

Children's museum seeks site in central Lake County

July 28, 2008 By RYAN PAGELOW rpagelow@scn1.com

For now, the Busy Brains Children's Museum exists as a traveling exhibit out of a trailer, but two former elementary teachers hope the museum will have a permanent site in central Lake County by the end of 2009.

Busy Brains co-founders Alison Price of Grayslake and Kathy Goers of Round Lake Beach are in talks with a few villages in central Lake County and plan to announce a future site as early as October.

» Click to enlarge image Tristan Sytsma, 2, of Antioch gets ready to play with some gears from the Busy Brains Children's Museum. Michael Schmidt mschmidt@scn1.com

Price and Goers have known each other since they worked together at Lincoln Elementary in Mundelein. Once they moved on to raise their own kids, they realized the closest children's museums were in Chicago and Milwaukee, so they founded Busy Brains in 2003 in an effort to bring a children's educational destination to Lake County.

"We need something close to home in Lake County," said Price, Busy Brains executive director. "We believe strongly in the power of play. Children learn best by doing. We're hoping to provide that perfect environment so they learn while playing, but don't necessarily know their learning."

Busy Brains, a not-for-profit corporation, wants to open a 12,000-square-foot museum for children ages 10 and under.

A referendum for a Lake Villa community recreation center, which would have included a wing for Busy Brains Children's Museum, failed in April 2007.

While Busy Brains is pursuing a permanent site, it's also working on designing future exhibits. Some of the current renderings include a section that would teach the physical sciences such as gravity, momentum, friction and air pressure through slides, air tubes and ball-race tracks.

Another proposed exhibit includes a replica farmers market where children could role play and interact with plastic produce, money and scales. Nutritional information and food pyramids would also be included.

"We want this to be family interaction time," Price said.

Once Busy Brains announces a future site, it will begin a \$3 million capital campaign to fund start up costs as well as to support the museum's first three years of operation.

"We're working on a strategy for it. We're hoping to get our site finalized first. We feel it will be easier to approach donors then," Price said.

Initially, Busy Brains plans to have four to five exhibits and space for a traveling exhibit. The remaining space will be used for a gift shop, restrooms, eating area, office space, small workshop and private rooms for programs, classes and rentals.

For the past three years, Busy Brains has rented out a traveling exhibit at corporate events, parties and festivals. An engineer who sits on the Busy Brains board of directors designed and built most of the objects which are small enough to easily load into a trailer.

Co-founders Price and Goers do most of the set up and take down during the week, while volunteers help on weekends.

"This is just a taste of what we're going to offer," Price said.

For more information, visit www.busybrains.org.