



# The Children's Museum

of The Upstate

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2019 - 2020**

♥ *Shaping the Future Starts Here*

## ♥ Our Mission

Ignite a community of compassionate problem solvers through intentional and inclusive play.



# From Us to You

## Dear Friends,

During a particularly successful year in 2019, The Children's Museum of the Upstate embarked on creating a new mission and vision, to encourage further growth and expand upon its' position as an **essential Upstate family resource**.

This vision statement, adopted in February of 2020, calls us to create a world where no barrier is bigger than a dream. I am certain we could not have imagined the particularly intimidating barrier we would soon encounter in the form of COVID-19

Yet, in the months that followed, we saw a **steadfast commitment** to this inspiring vision. From member families who enthusiastically joined us for virtual story times, to staff who embodied **creativity and resiliency** at every turn, to donors and

sponsors who continued to support us so generously—2020 has shown us that indeed no barrier, **not even a pandemic-sized barrier**, is bigger than our dream.

For nearly four months in 2020, the museum's doors were closed, but our work did not stop. In addition to moving programming to virtual platforms, we undertook facilities improvements and exhibit enhancements. We **increased safety measures** and considered how to optimize our visitor experience in these most unusual times. Our staff continued to plan and prepare for the days our doors would reopen, and it is hard to describe the joy of welcoming so many of you back to TCMU.

As we safely and successfully conducted camps, and hosted Halloween and holiday events, we were encouraged by the stories families shared about how much they had missed the museum, how the museum had played an **essential role in their child's disrupted year of learning**, and how thrilled they were to be able to explore and play in this **beloved space** again.

The dream of TCMU began more than a decade ago by a committed group of

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# A Total Dedication To The Future Generation

community members and parents who desired to create a place where Upstate children could **learn through play**.

It is an honor to continue that dream.

As we embark on 2021, we are excited to resume work on physical improvements to our spaces, to increase our programming offerings, to introduce you to **new staff members and exciting new events**, and to continue welcoming you back for in-person play and learning. TCMU is a vital part of the Upstate community, and we are truly grateful for **your continued support**.



▲ Connie Jones  
Daughters, June and Julia Jones

Sincerely,

*Connie Jones*

Connie Jones, Board of Directors  
*Chairwoman*

## ♥ Our Vision

Create a world where no barrier is bigger than a dream.

”

**WE SAW A STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO THIS INSPIRING VISION.**

Connie Jones



# 2019

**266K+**  
total visitors served

**25K+**  
served through outreach

**19K+**  
school children visited



# 2020

**91K+**  
total visitors served

**2K+**  
served through outreach

**9K+**  
school children visited

## Admission, Membership & School Visits

In 2019, TCMU saw extraordinary visitation and membership numbers. When TCMU closed its doors in the spring of 2020 to help stop the spread of COVID-19, the museum **faced a loss of over 60% of its' annual revenue**, from admission, membership and school visits.

Upon reopening, TCMU implemented and reinforced several measures to create a safe environment for all families. The museum began to see a slow, but steady, **increase in visitation** as the community became more comfortable with public activities.



