

**1999 Metropolitan Life Foundation and Association of Youth Museums
Promising Practice Award Applicants**

Summaries of Promising Practices in U.S. Children's Museums

Listed below are summaries of promising practices in U.S. Children's museums submitted for the 1999 Metropolitan Life Foundation and Association of Youth Museums Promising Practice Award. The award honors innovative management and programming practices among U.S. children's museums. The 1999 *Promising Practice Award* emphasized **model practices in the area of early childhood learning for children ages birth to three**. The summaries are taken from applicants' written submissions. For more information on the promising practices described below, please contact the museums directly. For information on Metropolitan Life Foundation and Association of Youth Museums Promising Practice Award, contact Association of Youth Museums, 1300 L Street, NW, Suite 975, Washington, DC 20005 Tel. 202/898-1080, Fax 202/898-1086.

1. **Betty Brinn Children's Museum**
929 East Wisconsin Avenue FL 2
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Tel. 414-291-0888 ext 214
Fax 414-291-0906
Email fshup@execpc.org

Tot Time – Betty Brinn Children's Museum's *Tot Time* program teaches adults how to stimulate a young child's development through listening, movement, hands-on activities, and arts experiences. In addition to learning about the importance of early learning and the museum as an educational resource, participants explore strategies on child development with support from professional staff. To ensure accessibility for all families, *Tot Time* is offered several times each week both at the museum and off-site, including Saturdays to enable participation by working parents. *Tot Time* offers a consistent format in a safe environment with professional staff support. All activities are age appropriate based on established child development guidelines.

2. **Chesapeake Children's Museum**
2331 D Forest Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

Tel. 410-266-0677
Fax 410-266-7790
Email ccm@toad.net

The Rainbow – The *Rainbow* is a developmental tool designed to guide parents and other adults (caregivers, teachers) in the age-appropriate value of exhibit areas and their corresponding activities. The *Rainbow* itself is a picture of a rainbow mounted on the wall of the exhibit area. Each color band is labeled for an age group. For example, Purple is "Babes in Arms," 0-6 months; Blue is "Crawlers," 6-12 months; Green is "Toddlers," 1-2 years; Yellow is "Preschoolers," 3-5 years; Orange is "Elementary," 6-9 years; and Red is "Big Kids," 9 years and up. The matching colors of the rainbow point to age appropriate activities.

3. **Chicago Children's Museum**
700 East Grand Avenue Suite 127
Chicago, IL 60611

Tel. 312-464-7667
Fax 312-464-7731
Email www.ellenbchichildrensmuseum.org

Seuss! Mobile – To encourage young children to read, Chicago Children's Museum, in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and a local corporation, developed a multi-dimensional outreach initiative that is impacting schools and families throughout Chicago. The *Seuss! Mobile* combines original performances with curriculum, learn-to-read classroom libraries and take-home materials. A retrofitted Peoples Energy van has been transformed into the *Seuss! Mobile* that brings a troupe of performers to 234 elementary schools. The theatrical performances are based on a combination of Seuss' Beginner Readers series and his other books. Hands-on interactive educational materials are provided to teachers. The initiative is reaching all K-2 students and their families in (CPS) classrooms and is serving as a catalyst to celebrate reading in innovative ways.

4. **Children’s Discovery Museum of Central Illinois**
716 E. Empire
Bloomington, IL 61701

Tel. 309-829-6222
Fax N/A
Email N/A

Museum Mission – Children’s Discovery Museum of Central Illinois’ promising practice is grounded in its mission to promote “the love of learning” and the attitude that “learning is fun.” The museum staff uses a process of critical thinking, empowerment and ownership strategies, creative hands-on problem solving, open communication and teamwork to achieve their mission. The result is a variety of hands-on interactive exhibits, educational classes, workshops, family fun activities, and community partnerships that motivate learning and encourage interactive educational experiences for its visitors.

5. **Children’s Museum of Kansas City**
4601 State Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66102

Tel. 913-287-8888
Fax 913-287-8332
Email N/A

A Tree and Me – The Children’s Museum of Kansas City’s preschool exhibit, *A Tree and Me*, is a special treehouse designed to allow young children an innovative place to learn and use their imagination. *A Tree and Me* stimulates young children’s imaginations by encouraging them to build a bird nest, be a bird or a squirrel, or lie in a nest reading books. Children exercise their creativity by building with real tree-branches and blocks. They develop gross and fine motor skills by walking the balance beam tree branches. They role play by wearing bird costumes and building a nest. This artistically enriching environment encourages thoughtful consideration of nature and problem solving. Training is available for teachers of preschoolers for a special *Storytime Plus Program*. The program involves ten stories and story-related learning opportunities along with dance, pre-math activities, etc.

