

The thinking kid's place for fun

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By MYRNA PETLICKI Contributor

Lake County kids deserve a museum of their own. That's what parents and former Mundelein teachers Kathy Goers of Round Lake Beach and Alison Price of Grayslake decided. In November 2003, they did something about it by creating a nonprofit corporation called Busy Brains Children's Museum.

Their goal is for the museum to be housed in a permanent building of its own somewhere in central Lake County by December 2008, but until that happens the two women have been taking the museum on the road in a trailer.



(Dave Shields/For Pioneer Press)

Nathan Dado, 3, of Algonquin, puts together pieces of PVC tubing in the construction area of the Busy Brains Children's Museum visiting the Barrington Area Library in Barrington.



(Dave Shields/For Pioneer Press)

In the construction area of the Busy Brains Children's Museum, visiting the Barrington Area Library, in Barrington, Ella Holtermann, 3, and Tommy Knecht, 5, both of Barrington, put together pieces of PVC tubing.



(Dave Shields/For Pioneer Press)

Michael Mileski (left), 6, and his best friend, Mikey Gryzlo, 5, both of Inverness, explore the wonders of the Tornado Tubes at the Busy Brains Kids Museum visiting the Barrington Area Library in Barrington.

Price, who serves as the museum's president, said she and Goers worried that there weren't many places in the area to take students on field trips. "We were spending a lot of time on the bus, either heading to Chicago or to Milwaukee to do some educational things," she said. "Then, once we retired and became parents, it became even more evident that there's not a lot of educational activities to do in Lake County."

While the two co-founders, board members and supporters are fundraising for the museum, the traveling exhibits serve a couple of purposes. "First, it's to get the word out that there is a children's museum coming to Lake County," Price said. "And also, it's earning a little bit of money."

When the trailer arrives at an event, Goers and Price unload all the exhibits. The pair jokes that on show days they don't need to work out because they get so much exercise loading and unloading the trailer.

It's worth it to the two of them, though, because children are enthusiastic about the exhibits. "We've had anywhere from 12 kids playing on it in a small classroom situation, to about 75 at one time," Price reported.

The traveling exhibits are geared for ages 1-8; the permanent museum's age range will be birth to 10.

Two of the most popular exhibits have been "touring" since the museum's beginning.

One, referred to as the Rock Table, is a train table filled with pea gravel, trucks, stop signs and trees. "The kids surround it," Price said. "They will stand there for hours if you let them, building roads, building mountains, pretending they're construction workers and doing a lot of really good dramatic play. We also get a lot of good teamwork going on around that exhibit because if you're going to build a road it's going to take more than one kid."

The other favorite is the Bernoulli Box. "That one teaches a little bit of the mystery of flight and how airplanes stay afloat in the air," Price said. "That's a simple box with a leaf blower hooked up to it. It funnels the air through pipes coming out of the top. We put ping-pong balls and other play balls on top, and the balls float because of Bernoulli's Principle."

A more recent edition is Geariosity. "It's a giant easel with two sides and the sides are both magnetic," Price said. "Then we have gears that are also magnetic that you stick on there. One is a driver gear. When you push it on it rotates. As it rotates, all the other gears that you hook up to it also start rotating."

Altogether there are 11 exhibits in the traveling show, including one designed to help develop the senses, plus others about gravity and air and water pressure. "The big thing that we're trying to teach is that learning is fun," Price declared. "Any concept -- no matter how difficult it is -- can be broken down in a way that a child can interact and can learn."

BUSY BRAINS CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

10 a.m.-noon, Saturday, Aug. 18, Lake Villa Community Bank, 345 S. Milwaukee Ave.; 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, Aug. 18, Libertyville Bank and Trust, 345 S. Milwaukee Ave.; Noon, Sunday, Aug. 19, Grayslake Summer Days Parade on Center Street; 3 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 29, Grayslake Farmers Market, Center and Slusser streets. E-mail alisonprice@busybrains.org or kathygoers@busybrains.org.