### Safe & Sound

All adult visitors and TCMU staff required to **wear masks**

Enhanced museum **cleaning**

**Hand sanitizing stations** throughout the building

Toys and props **cleaned and rotated** regularly

Water tables **treated weekly**

**Advanced timed-entry ticketing** at both locations

Museum capacities set at **45% or less** to encourage social distancing



## A Dip In Our Data

### SUPPORT NEEDED

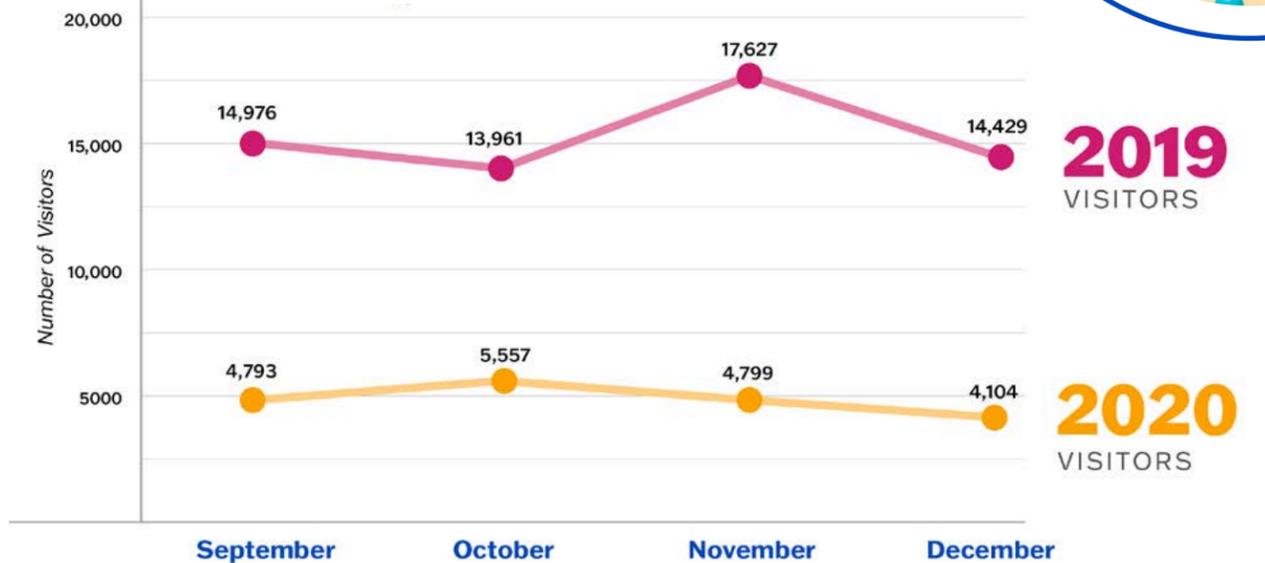
Over 1M in earned revenue was lost during the museum's closure in 2020



**2X**

Visitation had doubled since the museum's opening in 2009

## Compare//Contrast



**2019**  
VISITORS

**2020**  
VISITORS

## New Exhibits

At the onset of 2019, the goal was to renovate several TCMU exhibits: *Grandma Betty's Farm*, *Start Your Engines* and *Publix*.

*Grandma Betty's Farm* successfully opened on May 11, 2019. Geared towards ages 5 and under, this exhibit provides a new way for TCMU's youngest visitors to learn about farm animals, create their own dinner, and use motor skills to climb to the top of the treehouse!

In partnership with Kraemer Design Group, extensive planning began for the renovation of *Start Your Engines* in late 2019. COVID-19 halted these plans, as priorities quickly shifted to sustaining the museum through the pandemic.

*Publix* was revamped in November 2020, with the addition of a new facade and several other new exhibit features.

Conversations and fundraising for *Start Your Engines* began again at the end of 2020, with the goal of a fall 2021 launch.

TCMU also began refreshing current exhibits and plans to replace *The Great Outdoors* in the late spring of 2021, to provide new experiences for members and visitors.

## ♥ Creative Spaces

Exhibits at TCMU provide children with crucial hands-on learning that cannot always be found in the classroom or were disrupted due to COVID-19. With STEM components in every exhibit, TCMU gives children a new and exciting outlet to learn important life concepts, skills and lessons.



**Grandma Betty's Farm**  
Opened May 2019



**New Publix Facade**  
Opened November 2020



”

We cannot get enough of TCMU! Our kids ask us to go several times a week! The friendly staff, all of the creative things to do, and the clean environment keep us coming back weekly, if not multiple times a week. We are huge TCMU fans and it has easily become one of our favorite places to spend time as a family!

