2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- 45 Program Scholarships Awarded
- 42,000+ Visitors from all 50 states
- 1,350+ Members (a new record!)
- 71 Membership Scholarships Awarded
- 6,131 Program Participants
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABOUT**
- Mission - P3
- History - P4
- Board - P5
- Staff - P6

**MUSEUM**
- Members – P7
- Visitors – P8
- Temporary Exhibits – P9
- Permanent Exhibits – P10

**PROGRAMS**
- Summer – P11
- Seasonal – P12
- Year-Round – P13
- Schools – P14
- Outreach – P15
- Success Story – P17
- Scholarships – P19

**SUPPORT**
- Nightmare Affair – P20
- Events – P21
- Sponsors – P22
- Support – P23
2023: A TIME OF TRANSITION

2023 marked the start of a new chapter at ExplorationWorks. Our Executive Director for the previous seven years, Kelly Posewitz, decided to pass the baton to new leadership. ExWorks flourished under her steady hand. She helped build our camps into Helena’s marquee summer camp program. She found creative and unique ways for us to remain financially sound and contribute to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kelly brought ExplorationWorks to a whole new level and we’re forever grateful for her dedication, resilience, and kindness.

Near the end of the year, we welcomed our new Executive Director, Heather O’Neill. She brings a wealth of experience with children’s programs, non-profit management, and fiscal oversight, which has proven invaluable so far.

I am incredibly proud of our performance this past year. Visitor numbers were over 42,000, which is more than the entire population of Helena. Our camps had a 99% fill rate and educated 759 students. Meanwhile, our staff team continues to find creative ways to excite young minds with new exhibits and activities. Their enthusiasm for knowledge is contagious! As a board, we’re excited to see where they take us in 2024.

Brett P. Clark
ExplorationWorks Board Chair
2022-2024
KELLY’S FAREWELL

ExWorks will always hold a special place in my heart. It is where I raised my kids and watched many kids in our community grow up and fall in love with science.

I am very proud of all that we accomplished during our 7 years together. While we have so much to celebrate, I will always cherish our first big accomplishment - the addition of the water table exhibit. It brought new life and excitement to the museum. That momentum inspired us to take big leaps including doubling our summer camp offerings, with great enthusiasm and support from the community.

Right in the middle of this great progress, the pandemic hit. Like always, we found a way to continue our mission. First by transforming our facility into a child care center for St. Peter’s Health employees’ kids so parents could continue to serve the community. Second, we found a way to safely continue summer camps, something desperately needed for both kids and parents.

After a 14 month closure to the public, it was a memorable day when we reopened. A day that the staff will always remember (as well as the day before we opened when two pigeons decided to pay us an early visit, but that’s another long story!)

I will forever be connected to ExWorks. It is wonderful to see the work being done by Heather, staff and the Board to bring new ideas to life. This place is bigger than all of us. Thanks for letting me be part of its history!

Kelly Posewitz
ExplorationWorks Executive Director
2017-2023
OUR MISSION

Igniting a lifelong love of science to enrich Montana’s Future.

ExplorationWorks is an independent non-profit museum that offers interactive STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) exhibits and programs. Located in the Great Northern Town Center in Helena, we address community needs by helping kids, families, and schools transform book-based STEM knowledge into hands-on experiences.

Diversity and equity are at the core of who we are. ExplorationWorks is a safe space for all people. We have competent and caring leaders who ensure everyone can grow and learn in an inclusive environment.

Our exhibits and programs leave lasting impressions, spark curiosity, and inspire young people to pursue STEM careers.

ExplorationWorks is housed in a state of the art:
- 13,000 Square Ft. Facility
- LEED Certified Building
- Built in 2007
HISTORY
Realizing a dream to share science.

2000 – Community Works is founded by Alan Nicholson, Galen McKibben, Suzanne Wilcox, Dr. Liz Gundersen, Ellen Feaver, as well as many other people operating as a “Museum Without Walls” offering children’s programs.

2007 – ExplorationWorks opens its doors with a permanent location and “The Healer Within” on the floor exploring the human body’s self-healing properties.

2008 – A partnership with Helena Public Schools is established with the help of Bruce Messinger for homeschool students to complete their science education at ExplorationWorks. The first annual Nightmare Affair fundraising auction is held onsite.

2010 – First of three exhibits funded by NASA debuts about space exploration.

2012 – Women’s (Girls’) STEM Round-up is created for tween girls to meet and learn from women in STEM careers.

2018 – A new interactive water table is installed for children to discover the physics of water.

