlene Pate
V.P. of Special Initiatives

Alison Powell
V.P. of Strategic Planning

Chris Joseph
Member At Large

Brad Morgan
Member At Large

Rayanne Darensbourg
Chief Executive Officer

Life Board Members

Gail Adler
Julie Alexander

Nancy Allen
Charlene Pate
Dr. Kathryn Rabinow

2024-2025 Board of Directors

Marc Adler
Kevin Alexander
Laurie Allen
Caroline Bean
Jeb Bowden
Bradley Bracewell
Geoff Bracken
Babatunde Cole
Dr. Kelly Coleman
Winnie Dodson
Julian Duncan
Gilbert Andrew Garcia
Silas A. Girgis
Hunt Harper
Michael Holthouse
Devorah Krieger
Rachel Leaman
Lexi Sakowitz Marek
Shawnie McBride
Rishma Mohamed
Eva Pawelek
Maya Pomroy
JP Ramirez
Jacqueline Richert
Erin Smith
Ryan Smith
Randal Wichuk
Bryan Wooten
Daniel Zeplain
Laura Thompson,
Ex Officio

2024-2025 Advisory Board Members

Katie Arnoldy
Robert Baker
Lisa Barksdale
Leslie Blanton
Jane Block
Kate Brem
Sharon Albert Brier
Whitney Burns
Laura Chapman
Tom Debesse
Adam Drutz
Dimitri Fetokakis
Sam Gainer
Glen Gonzalez
William Griffin
Hunt Harper
Jennifer Hazelton
Susan C. Jhin
Mary Catherine Jones
Pamela Laborde
Molly Hackett LaFauci
Lee Lahourcade
Allison Leach
Michael Lueck
Dr. Robert McCallister
Michael Mithoff
Paul Murphy, Jr.
Anne Neeson
Tracy Northington
Daniel S. Parsley
Sue Payne

Winnie Phillips
Mike Plank
Holly Radom
Nina Rand
Ross Robin
Dr. Barbara G. Samuels
Jeff Scofield
Sebastien Solar
Bobby Stillwell
James Thompson
William Toomey II
Duncan Underwood
Maggie Vermillion
Cynthia Walker
Walter Weathers
Travis Wilson
Richard Yoo
Lyndsey Zorich



Every Gift *Makes an Impact*



Children's Museum Houston
1500 Binz St, Houston, TX 77004
(713) 522-1138
www.cmhouston.org

*Children's Museum Houston is a
501(c)(3) organization.*

