Math Happens

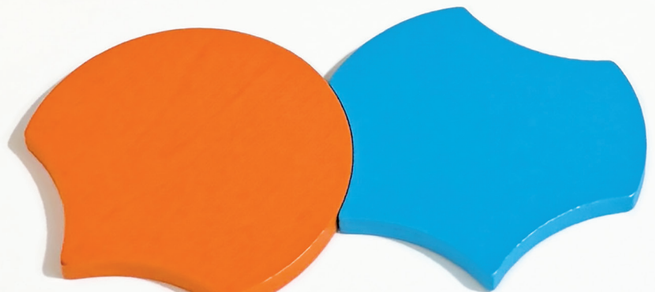
Math for all ages, shared in all places



1606 Pearl Street
Austin, Texas 78701

contact@MathHappens.org
MathHappens.org

@MathHappensFoundation



ANNUAL REPORT | 2025

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Partners,

In 2025, MathHappens Foundation continued to expand the reach of its MathHappens Math Rooms™ and Open Play Kits™, more than doubling the number of locations served and growing its presence to over 40 locations across 15 states. The success of our early Math Room partnerships demonstrated that hands-on mathematics can thrive in a variety of public environments.

By the end of 2025, 18 staffed MathHappens Math Rooms were open in partner museums and libraries every weekend, providing more than 4,500 hours of facilitated mathematical engagement annually. These Math Rooms employ approximately 100 facilitators, coordinators, and education professionals and serve as community hubs for hands-on mathematical engagement. In addition to our staffed Math Room locations, 22 institutions used MathHappens materials through our self-serve Open Play Kits. Building on this momentum, we expect to more than double our reach again in 2026.

We foster, support, and promote mathematics learning wherever people gather. Through partnerships with museums, libraries, community organizations, and educators we are helping expand access to meaningful mathematical experiences across the country.

Our success depends on people, not just the materials, activities, and models we create. Our core leadership team, dedicated coordinators and facilitators, university students and interns, and the welcoming staff at our partner institutions all play an essential role in bringing MathHappens to life. Their commitment and enthusiasm will continue to be the foundation of our growth and impact in the years ahead.

With appreciation and excitement for the future,



Lauren Siegel
Executive Director

MathHappens Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation supported by the Lauren and Philip Siegel Family Foundation

Mission and Core Values

Our mission is to promote math literacy by creating and distributing math models and supporting development of mathematical learning experiences outside of the classroom in our public places and spaces.

Our Core Values

Collaboration

Meaningful collaboration between partners, teams, and stakeholders drives richer experiences and leads to the most successful, impactful programs.

Generosity

Freely sharing materials, knowledge, and resources expands access, empowers others, and amplifies collective impact.

Integrity

Honesty and consistency in our actions and communication build trust and ensure our work delivers on its promises to educators, communities, and the public.

Authenticity

Models and concepts offered should be genuine, accurate, and mathematically sound.

Joy

Math is a source of delight, wonder, and surprise. We design experiences that invite curiosity, build meaningful relationships, and celebrate the pleasure of figuring things out because when people enjoy math, they engage with it more deeply.

Why This Work Matters

Whether on a K-16 education pathway or returning to school later in life, people often face significant challenges in mathematics literacy that impact career and personal goals. Access to meaningful mathematics learning and the presumptions about who can be a “math person” are too often variables that lead to a bad experience in math. At MathHappens Foundation, we believe that everyone deserves the chance to benefit from mathematics, whether or not they pursue a career in a STEM field.



Texas Roots, Nationwide Impact

Austin Headquarters, a Living Laboratory

Our headquarters is based in Austin, Texas, where we maintain our workshop and operate two Math Rooms. Austin provides ongoing opportunities to engage with families and educators through conferences, festivals, workshops, exhibits, and community events hosted by local museums and libraries. The insights gained through the long-term work in Austin inform our operating principles and help guide decisions across our organization.



Workshop

Our Austin workshop produces our mathematical models, from laser cutting to final assembly. Staff and interns laser cut and 3D-print components, fabricate parts, sand, paint, assemble, package, and prepare models for distribution. At the workshop we train interns in design and laser operation so they can prototype new models, strengthen their technical skills, and test their own ideas in our public spaces.