2019 – Summer camps achieve a 99.8% fill rate highlighting the important need and demand for our prestigious programs.

2020 – ExplorationWorks closes because of the global pandemic and becomes a childcare center for the students of St. Peter’s Hospital staff. Summer camps run at a reduced capacity while following health and business restrictions.

2021 – The doors open to the public again.
BOARD

Building the foundation for success.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Brett Clark
Board Chair
Attorney, Crowley Fleck, PLLP

Katie Steiner
Vice-Chair
Program Manager, Amazon Web Services

Dr. Liz Gundersen
Secretary
Retired Pediatrician

Angie Murdo
Treasurer
Principal, Pinion Global

DIRECTORS

Laura Clark
CEO, Opportunity Bank Montana

Tana Dearborn
Retired High School Science Department Head

Jeff Downhour
Architect, Mosaic Architecture

Ellen Feaver
Retired CPA

Kathryn Gallagher
Intranet Manager, Guidehouse Consulting

Annie Hanshew
Adjunct Instructor, Eastern Oregon University

Dennis Manalo
CEO, Fast Enterprises

BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Darren Chiappinelli
Managing Director, Sabot Consulting

John Cummings
Director of Learning & Development, Pinion Global

Dave Morin
Co-Founder & Managing Director, Offline Ventures
STAFF
Making real life magic happen.

Kelly Posewitz
Outgoing Executive Director

Heather O’Neill
Incoming Executive Director

Kari Gagner
Deputy Director of Operations
Interim Executive Director

Jessie Herbert-Meny
Deputy Director of Programs

Matt Jetty
Exhibits & Facilities Director

Sara Feilzer
Science & Education Director

Shannon Thomas
Office Manager & Fund Development Specialist

Lily Evanston
Education & Outreach Manager

Whitney Summers
Early Childhood Program Coordinator

Iva Haas
Visitor Services Lead

Full Time Staff: 9
Part Time Staff: 7
Seasonal Staff: 15
• 8 Lead Educators
• 7 Assistants

Volunteers: 18
Carroll College Service Saturdays: 40 Volunteers
• Students came to get a glimpse into the innerworkings of our museum, help clean, and prepare educational materials.
MEMBERS

Sharing our love for science.

Our members are the heart of our community. Their friendly faces, frequent visits, and thirst for knowledge inspire us to provide exceptional experiences.

1,242 Family Memberships  
84 Grandparent Memberships  
4 Community Partner Memberships  
15 Corporate Memberships

Community Memberships allow organizations who work with youth to bring their program participants to ExplorationWorks.

Corporate Memberships are available at a discounted rate for local businesses to purchase for their employees.

Member Benefits
- Unlimited admissions for a year.
- Early summer camp registration.
- Discounts on all our programs.
- FREE admission to Tinker Labs.
- FREE admission to Early Explorers.
- Exclusive announcements and emails.
- FREE admission to 360+ science and technology centers worldwide through the ASTC Travel Passport Program.
VISITORS

Discovering the wonders within our museum.

Each year, we welcome visitors from all over the world. Sharing our space with them is a truly special experience.

U.S. States: 50
Montana Counties: 46
Total Visitors: 42,066

ASTC Passport Program Participants: 1,951
EBT/WIC (Museum for All): 1,273
Group Visits: 511
Non-Member Visitors: 16,368
Member Visitors: 21,963

People come from all over the country to discover, imagine, and play at the best place in Helena for children and families. We welcome both locals and tourists with daily visits and group admissions that leave a lasting impact creating core family memories.

Birthday Parties
We have the capacity to host six birthday parties each weekend in our upstairs classroom. Guests receive complimentary, full-day admission to explore both floors of our hands-on exhibits. It’s the perfect way to celebrate those special milestones.

Total Number of Birthday Parties: 117
Total Number of Birthday Party Guests: 3,498
TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

Bringing state-of-the-art exhibits to Montana.

We showcase three big exhibits on our main floor each year.

ELECTRICITY
January - May
Explore something we use every day. Make static electricity with a Van de Graaff generator, create electricity with a bike, and find out where the power in your home comes from.
Built at ExplorationWorks
Sponsored by NorthWestern Energy

ROBOT ZOO
June - September
With three larger-than-life animated robots, along with many other hands-on activities, learn how a chameleon changes colors and a fly can walk on ceilings.
Rented from Evergreen Exhibitions
Sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana and TDS

SUN EARTH UNIVERSE
October - December
Use real science tools to see what’s invisible to the human eyes, build your own model spacecraft, and explore the surface of Mars with toy rovers.
Rented from National Informal STEM Education Network (NISE Network)
Exhibition Funded by NASA
PERMANENT EXHIBITS

Experiencing hands-on STEM learning.

