

# Traveling museum features hands-on exhibits for kids

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A series of hands-on exhibits from a traveling children's museum made a visit to the Arlington Heights Memorial Library recently, and one look outside the door proved it was a big draw.

A pileup of strollers parked outside the Hendrickson Room hinted at all the busy play going on inside. Instead of chairs lined up for a concert or presentation, toddlers and small children covered the room, running from one play station to the next.

"This is great, it's all in one place and there's only one door, so I can watch all of them," said Beth Klicker of Arlington Heights, who brought her 2 1/2-year-old triplets and 3 1/2-year-old son.

Sue Brown, also of Arlington Heights, concurred, as she watched her sons, Josh and Zach, put on hard hats to build their creations out of PVC pipes and connectors, before moving to a table where airflow powered balls into the air.

"It's great creative play," Brown said.

In the middle of it all were the two founders of the so-called Busy Brains Children's Museum, Kathy Goers of Round Lake Beach and Alison Price of Grayslake.

Both grew up in the Northwest suburbs - Goers in Mount Prospect and Price in Arlington Heights - and they met while teaching in Mundelein. Together they conceived the idea of establishing a children's museum, closer to home.

"There are lot of young families in Lake County, but very little educational entertainment," Price said.

She pointed to plenty of family pizza restaurants with indoor arcades, but not many destinations with educational components built into them.

"We were looking for ways to promote children playing and learning at the same time," said Goers, a former preschool teacher and mother of three small children. "What's great about all of this is that these children are playing, and they have no idea they're learning."

She and Price, who taught primary grades before having her four children, designed the dozen exhibits to stimulate children's senses.

There's the rock table, where children manipulate dump trucks and construction vehicles, amid small pebbles. While they love all the digging, Goers says, what they don't realize is all the role- playing involved.

The Bernoulli Table, with its pipes blowing air enough to propel balls into the air, is the museum's most popular exhibit. Again, while the balls fascinate children, they really are learning about the mystery of air flight, Goers adds.

Large motor skills are engaged at the construction station, while visual and spatial skills are enhanced at the drawing table, where children do rubbings of animals etched into the table's tiles.

Their newest exhibit, "gearosity" encourages fine motor skills as well as science and reasoning as children try and figure out how to get all the moving gears to work together.

At this point, Busy Brains travels to venues to display its exhibits - including libraries, birthday parties and corporate events - but its founders say they are in discussions with two interested parties, about establishing a permanent site within the next year in Lake County.

"Our idea is to have it totally hands-on and interactive," Price adds. "We don't want to have anything behind glass that you'll be looking at. Instead, it will all be touch and manipulate."

In the meantime, they seek input from parents and educators, and welcome any donations or corporate sponsors.

For information, visit [www.busybrains.org](http://www.busybrains.org).

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