

J. Colby Ernest, JD, Executive Director

- Ernest has dedicated his career to supporting families and children. With a history of leadership, he has served Lexington in the non-profit sector for over 10 years. Ernest is a graduate of the University of Kentucky College of Law and practiced for three years. He brings broad experience in several critical areas, including fundraising, major gifts and grants, operations, human resources, and community outreach. Ernest is responsible for overseeing all daily operations, development, marketing, hiring and supervising full-time staff, board relations, and community relations.

Mary Franey, Director of Play and Learning

- Franey joined LCM in 2022. She has over a decade of experience working with kids through play and learning. Her passion lies with watching kids discover how the world around them works. She graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor's degree in Recreation Administration. Franey is responsible for all education-based programming at the Lexington Children's Museum, including Field Trips and enrichment activities, the Mobile Play and Learning Lab, and our STEAM Library.

Abby Thompson, Experiences Director

- Thompson joined LCM in 2022 with over 15 years of non-profit experience and has a passion for learning through play. Thompson's professional experience is vast in early childhood education development, family education engagement, community partnership engagement, social media marketing, and staff management. She is a native of Mt. Sterling and graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, with a bachelor's degree in Special Education. Thompson is responsible for all programming, operations, and events at the Lexington Children's Museum, plus all of our community outreach events.

Abigail Prang, PhD, Development and Communications Manager

- Dr. Prang joined the Lexington Children's Museum in 2024. She has over 20 years of experience tutoring and teaching both children and adults. She completed her PhD in English at Howard University in 2016. She has a background in writing, child advocacy, policy analysis, and administrative leadership. At LCM, she supports development and fundraising, manages volunteers and interns, and is responsible for all communications and public affairs initiatives, including maximizing philanthropic support and community engagement.



Full Time Staff

Jonathan Leach, Museum Experiences Specialist

- Leach has a lengthy background in museums, visual art, and exhibit maintenance, including work as a professional artist. He facilitates exhibit programming, and supports educational, event, and outreach programs. His role is crucial to operations on the museum floor, both in terms of exhibit functionality and visitor engagement.

Sarah Gerrets-Praria, Guest Experience Specialist

- Gerrets-Praria continually works to meet visitor needs, ensuring they feel welcome and informed about the array of options we offer for engagement and programming. She supports all manner of guest experience, from planning regular visits to membership sales and party reservations. Gerrets-Praria is also a professional artist.

Kalyann Meece, Play and Learning Educator

- Meece supports lesson planning and curriculum development, teaches enrichment classes and camp activities, delivers educational demonstrations and hands-on activities at schools and community centers, and helps train part time staff in the Play and Learning Department.

Part Time Staff

Lorie Settles, Weekend Experience Specialist

- Settles manages operations and experiences throughout the weekend, including regular operations as well as birthday party coordination and presentations.

Experience Associates

- Haedyn Brown
- Isabella Spencer
- Constance Teater
- Vanessa Martinez-Rodriguez

Play and Learning Educator

- Zinnia Blair