WATERWAYS TO THE FUTURE
Make a splash while discovering the physics of water! Our water table features Mount Helena, the iconic fire tower, Sleeping Giant Mountain, and the Cathedral of Saint Helena.

LITTLE SKY
Discover where your food comes from, hunt for eggs, scramble up the slide, and find stuffed fish in the outdoor area. This is our special playland for children under five.

BEEHIVE
Check out the “buzz” around our indoor beehive. Learn about the invaluable role honeybees play in our lives by pollinating agricultural crops and native plants.

LITE ZILLA
Create a colorful masterpiece on our giant Lite Brite. Fun for both kids and adults, you can use your imagination to design art with light just like you remember.

AIR MAZE
See colorful scarves rocket through the air maze with the magic of air. Watch them go through the maze and catch them to collect a rainbow.
ExplorationWorks is the best place for discovery, curiosity, and adventure! We focus on STEM education that builds a foundation for a love of learning. Our programs are designed to meet individual camper needs while giving them a safe space to thrive. They leave with increased confidence, new skills, and a sense of belonging.

**Ages of Campers:** 4 – 15  
**Sessions Available:** 70  
**Unique Camps:** 63  
**Total Registrations:** 759  
**Fill Rate:** 99%  
- Ages 4 – 5: 103  
- Ages 6 – 9: 427  
- Ages 10 – 12: 195  
- Ages 13 – 15: 34

**TOPICS**
LEGO, Potions, Robotics, 3-D Printing, Culinary Arts, Ecology, Geology, Wilderness Skills, Prehistoric Discoveries, Space, Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering

**KIDS KICKING CANCER CAMP**
A special STEM camp for students who have been impacted by cancer. ExplorationWorks covers their registration fees.
SEASONAL PROGRAMS
Developing a passion for discovery.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS
Experts in the field of fun-ology. After-school programs happen onsite and are focused on a variety of different STEM topics based on age group.
- Winter (8 Weeks): 6 Sessions, 68 Students
- Spring (6 Weeks): 5 Sessions, 57 Students
- Fall (8 Weeks): 6 Sessions, 59 Students
- Ages 7 – 13

WORKSHOPS
Who says the learning stops when school is on break? We are open to help families with childcare while providing STEM enrichment.
- Winter Break: 9 Workshops, 79 Students
- Spring Break: 8 Workshops, 96 Students
- Fall Break: 4 Workshops, 41 Students
- Ages 6 – 9
YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS
Inspiring future innovators.

EARLY EXPLORERS
Our Early Explorers program gives preschool-aged children an introduction to science though interactive activities.
- September – May
  - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays (10:30 – 11 am & 2 – 2:30 pm)
  - Fridays (10:30 – 11 am)
- June – August
  - Fridays (10:30 - 11 am & 2 – 2:30 pm)
- Ages 0 – 5 (with their caregiver)
- Participants: 2,600
  - Adults: 1,108
  - Children: 1,504

TINKERLABS
These walk-up, interactive science experiments are fun for the whole family. With a new and exciting topics, Tinker Labs provide a unique experience each week.
- Saturdays (12:30 – 2:30 pm)
- Participants: 2,658
- Adults: 1,061
- Kids: 1,597
- All Ages
- Sponsored by Boeing

Both Early Explorers and Tinker Labs are offered at no charge to members and visitors with paid admission.
SCHOOLS

Complementing classroom learning.

FIELD TRIPS
Fan the spark of curiosity into a passion for learning. Our field trips enhance the classroom experience with interactive activities and access to our museum.
- 1,072 Field Trip Attendees
  - Students: 868
  - Chaperones: 204
- 38 Field Trips
  - Guests consisted of: private schools, public schools, homeschool groups, preschools, and senior care centers.

ASSEMBLIES
Our assemblies amaze students with head-scratching experiments and mind-blowing demonstrations. Schools provide the stage, we bring the explosions!
- 3 Assemblies
- 650 Kids
- Helena Public School District and East Helena School District

EXPLORE KITS
We provide engaging science kits filled with hands-on teaching tools and lesson plans that meet the Montana Science Content Standards.
- 30 Kits Available
- 17 Rented

EXPLORE SCHOOL
Helena Public Schools rents space at ExplorationWorks for their Explore School alternative learning program. It provides families who homeschool their children a fun and engaging way to complete their science education.
- Ages 7 – 14, Grades 1 – 8
- 61 Students
OUTREACH
Giving back to the community.

