

NEWS RELEASE



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Imagine Children's Museum Appoints New CEO

Elee Wood will replace Nancy Johnson to lead the biggest children's museum in the Pacific Northwest

EVERETT, WA (March 28, 2024) — The Board of Directors of Imagine Children's Museum announced the appointment of Elizabeth (Elee) Wood, PhD, as its new Chief Executive Officer, following an extensive national search process. Wood will replace Nancy Johnson, who last year announced her intention to retire.

Nancy Johnson has led the nonprofit organization since 1999, when it was known as the Children's Museum in Snohomish County and operated out of a leased storefront on Colby Avenue. Johnson put the Museum on a pathway to long-term sustainability and growth, harnessing grassroots support to build an integral resource for children, families, schools, youth organizations and social service agencies. Located in beautiful downtown Everett, Imagine Children's Museum is now a major family attraction that serves more than 283,000 visitors every year. It is the biggest children's museum in the Pacific Northwest, with 68,000 sq. ft. of playful learning exhibits and multipurpose program areas.

Johnson said: "It has been the honor of my life to lead Imagine for the past 25 years. Last year, I informed the Board of Directors that, with the successful completion of our \$25 million capital campaign and the opening of our expanded Museum, it was the ideal time for the organization to transition to new leadership. The Board has worked tirelessly to find the right individual to guide Imagine into the future, and I'm excited about the new heights of excellence that Elee Wood and the team will achieve by working together to enrich children's lives through playful learning."

Board President Clay Wertheimer said: "As a member of the Imagine Board of Directors for 30 years, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nancy for her leadership of Imagine. I feel profound gratitude and admiration for what she has achieved on behalf of children and families in our community. As we look to the future, I am confident and excited to welcome Elee as Imagine's new CEO. The Board selected Elee because she has the

character and qualifications to carry on Nancy's legacy and build on her accomplishments.”

Elee Wood will begin as Imagine Children’s Museum CEO Designate on May 14, 2024, and will assume the responsibilities of CEO on June 3, 2024, after a handover period. She is currently Nadine and Robert A. Skotheim Director of Education and Public Programs at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, CA, where she oversees the areas of school programs, docent and volunteer programs, public programs and community partnerships.

Prior to joining The Huntington, Wood held several positions at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, including those of associate dean for student affairs, chair of the museum studies program, and professor of museum studies and education. She also served as public scholar of museums, families, and learning at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis and as public programs manager at Minnesota Children’s Museum. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, and a master’s degree in education and a PhD from the University of Minnesota.

Wood said: “I am thrilled to be joining the team at Imagine. Having spent nearly 30 years in the field, I know the potential and possibility that await Imagine in this next phase of operations. I look forward to the opportunity to serve the community as an important place of play and learning and being a champion for children and their families.”

Located in beautiful downtown Everett, Imagine Children’s Museum is the largest children’s museum in the Pacific Northwest for children ages 12 and under. In 2022, it opened a \$25 million expansion, including two new floors of interactive exhibits to inspire a lifelong love of learning through play. The Museum includes a woodland climbing structure, a make-believe wildlife veterinary clinic, an aquarium and marine science gallery, a hands-on engineering exhibit, an art studio and a tinker shop where children can learn to use real tools. These complement Imagine’s beloved and captivating original playscapes, including a bus, a plane, a miniature locomotive track and a water works area.

In 2017, Imagine achieved American Alliance of Museums accreditation, becoming the first accredited children’s museum in the Pacific Northwest. It has a 100%, 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America’s leading independent evaluator of charities for financial health, accountability and transparency.

About Imagine Children’s Museum

Imagine Children’s Museum in downtown Everett is Washington’s ultimate play and learning destination for children ages 12 and under and their families. With a mission to utilize playful learning to enrich children’s lives, Imagine Children’s Museum sparks curiosity and ignites creativity through one-of-a-kind exhibits that build foundational skills in science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and math. Discover where play inspires imaginations! Plan your visit at [ImagineCM.org](https://www.imaginecm.org)