Field Trips

MathHappens has developed field trip programs for nature centers, maritime history museums, pioneer museums, and public archives. In each setting, we create hands-on activities that connect mathematics to the exhibits and stories unique to that location. These collaborations continue to inform the development of our models, inspire new ideas, and expand the reach of our work.





Media

Since 2020, MathHappens has sponsored a weekly mathematics puzzle in the Austin Chronicle, publishing more than 250 interesting and approachable classic math puzzles. The puzzles reach an estimated 35,000 readers and provide interns, students, and staff with opportunities to see their work published and occasionally engage with readers. We make our collection of puzzles and solutions available online for partners, including libraries, to use in newsletters and other community initiatives that encourage mathematical curiosity and learning.

Local Internships

We have a continuous 12 year relationship with the University of Texas at Austin (UT) UTeach Internship Program. Our UT interns, joined by others from Huston-Tillotson, St. Edward's, and Texas State University have the opportunity to work in all these environments as well as in our workshop. The interns bring fresh ideas, design new learning experiences, master design software, make models, research and find new models, staff events, and support production of existing models. Their innovative work here in Austin is integral to the success of our nationwide programs.



Our Programs

MathHappens Math Rooms

In 2025, we added 12 new Math Rooms in 10 states. MathHappens provides materials and staff to coordinate and manage each Math Room. To provide a consistent and reliable resource to our partners and the communities they serve, we commit to being open at least 4-10 hours each weekend. We support our facilitators with training and meaningful work experience, and our hosts with a quality program that can be a part of the museum's regular offerings. The activities range from open-ended "invitations to play," requiring no instructions, to optical illusions and brain teasers that spark conversation, as well as objects connected to history and more advanced mathematical ideas.







Our Programs

MathHappens Open Play Kits

In 2025, we expanded our reach by distributing our three-part Open Play Kits to 21 new collaborators and partners. These kits are a core component of our Math Room materials and consist of: Bubble Tiles by MathHappens Foundation, 21st Century Pattern Blocks by Math For Love, and Geometiles by Imathgination LLC. The shared foundation of these materials is an internally consistent, expansive tiling or building environment that invites participants to engage through spatial reasoning and creative construction. We make and provide custom frames for the Bubble Tiles and 21st Century Pattern Blocks allowing for additional forms of exploration with the materials.

We encourage our partners to provide these materials to their visitors as either a full set of three activities or individually within larger spaces and/or community events.







Our Programs

Support for Informal Education Partners, Public Libraries, Teachers, and Non-Profit Organizations

Informal educators hosting community events are increasingly interested in adding meaningful mathematics to their programs. Whether supporting an author reading at a library, a school fall festival, or a STEAM event at a museum, we provide our informal education partners with free materials, resources, guidance, and staffing support if needed to make these experiences successful. We have funded programs, sent models and materials at no cost, or have provided programming to support the following established partner organizations who share our mission: American Institute of Mathematics, Benjamin Banneker Association, Fundapromat, Julia Robinson Math Festivals, Math Circles of Chicago, Natural Math, Orlando Math Circles, the Seattle Universal Math Museum, and the National Museum of Mathematics.

Making and Distributing Bubble Tiles and Conic Sections Models

Bubble Tiles

In 2023, MathHappens co-founder Lauren Siegel invented, designed and produced an original 13 piece tile set called Bubble Tiles that blends mathematical discovery with artistic creativity and is safe for all ages. Based on a circle divided into six concave and convex arcs, Bubble Tiles offer endless opportunities for creativity, experimentation, and mathematical exploration through color, pattern, symmetry, and spatial reasoning. Families, students, educators, and museum visitors can intuitively create beautiful designs with frames or by free tiling. To date, we have distributed over 1,500 sets of Bubble Tiles, each packaged with frames we produce ourselves, and have 2,500 more for future projects. Bubble Tile sets and frames have become valuable tools for outreach programs large and small, engaging learners of all ages and experience levels. Thanks to the generous support of the Lauren and Philip Siegel Family Foundation, we are pleased to continue distributing Bubble Tile sets free of charge.





Conic Sections Model

In 2021, Lauren Siegel adapted a design for laser cutting a conic sections model from ⅛" wood as part of a collection of reference models intended for display in libraries. Response to a social media post revealed a strong interest in and demand for the model, particularly among teachers. We share the digital design files online for anyone to use freely, while also producing and distributing physical models to educators at no cost. To support production and distribution, the Foundation recruited and funded maker spaces in St. Paul, Minnesota; Houston, Texas; Long Beach, California; New York, New York; and Barcelona, Spain. Together, these efforts have provided more than 5,000 free conic sections models to educators.

