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THE GRAND RAPIDS CHILDREN’S MUSEUM ANNOUNCES NEW ADDITIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

[Grand Rapids, MI] June 3, 2024 – The Grand Rapids Children's Museum is pleased to announce the addition of 3 new members to its Board of Directors effective April 17, 2024 at the Annual Meeting of the Members. New board members include Sommer Jabbar, Kevin Polston, and Kristi Haik.

“We are so excited to welcome 3 incredibly brilliant, talented, and strong community leaders to the GRCM Board,” says Maggie Lancaster, CEO, Grand Rapids Children's Museum. “They will launch us into the future of open-ended play that translates to brain development, SEL and creativity among so many other benefits with a great amount of vision.” GRCM also honored outgoing president Nick Paradiso. Nick Paradiso will be succeeded by Jocelyn Dettloff.

Sommer Jabbar: Sommer Jabbar, Ed.D, Director of Inclusion and Belonging for the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, has worked in the education sector in various capacities, including as a teacher, training and technical assistance manager, director of education, and diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant for her county. Sommer continues working with historically marginalized communities to bring more awareness to educational inequities and opportunities. Her passion and commitment to her community and children are what drives her in life. Her doctorate of education was conferred in May 2024.

“I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible magic that is GRCM! For years I have had the honor of collaborating with the museum in numerous ways- positively impacting families and children in the community. To serve on the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum board is to hold the honor of shaping young minds, cultivating curiosity, and building bridges to boundless imagination—a privilege that echoes through generations.”
Kevin Polston: Kevin has served as superintendent of Kentwood (MI) Public Schools since 2021. His previous superintendent experience included four years at Godfrey-Lee Public Schools in Wyoming, Michigan. Prior to becoming a superintendent, he served as a teacher, coach, principal, and curriculum leader at Grand Haven Area Public Schools (MI) for 15 years. His vision is to "change the world through opportunities for students." Polston serves as a trustee on the Board of Trustees of KConnect, a collective impact organization in Grand Rapids, MI, on the Board of Trustees for Kent School Services Network, a community schools initiative in Kent County, and serves on the Grand Rapids Community Board for Corewell Health. Polston holds a BA from Michigan State University, a M. Ed. and Ed. S. from Grand Valley State University, and is currently a doctoral candidate studying educational leadership at Central Michigan University. Areas of expertise include strategic planning, innovative practices, school safety, and equitable leadership.

"It is an honor to serve on the GRCM Board of Directors to support our mission to provide a safe and healthy environment for children to grow and learn through play. I deeply believe in playful learning as an integral component of children's wellbeing and development."

Kristi L. Haik: Dr. Kristi Haik, Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) at GRCC, has earned her B.S. in Biology, M.S. in Experimental Psychology, and Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology (Neuroscience focus) from Central Michigan University. Dr. Haik's career trajectory shows she has a passion for working with underrepresented, first-generation STEM students from K-16. She was the Research Manager of Basic and Clinical Neurosciences at the Field Neurosciences Institute in Saginaw, Michigan. She became an assistant professor of neurobiology at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) in 2005, where she developed and led Project SOAR (Scholarships, Opportunities, Achievements, & Results). Project SOAR seeks to recruit, retain, educate, and graduate financially needy, academically talented students – SOAR Scholars – who will enter the workforce or graduate school in a STEM field. As a first-generation college student, she used her experiences to help STEM students be successful in college. All SOAR programs increased the participation of students from groups that have historically been underrepresented in STEM. Dr. Haik's neuroscience and nanotechnology research has always involved undergraduate students and international collaborators and published their findings in peer-reviewed journals. At NKU in July 2012, Dr. Haik became Associate Dean and Director NKU's STEM center. In July 2013, she became Chair of Biological Sciences. She was Dean of Art & Sciences from 2016-2020 at Ferris State University.
“My mission is that everyone has the opportunity to engage with STEM. The most effective way to involve learners of all ages in STEM is through play—consider the simplicity and educational value of paper airplanes. STEM activities engage learners, encouraging them to be creative and learn more about the world around them. Importantly, when children learn through play, there’s no pressure of right or wrong, allowing them to explore freely.”

A full listing of the Grand Rapids Children's Museum Board includes:

**CEO:** Maggie Lancaster  
**Board President:** Jocelyn Dettloff, Mary Free Bed  
**Past Board President:** Nick Paradiso, Michael Best Strategies  
**President Elect:** Benjamin Brenner, Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band for Pottawatomi Indians (AKA Gun Lake Tribe) Tribal Council Member & Gun Lake Tribe Gaming Authority  
**Vice President:** Jessica Yon, Warner Norcross + Judd LLP  
**Board Treasurer & Secretary:** Erik Schumacher, Rehmann  
**Member at Large:** John Parker, EV Construction

**Board Members:**  
Katherine (Katie) Mason Asante, Mason Jones  
David Gregory, CEO & Lead Agent, Bullrush Sports  
Kristi L. Haik, Ph.D., Grand Rapids Community College  
Miranda Hillard, MD, HDVCH, Corewell Health  
Sommer Jabbar, Ph.D., Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce  
Sandy Jager, Mercantile Bank  
Jason Joseph, Corewell Health  
Paul Lothschutz, H & S Companies  
Mei Mah, Center for Educational Partnerships, GVSU  
Krashawn Martin, City of Wyoming Director of Parks and Recreation  
Colin Osborne, Meijer  
Kevin Polston, Kentwood Public Schools  
Dale Rietberg, Varnum, LLP  
Jason Schnelker, Schnelker, Rassi, & McConnell, PLC  
Kelley Stoppels, Miller Johnson  
Margaret Vega, Fine Artist and Founding Director of SiteStudio and Children Designing for Children

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About the Grand Rapids Children's Museum
The Grand Rapids Children's Museum is two floors of hands-on interactive exhibits and daily drop-in programs that inspire learning through play. GRCM has been a playful destination in downtown Grand Rapids, MI for over 25 years and 4 million guests! The Grand Rapids Children's Museum is open to the public during the school year on Tuesdays, Friday, and Saturdays from 9am-4pm, Thursday from 9am-7pm, and Sunday from noon-4pm. Regular admission is $12.00 per person and $11.00 for ages 65+. Admission for teachers, healthcare and frontline workers, and active military members is $10.00. Admission is $6 per person on Thursdays during Family Night from 4-7pm. During the summer (June 1-August 30), the Grand Rapids Children's Museum is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 9am-4pm and Sunday from 11am-4pm. Through Museums for All, admission for EBT and WIC cardholders is $1.75 per person for up to 12 people per card. GRCM members and children under 1 are free! GRCM is a non-profit organization located at 11 Sheldon Avenue NE in downtown Grand Rapids. For more information and daily schedule of programming and events, please visit grcm.org.