-Ashlee, Member

## Dollars & Cents



INCOME

EXPENSES

**2019**  
2019 Actual  
\$2.5M

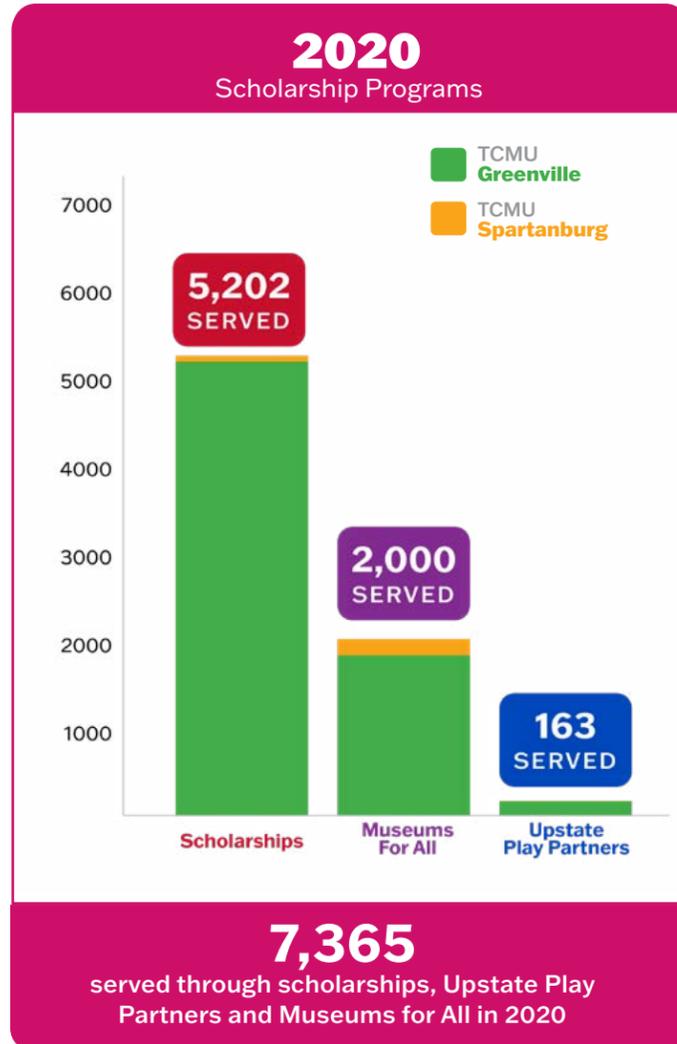
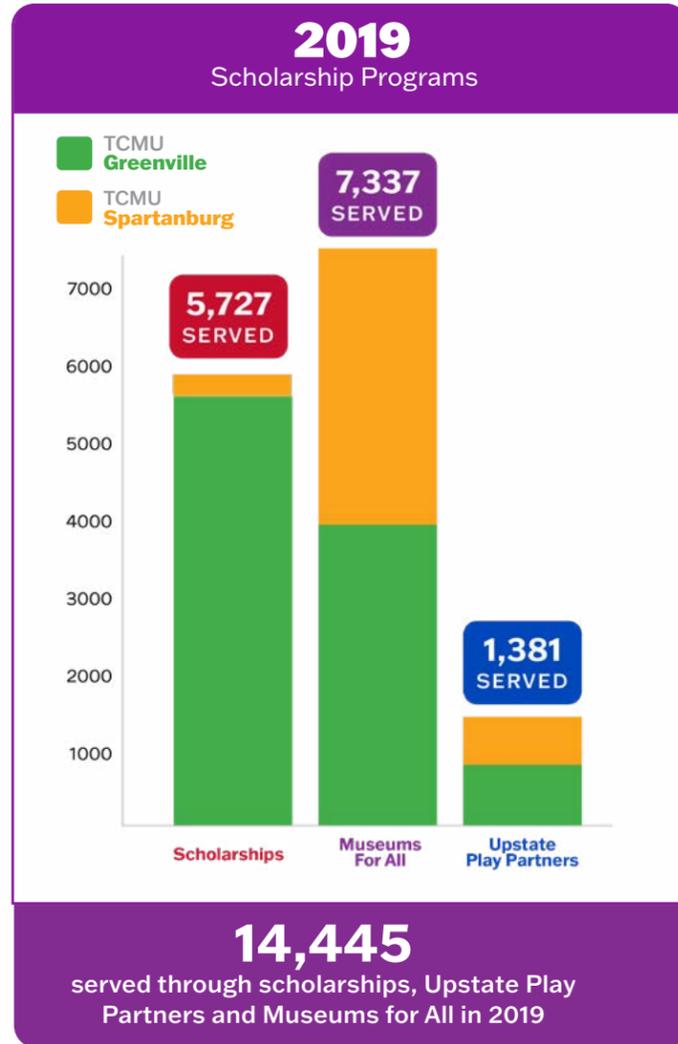
**2020**  
2020 Actual  
\$1.6M