The Power of Our Approach

In House Design and Production

Informed by over ten years of creating and delivering materials for outreach programs, we carefully design and select models, materials, and activities that are engaging, hands-on, and which offer a tactile learning experience. Creating models in our own workshop gives us the flexibility to test materials, explore and adapt new design ideas, and refine the models behind the experiences based on feedback. Durable raw materials like wood and plastic are intentionally selected to ensure that our models can last for many years.

Community Connections

In developing our materials we consider how the place or setting impacts the learning experience. We carefully select locations and staff for our programs that share our commitment to meaningful family engagement. The museum and informal education institutions we collaborate with offer more to their visitors and community than trusted information and a welcoming environment, they provide a place to explore and connect with family and friends.

Communicating the Math and Sharing Educator Resources

Our materials and models invite mathematical conversations, but do not require complex explanations. A label or title on a frame can offer a search word for further investigation. We provide connections to national learning standards on our website and encourage referral to the teaching guides that are made available by Math For Love and Geometiles. We continue to offer our digital resources for making our frames and models on our website.



Consistency and Proven in Practice

The models and activities we create and source offer multiple ways to engage and often illustrate several mathematical concepts making them relevant to a range of audiences. New visitors as well as regulars benefit from access to Math Rooms that are open every weekend, year round. Our partners benefit from the ease of portability of all of our materials which require minimal instructions for their own outreach projects.

Staying Connected

We communicate regularly with the hosts, coordinators, and facilitators, who are key to our partnerships for our programs, and we seek feedback and concept validation from the other educators who use our materials. Our guest books and our newspaper puzzles are two ways we collect direct feedback.

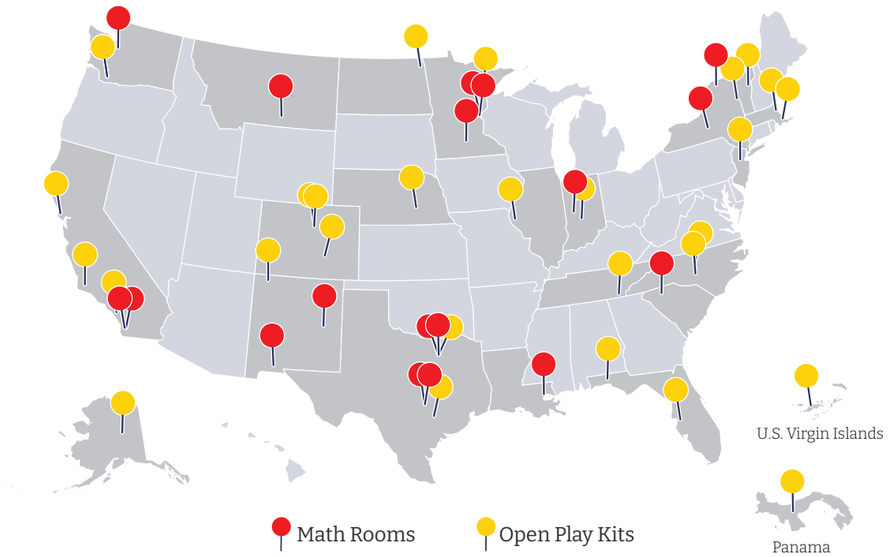
Make-and-Take

We offer many “make-and-take” activities so people can take the math home. The mathematical pendants we design and produce as souvenirs are especially popular. In 2025, MathHappens placed 9,000 of these pendants into the hands of participants through a variety of programs.

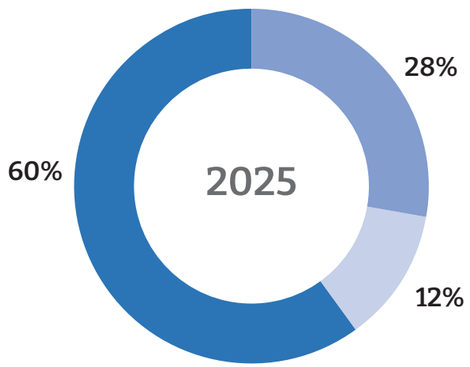


Our Partners

Our Impact



Total Math Rooms and Open Play Kits				
Year End	2022	2023	2024	2025
Math Rooms	1	4	6	18
Open Play Kits	0	0	3	24
Total	1	4	9	42



Math Room and Open Play Kit Locations by City Population	
Year End	2025
Under 100,000 Residents	25
100,000–1,000,000 Residents	12
Over 1,000,000 Residents	5



Seeing students' excitement as they engage with math in new ways and hearing from parents about how these experiences have inspired their children affirm the importance of making math accessible and engaging.