ExplorationWorks brings STEM activities to rural and low-income families. We work hard to remove barriers, so everyone has access to enrichment opportunities.

LIBRARY TINKERLABS
Interactive science lessons such as experimenting with nanoscience and designing a physics experiment with LEGO are just a few examples of our library TinkerLabs.
- Clancy Library: 245 Participants
- Boulder Library: 119 Participants
- Held monthly

CREEK SQUAD
Taking place in the spring behind Clancy School, this program teaches 2nd-4th grade students about creek ecology while building a deeper connection with their local environment. In 2023, 11 Clancy students participated in this 6-week course.

KESSLER KIDS’ COLLEGE
Volunteers from around the community went to Kessler Elementary School to give them a glimpse into different career options. We taught three 1-hour STEM classes to a total of 64 students.

VISITS TO STARBASE
ExWorks Educators shared their expertise with 150 Helena-area 5th graders through the Department of Defense (DoD) STARBASE program.
ExplorationWorks attended the following events sharing information about our programs and scholarships while handing out free passes.

**HELENA FOOD SHARE LOT PARTY**
**50 PEOPLE**
This was hosted to educate low-income families about services available and provide them with some fresh food.

**CARNIVAL CLASSIC**
**200 PEOPLE**
Extra-curricular organizations gathered to show students what’s available to start the new school year.

**READING AT THE ROTUNDA**
**55 PEOPLE**
ExplorationWorks joined to highlight our Early Explorers program during the city’s “Week of the Young Child.”

**NORTH JEFFERSON COUNTY LIBRARY KICKOFF PARTY**
**50 PEOPLE**
Families got excited about the library summer reading challenges and learned about our summer exhibit.

*All community outreach is offered at no charge.*
SUCCESS STORY

Creating a rocket scientist: Spencer Wright

Spencer was one of the first kids to explore the new science museum when we opened our doors in 2007. He loved building robots, tinkering, and creating new things. At the age of eight, he was finally old enough to register for our programs. LEGO Creations was his very first class with us, and the rest is history.

Throughout the years, Spencer took several robotics classes and navigated his way through every level with flying colors. In addition to his interest in engineering, he also had a contagious spark for learning and loved sharing that enthusiasm with others.

Spencer became a volunteer for our programs and eventually a staff member earning the affectionate nickname of “LEGO Dad” as one of our lead educators.

Spencer rapidly became everyone’s favorite. He was game to help with anything. From teaching after-school classes and summer camps to hosting private events and helping with exhibit changeouts, Spencer was our go-to guy! His dedication and passion were evident in everything he did, and he inspired countless young minds to pursue their own interests in science and technology.
Beyond his technical skills and knowledge, Spencer's warm personality and genuine care for others made him a cherished member of our community. His ability to connect with students and make learning fun and accessible was a gift that touched the lives of many families. Spencer’s commitment to nurturing the next generation of innovators has left an indelible mark on our organization.

A recent graduate of Embry Riddle Aeronautical University with a degree in Aerospace Engineering (focus on propulsion), **Spencer has fulfilled his dream of becoming an actual rocket scientist with a job at Boeing.**

Never without his trusty ExplorationWorks baseball cap and many, many pins collected over several summers, Spencer has left a lasting impact on our entire community.

Scan here to view a video featuring Spencer from our 10th birthday celebration in 2018!
SCHOLARSHIPS
Helping low-income families.

NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED: 45
PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS: 4
FULL SCHOLARSHIPS: 41
TOTAL $ VALUE OF SCHOLARSHIPS: $5,678

We are proud to offer financial support with the help of generous donors so all kids can join our programs. Families can apply for scholarships to cover registration fees.

These programs often change the trajectory of many young people’s lives, opening them up to a whole new world of possibilities. Children have the ability and resources to become almost anything with a solid education providing them with a strong foundation.
NIGHTMARE AFFAIR GALA
Raising funds for science education!

Our biggest fundraising event of the year, Nightmare Affair brings the community together to help us continue offering life-changing programs.

373 People in Attendance
18 Online Auction Items
8 Live Auction Items

- Live Music
- Dancing
- Costume Contest
- Delicious Dinner
- Wine
- Science-Themed Cocktails

Thank you to all of our incredibly generous auction item donors!

2023 PRESENTING SPONSORS:
MAY THE FOURTH
This Star Wars-themed, family-friendly fundraiser was held at ExplorationWorks on Saturday, May 4th and featured a special showing of a Star Wars movie, a costume contest, Star Wars themed food, and hands-on activities for families.

