

MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

ROCKY'S READER

A REACH OUT AND READ NEWSLETTER



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Dear Providers, Families & Friends,

Spring is one of my favorite seasons because it reminds us that growth is always possible. The world around us begins to bloom again, days feel a little brighter, and we are reminded that fresh starts are a gift. This season of renewal feels like the perfect time to introduce something close to my heart, MCM's **365 Days of Kindness** initiative.

At the Mississippi Children's Museum, we believe that reading together does more than build early literacy skills; it nurtures connection, empathy, and compassion. Kindness and literacy go hand in hand. When families read, talk, and grow together, children learn not only words and stories, but also how to care for others and see the world with understanding.

As we step into spring, I invite you to think about kindness the way we think about planting seeds. Small actions, repeated over time, can grow into something beautiful and lasting. A shared story at

bedtime, a kind word to a sibling, or helping a neighbor can all become moments that shape a child's heart and sense of community.

As the great Fred Rogers once said, "There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind; The second way is to be kind; The third way is to be kind." Those words remind us that while achievements and titles sound good, what people will remember most is how we treated them along the way.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. I hope this season inspires your family to embrace small acts of kindness that make a big difference, not just in spring, but every day of the year.

With gratitude and joy,
Monique Ealey, Ed.D
Director of Education & Experiences

365 days of kindness

At MCM, kindness is more than a moment – it's a movement. In 2026, the museum is embracing a joyful challenge: practicing **one simple act of kindness every single day**. The 365 Days of Kindness campaign invites museum guests to share creative, thoughtful ways to brighten someone's day. These ideas are woven into museum programming and will be showcased on social media, spreading positivity all year long.

From small gestures to big-hearted moments, each act helps build empathy, connection, and community. Together, everyday experiences become powerful reminders that kindness matters and that even the smallest actions can create a big impact, making kindness truly contagious.

A FEW SIMPLE WAYS TO PRACTICE KINDNESS AS A FAMILY ARE TO:

- Write or draw a thank-you note for someone who helps you or your family.
- Plant flowers or care for something living as a family.
- At dinner or bedtime, share one kind thing each person did that day.
- Share books or gently used toys with another child.
- Offer encouraging words during daily routines.

KNOW TO GROW



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Know to Grow: Learning Through Stories & Nature

Just as spring reminds us that growth happens in small, steady ways, the Know to Grow program at the Mississippi Children's Museum, sponsored by The Feild Co-Operative, helps children and families discover how learning grows through everyday moments. This hands-on program combines story time with simple nature and gardening activities, showing children how books connect to the world around them and encouraging curiosity, exploration, and wonder.

Through shared reading and meaningful experiences, Know to Grow strengthens early literacy while helping children build confidence, observation skills, and a deeper connection to their environment. Families leave with ideas they can continue at home, turning ordinary moments into opportunities for learning, conversation, and connection.

When families read, explore, and grow together, they nurture more than plants; they nurture empathy, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning. Visit the museum on Saturday mornings and attend our Know to Grow program at 10:00 am!



BRING KNOW TO GROW HOME THIS SPRING!

- Read a nature or garden-themed book together and talk about what you notice outside.
- Plant seeds in a cup and watch how they grow over time.
- Take a family nature walk and describe colors, shapes, or sounds you discover.
- Create a "kindness garden" by writing or drawing kind actions on paper flowers.
- Keep a simple growth journal where children draw or write what they see changing each week.





HEAR FROM A PROFESSIONAL

SPRING IS A SEASON OF RAPID BRAIN GROWTH

Spring is my most favorite time of the year. It is a time of re-birth and regeneration as man and nature often emerge from a time of near hibernation to a time of revival and renewed energy. It is a time when our sleepy winters are aroused by the gentle emergence of a new spring. It is amazing how quickly daffodils pop up and how fast they grow; just a bulb on a small green stalk one day yet tall and bursting with color and beauty seemingly the next day. Birds begin to hatch their young and their early morning songs announce the beginning of a new season.

Spring is also an ideal time to nourish rapid brain growth in our children. Young brains are poised for learning as they experience, touch, and question what is new or different in the world around them. With every physical or emotional experience, a new nerve-pathway is laid down and connected in their brains. This allows children to assimilate, remember, refer to, learn from, and build upon these experiences for the rest of their lives. They are eager to undergo fresh adventures either vicariously from stories in a book or in actions from daily activities. Children want to share these positive moments with you: mom, dad, sister, brother, grandparent, auntie, teacher, or any person who is a part of their lives.

