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About WonderLab

WonderLab is a family-focused science museum with interactive exhibits and programs that stimulate curiosity, encourage discovery and inspire lifelong learning. WonderLab ignites a love of science through learning that is experiential, inclusive and fun, and amplifies the role science plays in the world. WonderLab envisions a brighter, more equitable and sustainable future shaped by curious and creative problem-solvers empowered by science.

WonderLab was established in 1995 as a traveling science outreach program coordinated by six volunteers. In 1998, WonderLab opened in its first physical location, a small space in the historic Wicks Building on the north side of the Bloomington courthouse square. The current award-winning museum opened its doors to the public on March 29, 2003. The two-story 15,000-square-foot facility features exhibit galleries, a flexible programming space, gift store, and an adjacent outdoor garden. It is located adjacent to Bloomington's B-Line Trail in the heart of the Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District.

Year 2023 WonderLab Quick Facts

Incorporation Date and Status: 1995 as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

Total people served on-site and off-site between 1995 and December 2023:

- 1,532,326 on-site children, adults and infants to museum (since Jan 1998)
- 156,321 people through off-site outreach programs
- 11,827 families and teachers through virtual programs (since Mar 2020)
- 9,575 WonderCamp or other summer science enrichment program registrations

WonderLab visitors in 2023:

- 69,942 on-site visitors
 - 35% members
 - 29% nonmembers
 - 12% groups
 - 5% rentals/birthday parties
- 6,629 individuals through offsite outreach
- 600 WonderCamp registrations
- 1,772 individuals through virtual programs

Personnel in 2023:

- 20 FTE staff
 - 13 full-time
- 7.5 part-time individuals, includes seasonal staff and camp
- 310 volunteers
 - 7,205 volunteer hours

Exhibits, Programs, Events, and Outreach

Interactive Exhibits

The galleries feature over 80 hands-on science exhibits for visitors of all ages. Exhibit areas include:

- HoverCrafts
- The Hidden Life of Deserts
- SandScapes

- Water Works
- Oliver Winery Grapevine Climber
- Science Sprouts Place / Sprouts Lab (infants through age 5)
- Wonder Under the Waves Coral Reef Aquarium
- Exhibits on everyday phenomena such as air, bubbles, engineering and construction, electricity and magnetism, human body, light and color, natural sciences, gravity and motion, and sound and music.
- Exhibits programs and activities are also featured outdoors in the Bushnell WonderGarden.

Interactive Experiences:

WonderLab offers a host of educational programs, workshops, demonstrations, early childhood education programs, and presentations that serve preschool-age children through adults, summer camp programs, teacher professional development programs, outreach programs brought to offsite rural locations, and evening on site events. Year 2023 included in-person (on site, offsite) programs and on-line programs using Zoom.

In-Person, On site Programs and Events:

- 127 on-site early childhood education series programs for 936 people
 - Discovery Time, Ages 3-6
 - Science Sprouts, Ages Birth-3
 - Science Story Time, Ages 3-6
- 64 demonstrations and lab sessions for 2,399 students and chaperones on school field trips
- STEM Saturday's Program: 43 presentations and workshops for 926 museum visitors
- 28 special programs for 2,065 people (spring break STEAM programs, live animal shows, dinosaur showcase)
- 3 AfterHours programs for 221 adults

In-Person, Offsite:

- 2023 WonderCamp had 25 week-long sessions for 600 registrants / 370 individuals
- 71 off-site outreach events for 6,629 individuals at schools and festivals

On-line:

- 45 early childhood series programs for 425 individuals (Science Story Time)
- 91 all-age series programs for 1,347 families (Dive Deeper, Animal Hour, CoderDojo)

2023 Museum Operations

- Sensory Backpacks were launched in February 2023. Created by Nora Nelson Laird, a volunteer earning her girl scout gold award. They contain sunglasses, noise-reducing headphones, a pop fidget, social narrative, and feeling cards. These are available for visitors to borrow. The social narrative was also posted as an on-line pre-visit resource.
- Received a grant of \$417,116 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help transform our core outreach program, addressing current gaps to serving the groups in need and developing new community partnerships that will enhance STEM learning throughout our ten-county region.
- In partnership with Old National Bank and local community supporters raised \$90,506 for museum operations and accessibility at 100 Cooks Who Care event.
- Initiated Super Science Sundays, a monthly discount day with reduced admission of \$10 per person.
- Re-launched BubbleFest.
- 2024-2026 Strategic Plan completed and approved by Board of Directors.

Community Impact

Educational Resource – WonderLab provides informal science experiences that benefit thousands of schoolchildren and help schools address Indiana science standards. Each summer, the museum offers WonderCamp, week long science enrichment programs for children entering grades K – 6. In 2023, there were 8,393 children and chaperones on group visits, and 600 WonderCamp registrations.

Accessibility – To make WonderLab experiences more accessible to low-income youth and families, WonderLab’s Connecting to the Community (C2C) program provides free or greatly reduced admissions to the museum, free admission for Big Brothers Big Sisters participants and selected other agencies, and free scholarships for WonderCamp. WonderLab is a member of the Access Pass Program, a statewide partnership that allows qualifying low-income Indiana families the opportunity to visit WonderLab and other sites for \$2/person. In a typical prepandemic year, C2C supported free or greatly reduced admission for 5,000 museum visitors and 35 camp scholarships. In 2023, C2C supported free or greatly reduced admission for 6,873 museum visitors and 94 camp scholarships.

Economic Resource – WonderLab is located in downtown Bloomington, in an Urban Enterprise Zone. It is a major destination along the B-Line Trail, a downtown greenway. In a typical prepandemic year, WonderLab attracted over 82,000 visitors to downtown Bloomington from a ten-county region and beyond. Prepandemic surveys indicated that they spend over \$560,000 in downtown shops and restaurants annually, and all surveyed visitors indicated WonderLab was “very important or important to the quality of life in Bloomington.”

Volunteer Resource – Each year, the museum enriches community life by bringing together teen and adult volunteers from all parts of the community. WonderLab makes a special effort to offer middle, high school, and college students meaningful opportunities to enhance their personal development and workplace skills. Teens are involved as mentors to younger children in WonderLab’s summer science camps and as museum guides assisting the public. In a typical prepandemic year, this involved over 600 teens and adults. In 2023, this involved 310 teens and adults.

Award-Winning Museum

WonderLab has won numerous awards. It received the 2023 People’s Choice Award (category of museums) from Herald Times readers, the “Be More: Extraordinary Volunteer Program of 2022” and the 2020 Governor’s Award for Environmental Education / Outreach. WonderLab has been selected by Parents magazine among the top 25 science centers in the US and by American Towns Media as the “Best of 25” science museums and centers in the US. WonderLab regularly receives a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence.

Financial Support

WonderLab relies on earned revenue and philanthropic support. This reflects a commitment to keeping WonderLab as affordable as possible to families and schools.

In Year 2023, as we continued to recover from the pandemic, for every \$1 in earned revenue, WonderLab had to raise \$1.17 from contributions, special events, grants, government support and endowment cash distributions.

Total 2023 Operating Revenue = \$1,866,997

- Earned Revenues: \$860,798
- Individual Donations: \$199,168
- Corporate & Foundation Grants, Sponsorships, Donations: \$619,241
- Government Support: \$12,222
- Special Events: \$128,976
- Endowment Dividends and Other Income: \$46,637

Total 2023 Operating Expenses = \$1,571,745