

# Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility, Inclusion & Community Engagement **2024 Report**

children's  
museum  
            
pittsburgh

           museumlab

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# Introduction

In FY24, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh (CMP) reinforced its commitment to the mission of providing innovative and inclusive museum experiences that inspire kindness, joy, creativity and curiosity for all learners by expanding its Justice, Equity, Diversity Accessibility, Inclusion (JEDAI) & Community Engagement initiatives. We recognize that building strong and genuine relationships with community members and organizations is essential to understanding their needs and ensuring that our programs are reflective of their experiences and cultures. Through intentional outreach, partnerships and tailored programming, we aim to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity within our Museum and beyond its walls.

## **JEDAI: Purpose Statement**

By embedding JEDAI principles into the museum's policies, practices, exhibits and programs, we seek to create a space where all visitors, staff, community members and stakeholders –regardless of race, ability or identity–feel seen, valued and empowered to explore, earn and grow in an environment of true belonging.

## **Community Engagement: Purpose Statement**

The purpose of Community Engagement is to reach out to diverse audiences on Pittsburgh's North Side and beyond, authentically, inclusively and in a culturally relevant way. We aim to remove barriers in an effort to ensure that all learners can experience kindness, joy, creativity and curiosity at CMP. Through these efforts, we strive to build a welcoming environment where meaningful connections are nurtured, and every visitor feels valued and included.

# The Team

The establishment of the JEDAI & Community Engagement team in September 2023 marked a significant step forward in these efforts. Led by Teona Ringgold, the new Director of JEDAI & Community Engagement, the team has been instrumental in creating and implementing new systems and procedures that enhance our ability to serve the community effectively.



Danielle Linzer is the Senior Director for Education, Learning and Research. She has extensive expertise in museum education and accessibility. Her initiatives have been honored with awards from the Kennedy Center, Museums and the Web, the American Alliance of Museums, the Jodi Mattes Trust and more. Ms. Linzer served as a Senior DEAI Fellow for for the American Alliance of Museums and was Co-Chair of the Museum Access Consortium.



Teona Ringgold serves as the Director of (JEDAI) & Community Engagement. With a wealth of experience in fostering inclusive practice and building community partnerships, Teona is passionate about creating accessible and welcoming spaces for all. She holds a certificate in Leading Equity & Inclusion in Organizations from Northwestern University, further enhancing her commitment to equity and community engagement in all aspects of her work.



Angelica Miller, Accessibility and Community Engagement Manager, is a Pittsburgh native with a passion for informal education. Inspired by her experiences in various educational settings, she pursued training in diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion. Angelica builds community connections and ensures the Museum's spaces and programs are accessible to under-served and neurodivergent youth with disabilities.



Laurel Rountree, Outreach Coordinator, is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University with a degree in Design. She is passionate about sharing the arts and aims to become an art teacher, integrating history, culture and social justice into her curriculum. She is skilled in various art mediums, including oil painting, sculpture and technology-driven design such as 3D printing and laser cutting.

# Partnerships

## Collaborating to Reach More Communities

Partnerships are integral to the success of our Community Engagement initiatives. By collaborating with a diverse array of organizations, we are able to reach and serve a broader spectrum of Pittsburgh's communities, ensuring that our programming is both inclusive and impactful. Each partnership is carefully cultivated to address the unique needs of the populations these organizations support, allowing us to extend our mission beyond the walls of the Museum.

Partnerships throughout the year include:

- Gwen's Girls
- Youth Places
- Manchester Youth Development Center
- Manchester Academic Charter School
- Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Light of Life Rescue Mission
- Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation
- Watson Institute
- Homeless Children Education Fund



# Outreach Program

## Bringing Creativity and Learning Beyond Our Walls

The purpose of Outreach Programming at CMP is to meet community members where they are by providing transportable and accessible art and making activities rooted in creativity, joy, curiosity and kindness beyond the walls of the Museum. The Museum offers a menu of experiences that can be presented in classrooms, libraries, after school programs, community settings, parks and more. Over the past year, the Outreach Program has been able to generate \$15,000 in earned revenue, reaching 1,600 learners across many schools, companies and organizations through paid programs.

### Outreach Offerings

<b>MAKER</b> <b>Metals</b> Use tools to create your own textured metal art through a process called embossing. <b>Drawing Bots</b> Explore circuit building and design a robot that uses its own power to draw. <b>Woodworking</b> Discover how to shape wood using a variety of woodworking tools.	<b>ART</b> <b>Painting</b> Experiment with color theory and mix primary colors to create secondary colors. <b>Screen Printing</b> Explore the concept of positive and negative space to create your own screen print design. <b>Clay</b> Explore building, layering and texturing techniques to create oven baked clay sculptures.
<b>KINDNESS</b> <b>Paper Making</b> Create your own kindness ornaments while learning how to make paper. <b>Book Binding</b> Design and bind your own accordion book to fill with images and messages of kindness. <b>Radial Weaving</b> Weave a circle from the inside out and watch it become more beautiful as it expands, visualizing that love radiates from within.	<b>NATURE</b> <b>Natural Dye Making</b> Discover where natural dyes come from and create a painting using their pigment. <b>Seed Bombs</b> Make your own seed bombs using seeds and other natural materials. <b>Cyanotypes</b> Explore positive and negative space through by laying found materials on cyanotype paper and exposing it to UV light.