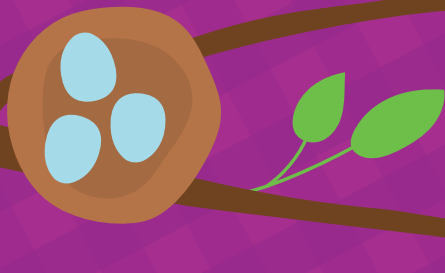
Just follow the children's lead and what peeks their curiosity. Don't underestimate what they can understand and comprehend. If going to a park is part of their day, look around and see what creatures are encountered. If you see a caterpillar, talk about its potential to become a beautiful butterfly. When you return home, read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle which tells about its metamorphosis into a butterfly. Give your children the opportunity to talk and read about what they come across.

Nature springs forth with wonder and new vibrancy, our children have brain cells that are eager to lay down new pathways. These pathways are established as they attain new knowledge and acquire new experiences while simply enjoying the journey. What better person to share this journey with than you?



Ruth W. Patterson, M.D. FAAP

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
University of Mississippi Medical Center



MCM TRAVELS

Wonder of Wellness

The **Wonder of Wellness** exhibit is designed to improve the lives of Mississippi's families by making healthy habits fun, hands-on, and engaging. Created in collaboration with sixteen local organizations and supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the exhibit invites children to explore how physical activity, balanced nutrition, emotional well-being, and healthy sleep patterns help their minds and bodies grow strong.

Interactive components allow children to monitor their heart rate, build a model of a nutritious meal, and learn how sleep positively impacts heart, lung, nutritional, and mental health. A robust emotional wellness section encourages children to identify feelings and create healthy coping strategies when faced with everyday challenges. One powerful activity allows visitors to physically compare the lung capacity of a healthy individual with that of someone affected by tobacco-related respiratory issues, making the impact of healthy choices tangible and memorable.

Wonder of Wellness benefits not only children, but their caregivers as well. Thanks to the support of wellness center manager Keri Baldwin and Blue Cross & Blue Shield's Indianola Community Wellness Center, the exhibit was hosted in their facility and made available to the local community for three months, expanding access to meaningful, health-focused learning experiences.



Indianola

"The exhibit will allow children to experience a unique, hands-on approach to wellness education. Not only will children garner wellness knowledge, but they will do so through out-of-the-box teaching techniques that are fun and engaging."

- Keri Baldwin
Manager, Indianola Community Wellness Center



Vicksburg

Wonder of Wellness proudly debuted in Vicksburg, MS at the "Let's Get Ready for Your Adventure" Health Fair hosted at the Warren County-Vicksburg Public Library.



DID YOU KNOW?

MCM has 12 traveling exhibits!

Scan to see all of our traveling exhibits!



ROCKY'S BOOK CLUB SPRING READS

Rocky's Book Club is a weekly program inspired by the traveling exhibit, *Rocky's House*, funded by the **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**. Created to promote the *Talk from the Start* campaign and in celebration of spring, *Rocky's Book Club* is highlighting stories focused on community and growth.

One of this season's selections is *Mrs. Spritzer's Garden* by Edith Pattou, a book that captures the joy of nurturing both gardens and friendships. Reflecting the season's themes of new beginnings, the story follows Mrs. Spritzer, an elderly woman who discovers joy and connection through gardening. After moving into a new home, she spends her days tending a colorful garden. Over time, neighborhood children become curious about the flowers and begin visiting her. Through shared moments among the blossoms, Mrs. Spritzer forms meaningful friendships, and her once-quiet garden fills with laughter and life. The transformation of her garden mirrors the emotional growth and fresh starts that spring represents.

During *Rocky's Book Club*, guests not only read this story but also participated in a related craft activity. Each visitor decorated a flowerpot and received a bag of soil and seeds to take home, encouraging them to start their own gardens this spring.

Another spring pick is *The Seeds of Friendship* by Michael Foreman, a heartwarming tale about a young boy named Ben who discovers a mysterious packet of seeds. Unsure of what they will grow into, he plants them and patiently cares for them. As the seeds bloom into beautiful flowers, other children are drawn to the garden. By sharing the flowers and tending the garden together, Ben forms new friendships and learns the value of kindness, patience, and cooperation.

Together, *Mrs. Spritzer's Garden* and *The Seeds of Friendship* beautifully reflect the heart of spring—growth, renewal, and connection. Through gardening and shared experiences, both stories show children that friendships, like plants, need care, patience, and kindness to flourish.

By pairing meaningful books with hands-on activities, guests not only celebrate the season but also nurtures a sense of belonging, community, and emotional growth in every child who participates.

Rocky's Book Club, an extension of *Talk From the Start* funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, demonstrates for parents and caregivers the power and efficacy of talking to and with children from birth.

Join MCM for *Rocky's Book Club* to receive an MCM Library Card. Attendees earn a sticker at each program, bringing them closer to earning a brand-new book from our Book Vending Machine!