# Scholarship Programs

Through TCMU's **scholarship programs**, school field trip costs are covered for children on free and reduced lunch. **Museums for All** provides a reduced price for families

receiving government food assistance. And **Upstate Play Partners** is a program in collaboration with other non-profits to provide free tickets for the families they serve.



# Powerful Programs

As one of the key components of TCMU's mission, programming was very robust in 2019. **Story Time & More** took place five days a week, three times a day. **Open Art Studios** was available six days a week, three hours per day. **Spark!Lab**, the museum's Smithsonian affiliated permanent exhibit, was open six days a week, six hours per day.

At the end of 2020, TCMU slowly began to reintroduce safe weekend programming, free with admission for all guests. This included BOO!SEUM at TCMU-Greenville and holiday programming every weekend in December at both museums.

## Heroic Possibilities

“We visited TCMU during our trip to Shriner’s Hospital in Greenville for our middle daughter Taylor. Today’s Halloween programming gave Taylor so much joy! To be around other kids, interact with staff and experience the museum made Taylor feel like a kid again.”

-Taylor’s Mom



### Access for All

In October of 2020, TCMU welcomed 21 scholarship funded field trips to the museum through a partnership with Greenville County First Steps, serving over 300 children.





## Summer Camp Safe



**1,349**  
VS  
**1,009**

More children attended TCMU summer camp in 2020 than in 2019.

After being closed for four months in 2020, TCMU made the decision to safely implement summer camps in June.

The camp model was redesigned so that class sizes were limited, campers stayed with their pods, and pick-up and drop-off occurred outside.

Despite all odds, 2020 camps were incredibly well attended. Camp **proved to be a need** for the community, as parents and caretakers were eager for ways for their children to have **safe, educational and fun** engagement, outside of their homes.



### Let's Learn

It is especially important for children to have spaces that allow for social development and connectivity. TCMU programs and camps help build skills that allow children to make friends, resolve conflict, gain confidence, manage anxiety and feel empathy.

# A Better Community Today A Better Future Tomorrow

Every year, TCMU hosts events that serve as fundraisers for the museum. In 2019, TCMU hosted several events, including Bunny Brunch and Breakfast with Santa at TCMU-Greenville and Countdown to Kindergarten at TCMU-Spartanburg.

In 2020, TCMU hosted two community fundraisers at both locations: Trick or Treat at TCMU and The North Pole at TCMU. From collecting candy to making holiday ornaments, both events were held with timed ticketing and limited capacities to create a safe environment for families.



”

I brought my five children on Saturday. They had so much fun. Three of them had never been inside the museum before so it was a wonderful way to see everything without being overwhelmed with choices. Thank you to all the sponsors and volunteers that made my children feel so welcomed and valued. It will be an experience they will always remember!

**Jennifer**  
Mother of Five

### ♥ Celebrating Community

These events not only supported the museum financially, but also gave families a much needed way to celebrate their favorite holidays in the midst of a tough year!



## Save The Dates

# 2021

**May 15<sup>th</sup>**  
Celebrating America's Heroes  
TCMU - Greenville

**August 6<sup>th</sup>**  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
TCMU - Spartanburg

**August 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Back-to-School-Bash  
TCMU - Greenville

**October 30<sup>th</sup>**  
Trick-or-Treat at TCMU  
TCMU - Greenville & Spartanburg

**December 11<sup>th</sup>**  
The North Pole at TCMU  
TCMU - Greenville & Spartanburg

” 2020 was such a difficult year for so many kids and parents. We are grateful for moments with our son at The Children’s Museum of the Upstate. TCMU fills my child’s life with such rich experiences and opportunities—even during a pandemic!

**May M.**  
TCMU Member



♥ Your Support.



♥ Their FUTURE.

