

# A NEW NAME FOR FAMILIES FIRST CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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**FAMILIES FIRST**  
LEARNING LAB

Families First Children's Museum is thrilled to announce our next organizational chapter involves not only a move to Missoula Public Library, but a name change too! As of November 1st, Families First Children's Museum will officially become **Families First Learning Lab**. For 25 years, Families First Children's Museum has been empowering families through parent education and learning through play. The name change to Families First Learning Lab honors this tradition while also strengthening and deepening the intention and impact of our work.

## FAMILIES FIRST

Families First was established in April 1994 with an initial focus on parenting programs. This programming provided parenting information and support with operating principles derived from Families First-Boston but remained unique and independent. The content for parent education workshops has varied over the years; however, the intent has remained the same- to provide parents with the knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges of parenting. Classes have always been held in person to provide parents the opportunity to also connect with peers to share experiences and build a network of support.

## THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM MISSOULA

The Children's Museum opened in 2002 with the purpose of providing a space for children to learn through play. Museum exhibits provided hands on experiences to ignite curiosity, discovery, exploration and play. The children's museum on Front Street saw an average of 17,000 visitors a year. With the opening of the museum space, family education efforts expanded to provide a family resource library within the museum to give parents access to information on a variety of topics. This ultimately led to the merging of the museum and Families First in 2013; and, subsequently, another re-branding campaign in 2016 to Families First Children's Museum. However, the space was limited in the museum and full integration of parenting classes and *learning through play* activities continued to be restricted.

In December of 2017, the museum on Front Street closed due to tobacco smoke exposure from a neighboring business. Since that time, Families First Children's Museum has been operating out of an admin office in the current Missoula Public Library in preparation for the permanent move to the new facility in the summer of 2020.

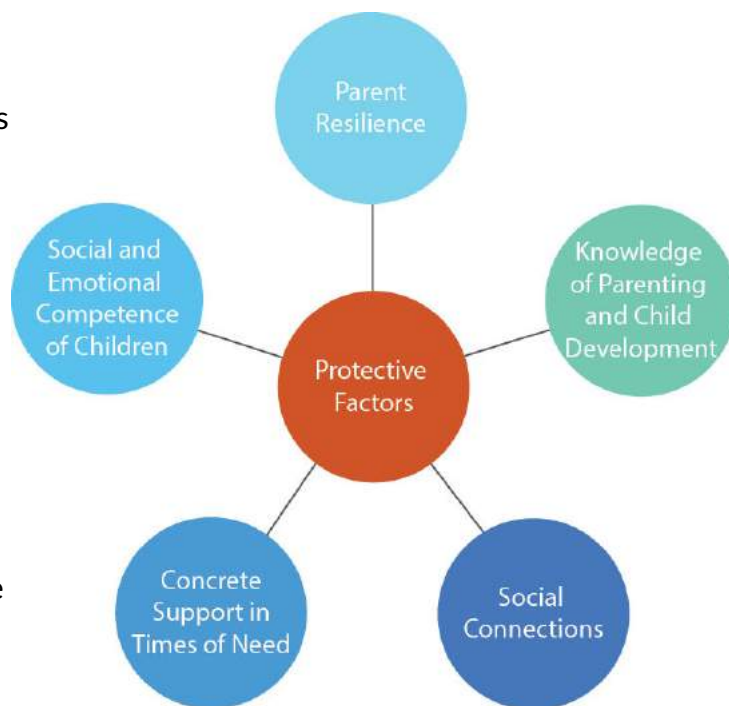
# FAMILIES FIRST LEARNING LAB

While Families First Children’s Museum has been serving families for 25 years, at times, the organization has been challenged to communicate the full mission. Many people know us as either “Families First” –if connection has been for parent education OR the “Children’s Museum” – if connection has been through the physical museum space on Front Street.

Through our time spent with families, we have recognized a common theme - the heart of our work involves strengthening family relationships to build resilient communities. Families First Learning Lab captures the spirit of an organization that is welcoming to all families, inspires hands on learning, and strengthens family relationships through education, connection, play, and partnerships.

## THE WHY

In recent years, our programming has included an understanding of The Five Protective Factors for Strengthening Families. The Five Protective Factors Framework aims to build **parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence in children** in order to increase positive outcomes for children and families. Research indicates when these factors are present for families, there is an increase in positive outcomes for children and families. The name Families First Learning Lab represents an intention to create a physical space at the library where families can learn and play together. Parents and caregivers will have the opportunity to participate in a family education class while children engage in a *learning through play* activity. We know that family life is a journey and at times, feels like an experiment, trying new things to learn and grow. Families First Learning Lab is committed to being a part of your journey and will provide the tools and resources to help you along the way.



Learn More at: <https://ctf4kids.org/about-prevention/strengthening-families/>

## OUR MISSION

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Strengthening family relationships through education, connection, play, and partnership.

## OUR VISION

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Supported parents and thriving children create resilient families.

## OUR VALUES

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Strong Families | Being a Connector | Collaboration | Showing Up For All | Learning Through Play | Evidence-Based Practices Community | Partnerships | Human Interaction

## OBJECTIVES



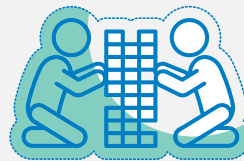
### Education

We focus on building knowledge and skills through the use of evidence-based practices, professional expertise, and social connections.



### Connection

We center around the power of group learning and in-person relationship building.



