

Susie Burdick has been fondly called “a child with experience.” With her deep love of kids, play and community, she shines as the Kids Discovery Museum’s executive director. Burdick was BPA’s first artistic director in the ‘80s and ‘90s, and has worked in nonprofits for decades. A chronic do-gooder, she recently served as president of the Rotary Club and now co-chairs the Healthy Youth Alliance. On top of all that, she keeps a weekly lunch date with her 100-year-old mother.



What’s it like to be behind the scenes at KiDiMu? For me, the majority is fundraising, which I absolutely love. I never see it as asking people for money, I see it as connecting people who want to do something good with what needs to be done. That conduit role is so special. I’m a relationship-focused person, which fits perfectly with fundraising.

How would you spend a blank check? Build a third floor. We are busting at the seams. And also build a fund to change

our exhibits, with a three-year exhibit plan that is strategic and deliberate. Space is our biggest challenge. There are so many things we’d like to do: a life-science wall with a large ant farm and a functioning solar system, for instance.

What is KiDiMu’s role on Bainbridge? KiDiMu is about community. We focus on early childhood education, making sure kids get the right start. Ninety percent of brain development happens from birth to five. That’s a huge window of opportuni-

ty and responsibility. When I joined the Healthy Youth Alliance, I asked them if we could change the mission from “kindergarten to career” to “cradle to career.” We want to know what we should be teaching kids at this age to make them more resilient going forward. KiDiMu is huge on collaboration and community partnership. We work to replicate that in the kids’ world here, to have many different people for them to play with.

Speaking of community, do you have a pro tip for the Rotary Auction? Work it. It’s one of the most fun volunteer gigs on the island. You can walk around and see stuff. If not, go to the preview night. We get 1,500 volunteers. We can make over half a million dollars in six hours, and it all goes back to the community and international work. The first auction [held in 1960] bought land to build the library. Last year’s refreshed it. It’s so Bainbridge!

You have lived on the island since 1980 and have seen a lot of change. What is your hope for the future? Having been on the island for so long, I share what other people want. Growth is fine, but don’t lose the community in the process. To keep that essence, I think, is the most critical thing.

For KiDiMu, my hope is that we continue to see the importance of having this for kids. The value is never going to diminish, as long as we evolve and pay attention to the world and do our part. Part of the way we cope with vitriol in the world is to raise good kids who really care about each other. —JAINE HUANG