

Dear Friends,

In a 1989 interview, novelist Toni Morrison drew on an old proverb to remind us of our shared responsibility to children: “You need a whole community – everybody – to raise a child.” Museums are, and can be, essential members of this community. And in fact, over the past decades, efforts to engage children – not just in children’s museums but in museums of all types – have blossomed.

We know that positive experiences at a young age can foster learning, connections, and memory-making. Moreover, they can help make lifelong museumgoers. And yet children’s participation in museum exhibitions is often an add-on, considered at the end of a development process, relegated to a separate space, or completely discounted. What can we do to put children first?

In this issue, our authors offer some answers. Their ideas and experiences are a rich resource, and one that comes at a pivotal time. During the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, many schools closed for extended periods, disrupting education and exacerbating longstanding inequities. As sites of informal learning, museums – and in particular exhibitions – can help meet the challenges we face.

As part of the community needed to raise a child, I know you will find inspiration in this issue: from our Q&A, which offers advice on trauma-proofing exhibitions, to articles on future thinking, playworking, and much, much more. I invite you to also explore our Spring 2008 issue on families for a host of ideas; you can find it on the NAME website (name-aam.org).

As always, I’d like to thank our outstanding editorial advisory board, managing editor Ian Kerrigan, the NAME board, designer Charita Patamikakorn, Exhibits Newslines editor Jenny-Sayre Ramberg, our authors, our reviewers, our contributors, and you, our readers.

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