The Museum also provides outreach programs free of charge for community partners, with customized offerings designed to meet their specific needs. The Museum works to build strong collaborative relationships with organizations that serve and support youth and families from marginalized communities. We apply our resources and expertise in art, making, social emotional learning, design, family engagement and evaluation to support the needs or address challenges of each individual partner organization. In FY24 we successfully served 1,500 learners across our various partnering organizations.

# Community Events

## Out in the Community

We love to show up in the community! Spending time at events like neighborhood festivals has helped our staff to connect with many community members who many not have the opportunity to visit our campus in person. Our Outreach team brings hands-on activities, information about upcoming events and opportunities at the Museum, and personal connections to community events. These meaningful interactions give children and families an opportunity to learn about Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and the programming and services that we offer, as well as simply giving them an opportunity to exercise their creativity and make something fun and beautiful to take home. It is also an added benefit when kids and families are full of joy and excitement to see the Museum and our staff, standing as a reminder that our presence is felt and needed.

### The Museum participated in various events and festivals this year, including:

- Open Air
- Sensory Awareness Walk
- Mission of Mercy
- Moms Rising
- Ultimate Day of Play
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. Toy Drive
- The August Wilson Block Party
- Pittsburgh Promise Career/College Fair
- Pittsburgh's Pride and People's Pride
- The Andy Warhol Museum/Pop District Opportunity Day
- Community Baby Shower
- Parent2Parent Picnic

**Let's Play PGH!** CMP received both an inaugural prototyping grant and implementation funds as part of Let's Play PGH!, a citywide initiative that aims to activate playful learning opportunities in community settings.

Our Outreach and Community Engagement team partnered with the Museum's researchers and exhibit developers to develop and play test a set of pop-up kits that can transform any environment into a colorful and welcoming play-scape. Working collaboratively with input from community partners, we designed activities that use movement, language and music to provide playful learning experiences that develop kindness, empathy, self love and connection. The activities are designed to be durable, easy to transport and usable indoors or outdoors with no special equipment.

Prototyping sessions were implemented with youth from PPS, Youth Places, Gwen's Girls, Museum campers and general visitors. Kits are currently in production and will be available for use in the community in the coming year.



# Community Nights

## Opening Our Doors to the Community

Supported by Jack Buncher Foundation

In celebration of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Museum received significant support from the Jack Buncher Foundation to launch a new program of community nights. CMP hosted 12 Community Family Nights in 2023 and 2024, welcoming more than 1,700 visitors. The events, held after hours and free of charge to guests, featured full access to exhibits, art and making activities, refreshments and special accommodations such as transportation, translation services and sensory adaptations.

Each event was specialized for a particular under-served community and hosted in affiliation with outside organizations who work within those specific communities. The ability to gather after regular hours, without the day-to-day flow of activity and visitors, allowed families to explore and learn in comfort, among friends. As this was a first-time experience for many, parents and kids alike tapped into their curiosity and playfulness. Through these partnerships, the Museum welcomed groups such as immigrant and refugee families; the LGBTQIA+ community; foster care families; families impacted by homelessness; families with children with autism spectrum disorders; and Northside youth and families. These nights allowed the Museum's Community Engagement team to build strong relationships and connections with a diverse network of organizations and partners that will continue beyond the grant period.

Family Nights enabled CMP staff to better understand what is important to community organizations, what challenges they face and what gaps the Children's Museum could help to close. Many organizations that participated in Community Nights had not partnered with CMP in the past and were eager to learn more about our offerings—including discounts, early learning programs, after school programs and other culturally relevant programming.



**"I loved seeing people able to interact and laugh together even when they had just met or didn't share a language. Kids (and adults) who didn't know each other or even speak the same language were playing, building and exploring together."**

*- visitor from Hello Neighbor, an organization that supports recently settled refugee families*



**"I felt like we were a whole community coming together to leave our troubles and stress at the door for a while and just have fun."**

*- visitor from Homeless Children's Education Fund*

# Celebrating Cultures

## Honoring Diversity Through Community Events

At (CMP), we recognize the importance of celebrating the rich cultures that make up our community. By highlighting and honoring diverse cultures, we aim to create an inclusive environment where all visitors feel represented, respected and inspired.