### Play

We believe in the importance of play as a catalyst for learning at all ages.



### Partnership

We value community partnerships that assist families in receiving the best services from the best providers.

# WHY THIS LOGO

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**FAMILIES FIRST**  
LEARNING LAB

In choosing a new logo, we wanted an image that would display the significance of the parent/child relationship. This new logo represents not only the literal connection between family members but also symbolizes an ongoing relationship- continuing to flow, move and grow. Blue represents loyalty, wisdom, strength and trust. Turquoise represents a recharging of spirits. Families First Learning Lab seeks to honor and build the loyalty, wisdom, strength and trust of families while providing tools and resources to build hope and recharge the spirit.



"We discovered Families First when our two twenty-something sons were a toddler and infant. Soon I was wondering how I could ever have raised them without Family First's expertise and compassionate guidance. Early on it was Pizza for Parents and other parenting programs. As they grew, we spent more and more time at the Children's Museum, playing and exploring magical exhibits together. The future looks very bright for Families First, and I am so happy that the children and families of Western Montana will get to share in the joy and support they provide, for generations to come."

HEIDI KENDALL



1994

Families First was founded by John Sommers- Flannagan



2002

Children's Museum Missoula was founded and doors opened



2005

MCPS Workshops launch & are free and open to the public



2009

Partnership with Flathead Indian Reservation begins



2013

Rebranding Happens, Children's Museum Missoula: Putting Families First is created

# OUR FUTURE HOME IN MISSOULA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Families First Learning Lab will occupy the 2nd Floor of the new Missoula Public Library facility alongside spectrUM Discovery Area. Each partner brings strengths and areas of expertise that collectively propel us one step closer to the shared goal of closing knowledge, opportunity, and achievement gaps for Missoula children and families.

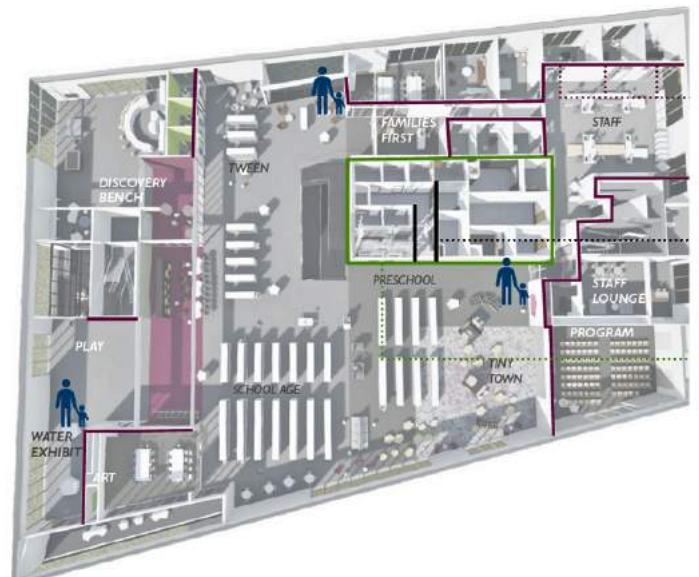


While Families First Learning Lab will no longer be a traditional “children’s museum” it WILL BE an inspirational place of learning, growth, and development for families. For the first time in our 25 year history, family education will happen in the same space as hands on *learning through play* experiences, giving parents a chance to model the skills they learn in workshops with their children. Activities for children and families will be intentional and meaningful. The Five Protective Factors will be apparent in our work as we:



- Build parenting knowledge and skills through workshops and multi session classes
- Provide a place and opportunities for social connection
- Develop social-emotional skills in children through hands on learning through play experiences
- Link families to professional support systems in time of need
- Build parental resilience by providing tools and resources to build confidence to navigate challenging times

The 2nd floor will feature a unique DNA climbing structure, water learning ecosystem, a dramatic play exhibit with rotating themes and activities, private consultation rooms, and a classroom space for family education workshops. We look forward to sharing more plans as they progress and can not wait to welcome you and your family to the new facility!



2015

Circle of Security parenting series launches



2018

Front Street Children's Museum closes



2019

Children In Between launches



2019

Families First Children's Museum becomes Families First Learning Lab



2020

FLL opens in NEW Missoula Public Library

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# GET INVOLVED

During this exciting time, we would love for you to join hands with us to get involved. Families First Learning Lab has many opportunities for donations, sponsorships, partnerships, and collaboration. We would also love to have you follow along with our progress in the new library and organizational transition through social media and/or joining our newsletter list. If you are interested in learning more about our direct services and programs, feel free to register online for one today or show up to one of our Community Connections or community events. All upcoming dates will be posted on our website.

We are hosting a new event October 25th to celebrate our beautiful, yet sometimes messy, family lives. Join us for a night of storytelling, family-friendly activities, and connection through a shared meal. The theme is Purpose and Possibilities- A Narrative for Nurturing Families; tickets can be purchased on our website.

**Thank you for your support!**

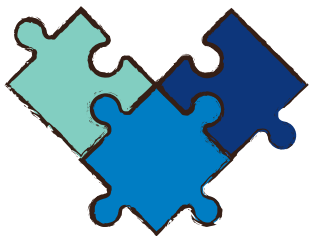


## GIVE BACK

Donate

Become a Sponsor

Become a Program Partner with Us



## STAY CONNECTED

Join our newsletter list- Sign up on our website!



## EXPERIENCE OUR WORK

Register for a Parenting Class

Come to a Community Connections Event

Join in on a Family Education Workshop