

“The Children’s Museum Stands on Community Shoulders” by Marlene B. Brown, July 25, 2009

A comment by Ben Stein in the *NY Times* read: "We are more than our investments. We are what we do for charity and our community". Which raises the question, how do children's museums survive in a difficult economy? When updating Future Visions, museums look at ways to earn the trust of the community who gives of their time, talents, funds- developing relationships to form collaborative opportunities.

It means conducting visitor surveys, readjusting hours open, asking for letters of appreciation, and support from elected officials. It means being proud of histories. Organized in October of 1963 by the Junior League, and permanently chartered by the Board of Regents of New York State, The Children's Museum of History, Science & Technology boosts 4 floors of interactive exhibits which provide an enjoyable educational experience for kids from 1 to 101 to learn, experience, create. Constructed at the turn of the century, the five story brick building’s Romanesque Revival exterior remains imposing, and the charm of the period remains inside with its decoratively paneled central oak staircase, fourteen foot high ceiling sheathed in fancy pressed tin, and loft windows. As we renovate, we keep the historic look.

It means being unique in how museum’s serve diverse communities. What do we offer? *1st Floor:* life size Wooden Train, Interactive Robot, Exploration Station; Playspace, Restrooms with Changing Tables, Eating area; *2nd Floor:* PlayDance Floor, Iroquois Longhouse, Interactive Dinorama & Fossil Center, Interactive History Diorama; *3rd Floor:* Touchscreen exhibits, Living Science Center; Lionel & Thomas Train Centers, Weather Station, Int’l Halls of Fame: BRCK; *4th Floor:* Lunar Lander, Mars Rover, Columbia Shuttle, Hot Wheels Hall, Interactive Science / Space Scale /Flight Timeline exhibits, a real Airplane to take a ride in.

It means continuing to improve their building aesthetics. What have we done? In 2002 we opened the fourth floor and were adopted by NASA and the Office of Science. In 2003, we installed new Heating/Air Conditioning and became headquarters for the Int’l Halls of Fame. In 2004, we installed a new oak front door and entranceway. In 2005, we installed new energy-efficient windows. In 2006 we started our commemorative brick sidewalk. In 2007 our building was declared a NYS & Federal historic building.

Why is this important? Cathy Jimenez, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, said “the museum is a great example of adaptive reuse of a building, balancing historic preservation with economic development.” Constructed in the 1890’s, our five story brick building’s Romanesque Revival exterior remains imposing, the period’s charm inside features a decoratively paneled central oak staircase, fourteen foot high ceilings sheathed in fancy pressed tin, and loft windows.

It means continuing to add new exhibits. In 2008, we installed new energy efficient lighting and new roof signs. In 2009, we installed an LED interactive Play Dance Floor and two TouchScreen history exhibits, and an interactive Lionel Train Table. In 2010-2011, we plan to finish our Surround Sound Theatre, add bathrooms on the 3rd floor, install an LEED green roof, build an eco-system, and a 5th floor planetarium.

It means being as affordable as possible. Our admission fees are comparable with other local family offerings, even though we currently receive no outside operations funding, as the original founders never expected their vision to grow as it has! Our group rates and membership offerings are a worthy best bang for the buck. Year-round we offer different activities commensurate with that season of the year. Planning is already underway for our November Holiday Gala/Festival of Trees extravaganza.

Thus the importance of our Children’s Museum, and all children’s museums, building on the shoulders of those who’ve gone before, inviting others to join as they move into the future. As a valuable Community Treasure, we will keep providing excellent resources of value to the tourism efforts and the quality of life for the residents of the Mohawk Valley, Central NYS and beyond. That means not just surviving, but thriving, even in difficult times. Come be a part of it. You will be proud of your investment in our children.

– Marlene B. Brown, Children’s Museum Executive Director www.museum4kids.net

- The Board of Directors: Michael Pilawa, John Stephenson, Matt Chmielewski, John Nogas, Dr. Joanne Palumbo-Mozloom, Ed Waszkiewicz, Brad Zacek. CPA – Vincent Gilroy Jr.

Children's Museum

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