

# Museum gives kids taste of traveling through space

Floor of Children's Museum a haven for future explorers

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**UTICA --** As NASA counted down to this afternoon's expected launch of Discovery, kids got their own taste of space at the Children's Museum on Tuesday.

The fourth floor of the museum is a haven for lovers of space. Video clips of NASA's space exploration run constantly, posters and newspaper clippings of historic launchings adorn the walls, and scaled-down models of space equipment spot the room.

Interest in today's anticipated launch generated increased traffic in the museum recently, Executive Director Marlene Brown said.

"People love our space exhibit," Brown said. "Sometimes people come in and just want to see the fourth floor."

Verdi Riversong of Utica came to the museum as part of his fifth birthday celebration. In between taking a "ride" in the museum's airplane and looking at a model of the solar system, Verdi checked out the spacecraft models in the NASA exhibit.

"I like lots of things that go fast," he said. "Spaceships go fast and there's fire at the rockets."

Since December 2002, the museum has benefited from its adoption by NASA and the Department of Energy's Office of Science. The two organizations regularly provide unique, interactive exhibits that stimulate children's interest and help quench their curiosity about space.

Recently, NASA set up a trailer outside the museum to supplement the space exhibits inside. The trailer was meant to give visitors an inside look at what it felt like to travel through space.

"That brought in a lot of people and we were really happy we got it," Brown said. "It only went into 20 cities and for us to be one of them is great for the community."

Brown said one of the most important aspects of the exhibit is helping children understand the connections between space and their every day life. To further that lesson, Brown teaches children that going into space is just another type of exploring, just like hiking, looking through an attic, or taking a plane ride.

"We are a nation of explorers," Brown said. "We came to this country to explore. Kids are amazing. They love exploring."

For Carly Cabral, 4, of New Hartford, getting the chance to do some hands-on exploring of her own made her visit to the Children's Museum enjoyable. Apart from dressing up in police officer and firefighter gear, the airplane in the Space Science Program was Carly's favorite part, she said.

"I got to go in the airplane," she said. "I got to check out the stuff. It was good."

Parents gave the exhibit a thumbs-up, as well. Carly's mother, Debbie, said the museum has made big strides in recent years, in part due to the addition of the space exhibit.

"I think it was interesting," she said. "I haven't been here in a few years and they really added a lot."

To finish out kids' visit to the space exhibit, Brown likes to push their imagination one step further and point out that they might have the same experiences as the astronauts one day.

"It will be very common for kids ten and under to go into space, to visit the International Space Station, even to live in space," Brown said.



TREVOR KAPRALOS / Observer-Dispatch

Peter Furgal, 4, plays with a shuttle toy while touring the NASA exhibit at the Children's Museum Tuesday morning in Utica. Furgal, of Coram, was visiting his grandfather Ted Furgal in Whitesboro. Peter's father, Whitesboro native Thomas Furgal, is a commercial pilot.