This station is so fun. I could just sit here all day...

This space is more than just a place to explore mathematics—it is a vibrant community hub where children, parents, and educators come together to engage with math in a way that is meaningful, hands-on, and culturally relevant.

It fills a gap of public programming at an expert level for unique content. It also allows our guests to experience a special programming element when our internal program staff is off.



It's awesome up here!

Investment Snapshot

Investments in Math Rooms, Open Play Kits, and the people who bring them to life reflect our ongoing commitment to expanding access to meaningful mathematical experiences and supporting long-term community impact.

MathHappens invested $1.1m across all initiatives in 2025.

Cost to:

$20k

Operate a Math Room per year

$6.5k

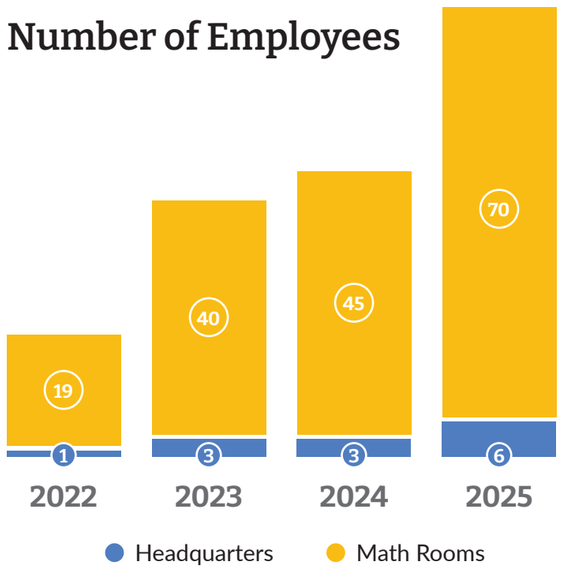
Launch a new Math Room

$555

Create and Distribute an Open Play Kit

Funding: *MathHappens Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation funded by the Lauren and Philip Siegel Family Foundation.*

Powered by People







Looking Ahead to 2026

Commitment to continued expansion and partner support!



Board of Directors

MathHappens Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation funded by the Lauren and Philip Siegel Family Foundation. Our mission is inspired by the values we share for education, opportunity, and mathematics.



Lauren Siegel

Co-Founder, Officer, and Executive Director

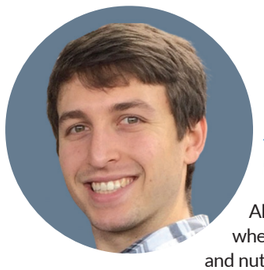
As a teacher, parent, and math enthusiast, Lauren understands the value of mathematics literacy on many levels. Joined by Philip Siegel and their children, she founded MathHappens in 2014 with the goal of increasing opportunities to learn math outside of school. This goal is being realized through staffed programs like the MathHappens Math Rooms and by creating, sourcing, and providing high-quality materials that help other organizations deliver engaging math experiences in their own communities. As Executive Director, Lauren has led the growth of MathHappens to over 50 locations, including museums, libraries, and nature centers across the US. Lauren is a Board Member at the Austin Museum Partnership, a guest lecturer at UT Austin, and the 2020 2nd Place winner of the Rosenthal Prize for Innovation and Inspiration in Math Teaching. Lauren earned a BA in applied mathematics at the University of Chicago and received her teaching credentials from the University of Texas at Austin UTeach Program.



Philip Siegel

Co-Founder and Officer

Philip is a founder and managing partner of Tritium Partners, a $1.5B private equity firm. Over his 25+ years as an entrepreneur and investor in Texas, Philip has been a founder or early investor in several notable success stories, including Newgistics, HomeAway, RetailMeNot, Vida Capital, RVShare, and Giact Systems. He served as a managing partner at Austin Ventures and as a partner and director in the Dallas office of Boston Consulting Group. He was a founder and professor at the Acton School of Business and a professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also the co-founder of CAPTRS, a leading non-profit organization focused on designing games for societal disaster and threat preparedness. Philip is deeply engaged in Jewish philanthropy and civil rights, reflecting his commitment to community and education.



