

Busy Brains secures Lake Villa location for children's museum

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LAKE VILLA – Retirement for two former Mundelein elementary school teachers was cut short when they partnered to establish Busy Brains, a traveling children's museum, more than 10 years ago.

Kathy Goers and Alison Price are now busier than ever, having secured a permanent location for Busy Brains at 130 Cedar Ave., Lake Villa. Construction is underway for the first phase of children's exhibits, set to open in late 2016, which will feature 10,000-square-feet of hands-on play space.

Goers, education director, estimates Busy Brains served more than 1,000 children in the Lake County area last year by bringing traveling exhibits to birthday parties, schools, local festivals and more.

"Summer has always been extremely busy for us, which is great," she said.

When asked which permanent exhibits she and Price have planned for the Lake Villa location, Goers said everything will be "very specific to the Lake County area."

There will be a "Body Journey" exhibit where children are able to walk through what looks like a real, human body – entering through the mouth and learning about the brain, spine, lungs and heart, Goers said.

In addition, a farmers market exhibit will allow children to role play a real-life situation where they plant, farm, sell produce and serve a meal "farm-to-table-style," Goers said. She also said there will be water tables set up like the Chain O'Lakes to teach children how objects sink and float.

A birthday party room has been sponsored by Lovin Oven Cakery of Libertyville. Once Busy Brains raises enough money, phase two of construction will tack on another 6,000-square-feet of finished space on to the museum by 2019.

Goers, a Lake Villamother of three boys between the ages of 10 and 14, continues to work part-time as a reading specialist in Round Lake Community Unit School District 116.

Price, executive director, also has four children of her own – three boys and a girl, all between the ages of 11 and 16. The Grayslake resident said her and Goers realized during their teaching careers there weren't enough field trip destinations in Lake County for parents and school groups alike.

"When you have toddlers, a two-hour drive to a museum in a car is not the best idea," Price said.

That's how the idea for Busy Brains came about.

The now-permanent facility, a vacant car dealership building, was donated to the nonprofit organization two years ago. The group has since been fundraising to cover construction costs.

Even though Busy Brains has found its home, Price assures fans that traveling exhibits aren't going anywhere fast.

"We've had great success with our traveling exhibits and hope to continue to offer a number of public events throughout the year," Price said.

Aligned with the common core standards of public schools, Busy Brains is intended for children up to 10 years of age – starting as young as birth, Price said.

About 25 volunteers currently serve Busy Brains and the group is looking to hire several people full- and part-time. Museum membership packages will be available in addition to daily rates "much lower than any other family options in the area," Goers said.

Visit www.busybrains.org for more information.