Guests: 45

Event partners: Bad Betty’s BBQ, Lewis & Clark Brewing, Treasure State Internet

NATIONAL HONEYBEE DAY
We hosted a National Honeybee Day celebration on August 18th complete with bee-themed hands-on activities and Queen Bee naming contest.

Visitors: 225

Event partners: GardenWerks, Holter Museum of Art, Lewis & Clark County Library, Montana Department of Agriculture

BIG RED BUTTON CHRISTMAS KICK-OFF
We helped kick-off the holiday season in Helena by pressing the big red button to start the holiday music on KMTX. The event was one of our busiest days in our history, and featured Santa & Mrs. Claus and a gaggle of elves (which just happened to be the children of some of ExWorks employees!)

Visitors: 463

Event partners: Montana Radio Co. and 1889 Coffee House
SPONSORS
Supporting our mission.

Thank you so much to our incredible sponsors who have helped us make everything possible.

$20,000+
FAST Enterprises
Montana Office of Public Instruction

$10,000-$19,999
Anonymous
Intrepid Credit Union

$5,000-$9,999
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Boeing Helena
Helena Area Community Foundation
Jackson, Murdo & Grant, P.c.
Opportunity Bank
Rotary Club of Helena
Speyer Family Foundation
St. Peter’s Health
Treasure State Internet

$2,500-$4,999
Alaska Airlines
ASTC
Merlin Foundation, Inc.
TDS
Treasure State Internet

$1,000-$2,499
American Chemet Corporation
Ballweber & Ostby Orthodontics
Best Western Premier Helena Great Northern Hotel
Big Sky Retirement
Bob’s Valley Market
Carousel, Inc.
Crowley Fleck PLLP
D.A. Davidson & Co.
Doubek, Pyfer, & Storror Law Firm
Fanwood Foundation
Helena Orthodontics, LLC
Junkemier, Clark, Campanella, Stevens, P.C.
Lewis & Clark Library
Morrison-Naierle, Inc.
Mosaic
Mountain View Massage
Northwestern Energy Corporation
Optimist Club of Helena
Pinion Global
Point S Tire and Auto
Power Engineers Foundation
Robert Peccia and Associates
The Montana Radio Company
Valley Bank of Helena

$1,000-$2,499
American Chemet Corporation
Ballweber & Ostby Orthodontics
Best Western Premier Helena Great Northern Hotel
Big Sky Retirement
Bob’s Valley Market
Carousel, Inc.
Crowley Fleck PLLP
D.A. Davidson & Co.
Doubek, Pyfer, & Storror Law Firm
Fanwood Foundation
Helena Orthodontics, LLC
Junkemier, Clark, Campanella, Stevens, P.C.
Lewis & Clark Library
Morrison-Naierle, Inc.
Mosaic
Mountain View Massage
Montana Television Network (MTN)
Northwestern Energy Corporation
Optimist Club of Helena
Pinion Global
Point S Tire and Auto
Power Engineers Foundation
Robert Peccia and Associates
The Montana Radio Company
Valley Bank of Helena

$500-$999
Dairy Queen Grill & Chill
DF Man Enterprises
Energy Laboratories
Exchange Club of Helena
Farmer’s State Bank
First Interstate Bank
Helena Education Association
Kiwanis Club
Payne West Insurance
Pioneer Technical Services
SMA Architecture & Design
South Hills Dental
Stahly Engineering & Associates
Tri County Disposal
Woolsey Tire
With a solid foundation in place, Exploration is looking ahead with plans to expand our programs and exhibit space while maintaining high standards of excellence. Join us on our journey!

DONATE
As a small non-profit business with no parent organization that provides us with funding, donor support is crucial to supplement our program and museum revenue. Whether it’s a one-time donation, monthly contributions, or legacy endowment, everything makes a difference! 2024 donors will be featured in next year’s annual report.

Visit: https://exworks.campbraingiving.com or scan here:

SPONSOR
We welcome businesses to contact us to support our programs, events, exhibits, and scholarships. We are happy to work with you to ensure a mutually beneficial sponsor agreement to promote your organization.

VOLUNTEER
Share our social media posts, write us reviews, and / or sign up to be a volunteer. We are always looking for people with a passion for STEM education to be role models for our participants.
DISCOVER. IMAGINE. PLAY.
DISCOVER. IMAGINE. PLAY.

All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind.

“Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge.” ~Carl Sagan