Alexander Siegel

Board Member

Alexander is a graduate of UC Berkeley, where he studied chemistry, toxicology, and nutrition-related sciences. He works in the emerging botanical extraction and regulated-products industry, with experience in plant-based production processes, cultivation methods, and product development. His interests include extraction technologies, processing techniques, and the practical application of chemistry within manufacturing and production environments.



Matthew Siegel

Board Member

Matthew is a geologist with Sage Geological Services in Tucson, Arizona. He earned a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering from Washington University in St. Louis and holds a Professional Master's Degree in mineral exploration from Colorado School of Mines. His background combines engineering and applied geoscience experience with a focus on mineral exploration and the mining industry.

Leadership Team

All members of the MathHappens leadership team install Math Rooms, give direction on major projects, mentor interns and staff, and promote informal learning by attending, speaking, and leading workshops at academic and professional conferences.



Jordan Varat

Director of Operations

Jordan oversees the creation of innovative learning tools and leads major projects, including defining and overseeing the Math Room installation process. At MathHappens, we make many of the models we depend upon to create unique learning environments, and Jordan's expertise with the laser and her ability to bridge technical production with educational delivery are integral to our mission. Jordan holds two undergraduate degrees from TCU, a Bachelor of Science in political science and in fashion merchandising.



Kelli Harrell Miller

Director of Finance

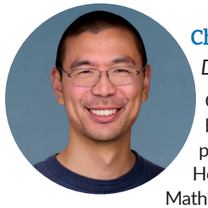
Kelli brings a background in finance, operations, and nonprofit leadership to her work at MathHappens, where she helps guide the organization's financial stewardship, policy development, and organizational infrastructure. With nearly 100 employees working across the country, her experience supports thoughtful policy-making, organizational stability, and scalable financial systems that help sustain the foundation's continued growth and mission. She has served on multiple nonprofit boards and held leadership roles for organizations dedicated to expanding educational access and opportunity. Kelli earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in financial planning from Baylor University.



Melissa Wilkinson

Chief of Staff

Melissa oversees the distribution of models and materials to our partners. Her team ensures that MathHappens supports our direct work in museums and our partners nationwide, including a recent expansion into public libraries. Melissa coordinates interns and staff as needed across our network, develops new projects, and supports events in our local community in Austin. Melissa has an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Science in environmental engineering from Stanford University. She is currently a lecturer in statistics at Concordia University in Austin.



Christopher Nho

Director of Community Partnerships

Chris connects all areas of MathHappens by facilitating collaboration among vendors, partners, employees, and the core team. He meets with leaders of our established Math Rooms, exploring new initiatives, and providing coaching and training. Chris oversees communications and public outreach through newsletters, website, and media work, and public speaking, all of which support the growth of our programs. He joined us with over 10 years of experience in mathematics education. He taught high school mathematics at all levels, served as a mathematics specialist for Chicago Public Schools, and contributed to curriculum development at Desmos. He holds a Bachelor of Science in secondary education–mathematics from Northwestern University.



Elizabeth Wrightsman

Ph.D, Special Projects Coordinator

Elizabeth is a mathematics educator and researcher. As the founding editor of our "Math Puzzle" publication, she has mentored dozens of students, helping them do the research, design work, and editing to communicate a math concept to the public. Elizabeth is an assistant professor of mathematics education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, teaching pre-service math teachers. She has been integral in articulating the educational value of the "play" in our programs. Elizabeth earned a Ph.D. in mathematics education and a Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Texas State University.



Matthew Hertel

Director of Math Room Operations

Matt led our first MathHappens Math Room project in Austin from its inception through development into a model that defines our current program. This work included refining the content and presentation of the math materials, piloting relationships with host institutions, defining responsibilities for staff, and navigating site logistics. Matt supports operations nationwide through inventory system improvements, educator resources, and internal professional development initiatives. He also coordinates operations for two sites in Austin. Matt is a Ph.D. student in STEM education at The University of Texas at Austin, and earned a Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Michigan State University.

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