**UK announces Lexington Children's Museum as 2026-2027 Cornerstone Community Innovation Partner**

**LEXINGTON, Ky. (Sept. 1, 2026) —** The University of Kentucky is pleased to announce the Lexington's Children Museum as its next Cornerstone Community Innovation Partner (CIP) for the 2026-27 academic year. The museum will maintain an ongoing presence at The Cornerstone, advancing community engagement with students, faculty and staff and deepening the connection between the university and the wider Lexington community.

This year-long partnership supports The Cornerstone's mission to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and community connection by creating opportunities for collaborative engagement between the university and the Lexington community.

"The Cornerstone was created to be a place where the university and community come together to explore ideas, build relationships and inspire innovation," said Melody Flowers, UK assistant vice president for economic development and real estate. "Lexington Children's Museum's commitment to learning through play creates unique opportunities for people of all ages to connect, collaborate and engage with one another. Through the Community Innovation Partner program, we're excited to support experiences that bring together students, faculty, staff and community members while fostering creativity, curiosity and lifelong learning."

Lexington Children's Museum is dedicated to creating opportunities for children and families to learn, explore and grow through play. As the organization continues to expand its impact and plan for future growth, it is working to engage community members, educators, families and other stakeholders in conversations about the role of play in learning, creativity and lifelong development.

Through this partnership, Lexington Children's Museum will use The Cornerstone as a space to engage both the university and Lexington communities in experiences and conversations centered on play and its impact across all stages of life. Planned activities may include interactive programming, community engagement opportunities, stakeholder conversations and exhibitions that invite participants to share ideas, provide feedback and contribute to the museum's ongoing program-development efforts.

"As the Lexington Children's Museum continues to grow, we are dedicated to innovating play and learning experiences that inspire all ages," Colby Ernest, J.D., executive director of Lexington Children's Museum said. "We are honored to be this year's Cornerstone Community Innovation Partner where we can engage even more of the community in the important work of play!"

This partnership will create opportunities for students to engage with community-centered initiatives while exploring how creativity, curiosity and play can foster connection, learning and innovation. The CIP program was started in 2021. In addition to its newest partnership with the Lexington Children's Museum, it has worked with five other community partners: Believing in

Forever, Black Soil, Operation Making a Change, FoodChain, CivicLex and Fayette Alliance. The program is run by Economic Development and Real Estate.

For more information about community programming at The Cornerstone, contact Ashley Castorena at ashleycastorena@uky.edu.