



For Immediate Release

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**BETTY BRINN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM CELEBRATES "HOW PLAY SHAPES US" AT
SECOND ANNUAL BE A KID BALL GALA**

The Museum's annual fundraising event will take place June 3, 2026 at the Pfister Hotel

MILWAUKEE, WI (March 10, 2026) – The Betty Brinn Children's Museum invites the community to its second annual Be a Kid Ball fundraising gala on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at the Pfister Hotel. The Be a Kid Ball is presented by Baird and Baird Funds and generously hosted by co-chairs Mary Burgoon and Andrew Lingenfelter and Meg and Matt Dean.

Play has shaped each of us. It is the agency through which children explore making their own decisions, learn about teamwork, build self-confidence, and foster creativity. The Be a Kid Ball is a play-inspired evening celebrating and raising crucial funds for play-based learning and early childhood education at the Betty Brinn Children's Museum. The 2026 event will invite attendees to reflect on how play has shaped their lives, and the event proceeds will help preserve the Museum as a space where kids can explore, learn, and grow through unstructured play, allowing the Museum to continue to positively shape the lives of the children it serves for generations to come.

"When I think about how play shaped my life, I think about imagination, belonging, and the freedom to explore without fear of failure. Those moments matter. They stay with us," said Tina Quealy, CEO of the Betty Brinn Children's Museum. "Supporting the Be a Kid Ball means investing in the next generation of leaders, creators, and dreamers right here in our community. We hope everyone will join us in celebrating how play has shaped us—and how it continues to shape the future."

The Be a Kid Ball will include an interactive cocktail hour highlighting the joy of learning through play for all ages, followed by a formal dinner program with live entertainment by the Betty Brinn Children's Museum's 2026 Artist-in-Residence, cellist Malik Johnson. The evening will also include a live auction and the presentation of the Museum's annual awards: Playmaker Partner, Little Learners' Biggest Advocate, and the Betty Brinn Legacy Award.

The Playmaker Partner Award is granted annually to a corporate or philanthropic community partner who exemplifies consistent and extraordinary commitment to the Betty Brinn Children's Museum mission. This honoree has played a key role in providing generous investments, vision, and collaboration to ensure all children can have access to vital play-based learning and early childhood education at the Museum. The 2026 recipient is the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is one of the Betty Brinn Children's Museum's longest-standing and most consistent funders. Most recently, they have significantly expanded their support to ensure that field trips to the Museum remain accessible to all, providing a vital grant to support field trip scholarships.

The Little Learners' Biggest Advocate Award is granted to an individual or small group of individuals who has provided considerable leadership and support to advance the success of the Betty Brinn

Children’s Museum. This honoree has given personally of time, talent, and treasures to ensure that all children can have access to vital play-based learning and early childhood education at the Museum. The 2026 recipient is The Teerlink Family: Ann Teerlink, Richard Teerlink (in memoriam), Victoria Teerlink, and Jeffrey Drope. Richard and Ann helped launch the Museum’s Be A Maker space in 2013, creating a platform for STEAM-based learning and exploration, and they have remained the lead sponsors of the space since its opening. Victoria Teerlink completed nine full years of service on the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum board in 2024, and she and her husband, Jeffrey, have been generous supporters of the Museum for nearly 20 years.

The Betty Brinn Legacy Award is granted to an outstanding individual, group, corporation, or community partner whose long-standing commitment and impact on the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum exemplifies the legacy of Betty Brinn, the Museum’s namesake. Betty Brinn was a Milwaukee resident who dedicated her life to securing healthcare for underprivileged women and children. The Museum carries on her legacy by creating a community gathering place that offers programming and experiences where children and families of all cultures, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses belong—where they feel welcomed to learn and play together in a space that is specially designed for them. The 2026 recipient is Mary Ellen Stanek, whose vision and leadership at the Museum’s inception was foundational to creating Milwaukee’s only children’s museum. She served as the first-ever Board Chair of the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum when the Museum began operations and planning in 1993. She served on the board for five years and has been an honorary board member since 1999.

Be a Kid Ball tickets are now on sale. A table of eight is \$1,600 and individual tickets are \$200 per person. Sponsorships are also still available. Visit bbcmkids.org/gala to see a full list of sponsors and to secure tickets. This event will sell out.

About Betty Brinn Children’s Museum

Through the power of play, the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum (BBCM) fosters joy, confidence and curiosity in children and families, inspiring a journey of lifelong learning. BBCM is dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to its immersive, educational exhibits and programs designed to promote the social, emotional and intellectual growth of children from birth through age 10. The Museum opened in 1995 and serves nearly 175,000 visitors each year at its downtown Milwaukee location.

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