6. **Discovery Creek Children’s Museum of Washington**
5125 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 10
Washington, DC 20016

Tel. 202-364-3111
Fax 202-364-3114
Email N/A

Eco-Explorers – The exhibition, *Eco-Explorers*, is Discovery Creek Children’s Museum of Washington’s promising practice. The exhibition provides immersion experiences for children. A series of exhibitions that recreate different ecosystems brings the outdoors inside within the walls of an 800 square foot exhibition space. By introducing live animals, plants, tons of soil, and water the museum inspires a sense of adventure and fosters the excitement of discovering unfamiliar lands to thousands of children annually.

7. **Lied Discovery Children’s Museum ***
833 Las Vegas Blvd. North
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Tel. 702-382-3445
Fax 702-382-0592
Email ldcm@sprintmail.com

Early Childhood Initiative – Lied Discovery Children’s Museum’s *Early Childhood Initiative* provides extensive educational experiences, resources, and services for children five years and younger and their caregivers. This Initiative, in particular the way it was designed and developed and the museum’s approach to it, is the museum’s promising practice. The focus and commitment of resources integral to the initiative, and momentum created by it, provide opportunities for museum staff to research, plan, experiment, communicate with its audience, evaluate, and revise to an extent not usually possible. The *Early Childhood Initiative* grew out of the community’s need for quality parent/child support activities and gathering places for very young children and their families. The initiative includes daily public programming; partnerships with community agencies, preschools and daycare centers; and a parent resource room. The museum’s belief in the value of early childhood education is represented in a systematic, museum-wide philosophy that pervades every aspect of the museum’s practices.

8. **Madison Children's Museum ****
100 State Street
Madison, WI 53703

Tel. 608-256-6445
Fax 608-256-0234
Email mcmex@terracom.net

First Feats – *First Feats*, Madison Children's Museum's early childhood environment is made of natural, non-toxic materials. The space contains a myriad of ramps, nooks, crawl through spaces, climbing structures, level changes, and developmentally appropriate activities all created with material of the earth: wood, natural fibers, stones, straw, mud, water, natural pigments, etc. The space is devoid of plexiglass, vinyl, plastics, laminates, foam, sintra, polyurethane, plywood, synthetic flooring and other toxins. This alternative approach to design offers an environment and educational experience for children and parents that celebrates the natural world and children's natural attraction to it.

9. **Miami Children's Museum**
8603 South Dixie Highway Suite 205
Miami, FL 33143

Tel. 305-663-8800 ext. 111
Fax 305-663-8878
Email mcmuseum@aol.com

Early Childhood Institutes – Miami Children's Museum's promising practice is its satellite Early Childhood Institutes project in which intimate spaces and dynamic programming are structured to work synergistically. Utilizing a thematic approach, parents and children learn and play together via the arts and sciences, applying lessons which are open-ended, experiential and process driven. Themes are orchestrated to allow activities to stay unique, exciting, and current and children and parents have the opportunity to work on skills that foster a child's strong self-concept.

10. **Please Touch Museum**
210 North 21st Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Tel. 215-963-0667
Fax 215-963-0424
Email PLEASTCH@LIBERTYNET.ORG

IMPACT – Please Touch Museum serves young children and families in the Philadelphia region with programs and exhibits designed to create learning opportunities through play. Over the past decade the museum has developed **IMPACT (Innovative Models for Parents, At-Risk Children and Teachers)**, a collection of community service programs that model appropriate adult-child interaction for parents and teachers, and engage children in stimulating, developmentally appropriate play, both on-site and off-site. By emphasizing parenting skills and positive adult/child interaction, the museum has had a profound and enduring impact on the local community.

11. **Santa Fe Children's Museum**
1050 Old Pecos Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Tel. 505-989-8359
Fax 505-989-7506
Email children@trail.com

Los Amigos Summer Day Camp – The Santa Fe Children's Museum, the local public school system, and funders have combined resources to meet a community need for quality summer programming. *Los Amigos Summer Day Camp* is a free, full-day program providing exciting, developmentally appropriate adventures in science, the arts, horticulture, and cooking for 100 underserved five-, six-, and seven-year-olds.