### Martin Luther King Jr. Day

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we hosted a day of reflection and celebration that emphasized the values of justice, equality and community. The day featured interactive art and making activities, story time by local author Dominique Briggs, who read her book, *Rhea the Great Detective*, and a poetry workshop led by Pittsburgh poet Michael Smalls. These experiences encouraged participants to connect with Dr. King's messages and consider their importance in today's world.



### Black History Month Art Crawl

On this special day, we celebrated the legacy of Pittsburgh's Black heroes and culture, both past and present. We invited local artists to create live portraits of several remarkable individuals, each accompanied by an accessible and informative biography detailing their contributions to the city. The event was made even more memorable by the presence of Mayor Ed Gainey and the legendary Sala Udin, whom were honored for their enduring impact on Pittsburgh.

Featured local artists and their subjects:

- Morgan Overton – Teenie Harris
- Janel Young – Gwendolyn Elliot
- Indira Cunningham – Billy Porter
- Keah Adams – August Wilson
- Darin Carlini – Sala Udin
- D.S. Kinsel – Mary Cardwell Dawson
- Treeny Finney – Billy Strayhorn
- Korey Edmonson – Ed Gainey



Because we honored the great Bill Strickland, we also invited in Manchester Craftsman's Guild who tabled, passing out resources for their programming while sharing Bill Strickland's impact with visitors.





### Pride Block Party

In honor of Pride Month, we hosted a vibrant day of activities. Originally planned as a block party, we pivoted to an indoor celebration at MuseumLab due to inclement weather. The event featured an open mic hosted by Bradley Hill, a captivating performance by C.C. Calhoun, live painting by Trenita Finney and a variety of activities that inspired pride, love and kindness.

### Fashion Show

In partnership with Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, we hosted a fashion show celebrating and supporting the LGBTQIA+ youth served by the organization. Leading up to the event, we offered a series of outreach workshops where participants learned how to up-cycle, bedazzle and craft their runway looks. The culmination of these efforts was a vibrant and empowering fashion show, held at MuseumLab, where the youth confidently strutted down the runway in a fun and, most importantly, safe space. This event kicked off Pride Month with creativity, self-expression and a strong sense of community.

### Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration

We hosted a day filled with vibrant activities and performances in MuseumLab to honor this community. Visitors enjoyed captivating performances from Steel Dragon Martial Arts and Dance School, Tzu Chi Academy, OCA Performance Ensemble and the Filipino American Association of Pittsburgh. Additionally, the day featured a mesmerizing dance performance by Ghungroo. This celebration highlighted the rich cultures and traditions of AAPI communities, fostering an environment of learning, joy and appreciation for diverse heritage.



# Supporting Parents

## Celebrating & Uplifting Families

### Mother's Day, Father's Day and Parents' Day

Family is at the heart of our programming, and our celebrations of Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Parents' Day are designed to honor the role of parents and guardians in our communities. We offered free professional family portrait sessions to 166 groups, creating lasting memories for families who visit the Museum.

### Mother's Support Group

This year, we piloted a Mother's Support Group popup in collaboration with Pillar, a community organization dedicated to supporting new and expecting mothers. We opened our space to provide a welcoming environment for these mothers to gather, share experiences and build a sense of community. The event featured refreshments and a dedicated area for mothers and their babies to connect, followed by an opportunity for families to explore our Nursery space.

This popup was just the beginning of a larger initiative. We are in the process of developing a comprehensive program that will continue to support and uplift parent support groups throughout Pittsburgh. Our goal is to create an ongoing series of events that foster fellowship and provide essential resources for parents, ensuring they have the community and support they need during this important stage of life.





# JEDAI

We made significant strides toward advancing Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion (JEDAI) across the Museum in 2024. Key initiatives include:

## Waugh Signage Updated

In collaboration with the City of Pittsburgh, the Museum updated exterior signage to provide context and invite critical conversations around representation and equity in public sculptures and memorials.

## JEDAI Committee

A group of dedicated CMP staff members committed to standing as JEDAI advocates and champions who meet monthly. This group plays a critical role in making positive change at the Museum. They offer valuable insights into JEDAI wins and challenges for staff and visitors, and support the goal of fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

## Accessibility

**BOO! A Sensory Friendly Halloween:** A fun and inclusive annual event designed specifically for neuro-divergent children and families. Featuring sensory adaptation such as lower lighting, reduced noise levels and quieter activity spaces to ensure that every child enjoys Halloween festivities in a comfortable environment. Families were able to participate in art making, costume parades and other themed activities, all tailored to providing a welcoming, joyful experience for everyone.



**Youth Mental Health Day:** Recognizing the importance of mental health, particularly among youth, we hosted Youth Mental Health Day as part of our commitment to holistic well being. This event featured activities such as yoga sessions with Dr. Tyi-Sanna Jones and therapy puppy exposure. By partnering with community organizations focused on mental health, we provided resources and information to families while promoting practices that support emotional and psychological wellness.



**Thank you!**

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