2023 was a momentous year for Playtime Project. We celebrated our 20th year of providing transformative play experiences to children experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. Over the years, Playtime has adapted to serve families where they are and in the ways they need most, based on ever-evolving trends in the nature of homelessness and housing insecurity.

Over the past 20 years, Playtime’s growth has been evident and last year was no exception. In 2023, we served a total of 487 children, which is a 21% increase from the previous year. A year of successful programs at LaSalle-Backus Elementary School, Playtime’s second school-based site, set the stage for our third and fourth school-based sites. Programs at Whittier Elementary School began in 2023 and Barnaby Manor Elementary School in the beginning of 2024.

Playtime continues to expand in strategic ways that meet families where they live. Our presence in Prince George’s County has expanded and we now operate programs at five sites in the county, which has seen steady growth in homelessness. At the end of 2023, Playtime is operating at nine sites across DC and Prince George’s County, as compared to seven in 2022.

We know our programs have a positive impact on the children and families we serve, but in 2023, we further refined the way we measure children’s improvement in our domains. Measuring key areas of growth throughout the year has shown that most children in our programs improve in areas like identifying their emotions, persevering when faced with a challenging task, and creative problem-solving.

Playtime Project is proud to look back on 20 years of service to children and families. We are even more driven to continue serving our children and families in the ways they need most.
VOLUNTEERS GIVE THE GIFT OF PLAY

In 2023, nearly 100 weekly volunteers dedicated their time to support Playtime Project’s mission of cultivating resilience in children experiencing housing insecurity through the power of play. Play Rangers volunteer weekly at program sites to support healthy socioemotional development for children experiencing housing insecurity in DC and Prince George’s County. Play Rangers implement trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate play activities, with supervision from Playtime program staff. They are an integral part of our work, and we could not have Playtime without them.

We have seen the long-term impact volunteers have on children’s lives. In 2023, we reconnected with three former Playtime participants, Kamari, Nyla, and Dakeisha. They told us how Playtime volunteers have not only kept in touch with them over the years, but also actively helped them apply to universities, advocate for them, and offer guidance. Read their stories at bit.ly/nov23-blog.

Since Playtime’s inception, volunteers have dedicated an estimated value of nearly $750M to our children experiencing housing insecurity. This includes Play Rangers, Volunteers in Motion, office volunteers, and more. A full list of our volunteer opportunities can be accessed at playtimeproject.org/volunteer.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

98
TOTAL WEEKLY VOLUNTEERS in 2023

2,605
TOTAL DIRECT SERVICE VOLUNTEER HOURS in 2023

$82,839
VALUE OF DIRECT SERVICE VOLUNTEER TIME in 2023

93% of parents surveyed feel Playtime helps their child improve SEL skills, acquire new skills that help in life or academic settings, and learn to solve problems creatively.

100% of parents surveyed said they believe Playtime helps their child feel optimistic or hopeful.

LOCATIONS (2023)

The Brooks | One of DC’s eight short-term family housing shelters (Ward 3)

Columbia Heights Village | Subsidized housing apartment complex (Ward 1)

Free Art for All | Community-based site located in the Beltway Plaza Mall (Greenbelt, MD)

LaSalle-Backus Elementary School | DC Public School with high number of children experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity (Ward 4)

Safe Passages | Domestic violence shelter (Prince George’s County, MD)

Shepherd’s Cove Emergency Shelter | Prince George’s County women and children’s shelter (Capitol Heights, MD)

Turning Point | Housing program for young mothers (Ward 1)

Warm Nights | Shelter based in a Prince George’s County hotel (Beltsville, MD)

Whittier Elementary School | DC Public School (Ward 4)

When told by a volunteer that her non-verbal son had gotten much better at communicating, the mom said, “That comes from Playtime. When he comes home from Playtime he talks a lot more.”

KEY AREAS OF GROWTH

Our data from 2023 highlight that more than half of the children in our programs increased their abilities across our key domains between January and October 2023.