12. **Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum**
321 Town Center West
Santa Maria, CA 93458

Tel. 805-928-8414
Fax 805-928-8414
Email N/A

Collaboration – Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum's early learning promising practice focuses on collaboration. The museum strives to find common ground with Early Childhood groups and professionals to further the missions of all involved. The museum has sponsored workshops and concerts with the local community through the Association for the Education of Young Children. The local college's early childhood studies program uses the facility in instruction. The county Children's Resource and Referral Program uses the facility to train child care providers, and

organizations serving under resourced groups use the facility free with their clients through funding from the local chapter of Altrusa International.

13. **The Children's Museum**
3112 Fire Road
Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234

Tel. 609-645-7741
Fax 609-645-7791
Email lindaszypula@po.altnet.org

Visitor Interaction – The Children's Museum in Egg Harbor Township's promising practice is its commitment to providing personal contact to each and every visitor entering the museum, and this personal contact continues throughout the entire visit. The museum's interaction with its visitors fosters parent-child interaction and discussion both at the museum and in the home.

14. **The Children's Museum of Acadiana, Inc.**
201 East Congress Street
LaFayette, LA 70501

Tel. 318-232-8136
Fax 318-232-8167
Email N/A

Pre-K Curriculum Connectors – The Children's Museum of Acadiana offers an early learning program called *Pre-K Curriculum Connectors*. The main focus of the program is the implementation of a curriculum-based guidebook for preschool teachers. The guidebooks give teachers a description of museum exhibits and activities, suggested classroom activities, and lists of the developmentally appropriate skills involved in all of these activities. 250 copies of the book have been published for distribution to pre-school teachers in the Acadiana area. Other promising practices include teacher and parent workshops on developmentally appropriate practices and an exhibit area designed specifically for early learners.

15. **The Children's Museum of Indianapolis**
P.O. Box 3000
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Tel. 317-921-4019
Fax 317-921-4019
Email anneh@childrensmuseum.org

Early Learning Environments and Gallery – In recognition that the early years are crucial to development and that young children learn best through play, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis provides a play-based learning environment for infants through age six. The museum offers an early childhood gallery, preschool classes, school group programs, and parenting resources to nurture love of learning using a wide variety of rich learning experiences.

16. **The Kidzeum**
22135 Hwy 8 East
Grenada, MS 38901

Tel. 601-226-8900
Fax 601-227-4497
Email kidzeum@dixie-net.com

School-Based Children's Museum – Located in the small, rural community of Grenada, Mississippi, Grenada Elementary School houses the first full-scale, school-based children's museum in the South, The Kidzeum. The school serves approximately 2000 students in kindergarten through third grade. For one hour every three weeks, each class interactively learns in one of the museum's four rotating, yearly exhibits. Funding for The Kidzeum comes from the school district, grants, and partnerships with business and industry.

17. **The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum**
516 South Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122

Tel. 314-822-8900
Fax 314-822-8930
Email amy@magichouse.org

Math Path – In 1998, to complement a new math exhibit area, The Magic House embarked upon a four-year educational program to positively impact math education in early childhood classrooms at ten elementary inner-city schools. Through *Math Path*, The Magic House began a special collaborative relationship with the St. Louis Public

Schools that involves engaging teachers, parents, and students in an exploration of math concepts for pre-kindergarten through second grade.

18. **The Pittsburgh Children's Museum ****
10 Children's Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Tel. 412-322-5059
Fax 412-322-4932
Email werrut5@aol.com

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Traveling Exhibit – The Pittsburgh Children's Museum's promising practice focuses on the design, development, production, and educational program of the traveling exhibit *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: A Hands-On Exhibit*. Every step of the design, development and production of the traveling exhibit was carefully crafted by a team of experts on early childhood education. The exhibit focuses not on the popularity of this well know television show but the *philosophy* of the show and its message about the importance of play in learning and of caring adults in children's lives. The program is a promising practice for collaborations and partnerships with experts in the area of early learning and for its value, both educationally and economically as a traveling exhibit.

19. **Treehouse Children's Museum**
2255 B. Ogden City Mall
Ogden, UT 84401

Tel. 801-3949663
Fax 801-393-6820
Email treehouse@relia.net

Museum Focus on Language – Every program and exhibit at Treehouse Children's Museum focuses on one theme: language learning. More than 300 parents and preschoolers join the museum weekly for the *Toddler Time* and *Alphabet Soup* programs that offer a variety of language and pre-reading activities. Families participate in *Side by Side*, learning to share values through children's literature. In addition, language learning, guided by adult questions, is researched and shared with parents through a partnership with Weber State University.

*** Recipient, 1999 Metropolitan Life Foundation and Association of Youth Museums Promising Practice Award**
**** Honorable Mention, 1999 Metropolitan Life Foundation and Association of Youth Museums Promising Practice Award**