Planting the Seeds TO READ

Planting the Seeds to Read: Growing Readers for the Future

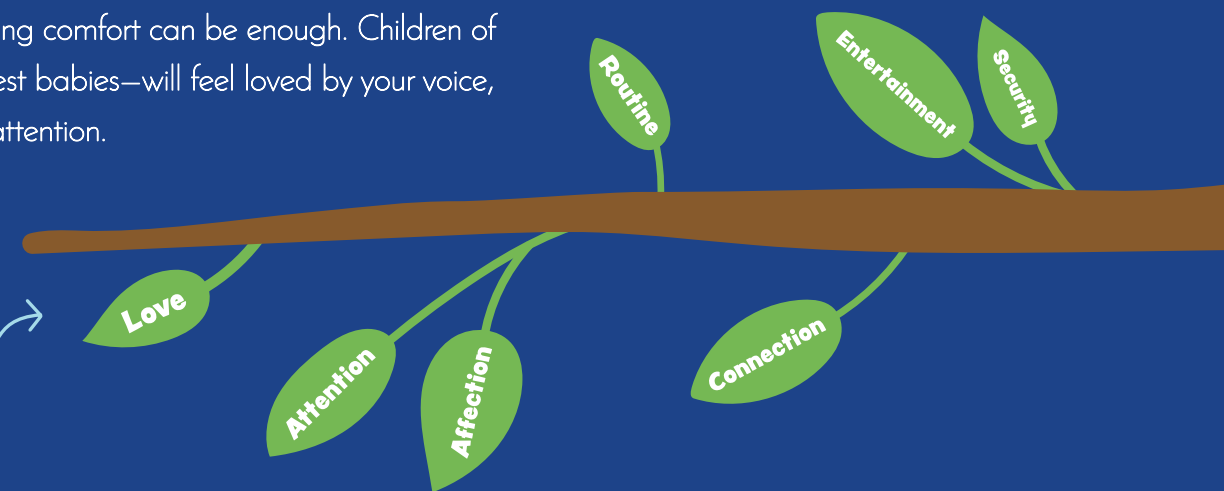
Spring reminds families that growth begins with small, intentional steps, and at the Mississippi Children's Museum, that's exactly the heart behind *Planting the Seeds to Read*. Held on Saturdays throughout the school year in partnership with the Jackson Public School District, this program supports second graders as they strengthen literacy skills and prepare for the important transition into third grade. Educators recognize that children should be reading proficiently by third grade because it marks a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Strong reading skills open doors to success across every subject and help children grow into confident communicators and lifelong learners.

Through engaging stories, hands-on literacy activities, and fundamental reading exercises, *Planting the Seeds to Read* nurtures not only literacy growth but also patience, encouragement, and kindness, reminding children that learning happens best when we support one another. This work aligns with programs like *Reach Out and Read*, *ABC Come Play with Me*, and *Rocky's Book Club*, all sharing a common goal: ensuring our children become strong readers and skilled communicators.

Reading With Children Can Help Them Manage Stress

You don't need to have the right words or all the answers to help your child through stressful moments simply being together, sharing a story, and offering comfort can be enough. Children of all ages—even the youngest babies—will feel loved by your voice, your presence, and your attention.

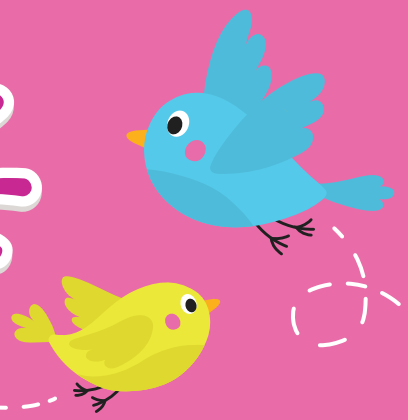
ALL CHILDREN NEED




SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE FULL REACH OUT & READ ARTICLE



SPRING BINGO



ENJOY THE SUNSHINE	BLOW BUBBLES	READ A BOOK	COMPLIMENT A STRANGER	HELP A FRIEND
TAKE A WALK	FIND A BIRD NEST	DANCE TO A HAPPY SONG	PLANT A SEED	DRAW A BUNNY
FLY A KITE	PAINT ROCKS		GO FOR A BIKE RIDE	INVITE SOMEONE TO PLAY
VISIT A PLAYGROUND	PICK UP LITTER AT THE PARK	PLAY OUTSIDE	LISTEN TO THE BIRDS SING	SPOT A RAINBOW
DRAW A PICTURE FOR A FRIEND	HAVE A PICNIC	PICK A FLOWER	EAT YUMMY FRUIT	JUMP ROPE



EMOTIONS AT PLAY
WITH PIXAR'S INSIDE OUT

children's museum
pittsburgh



MAY 23 - SEPT. 6, 2026

PRESENTED BY MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

LOCALLY SPONSORED BY:  Trustmark  ATMOS energy

This summer, explore the interactive exhibit based on Disney and Pixar's hit animated movie, *Inside Out*!

The exhibition was developed by Children's Museum of Pittsburgh in collaboration with Pixar Animation Studios. © Disney/Pixar. All rights reserved. Used under authorization.