

Universal Design Facility

Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago
Glenview, IL

(2007 Award Recipient)

Jennifer Oatess
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At Kohl Children's Museum, there are no wheelchair ramps, handicapped entrances or special stations or exhibits for children with special needs. Yet the museum has created an environment that caters to all its visitors equally, no matter the child, so that all can learn to grow. Using universal design allows the museum to accommodate guests with physical, visual, auditory, sensory and cognitive challenges without calling attention to guests with special needs. A key element across all museum and exhibit design concepts is creative sensory stimulation. For example, in the exhibit "All About Me," young children learn about and their own physical abilities in a non-comparison manner. Activities for children include pinpression formations and using switch-activated cameras to see their body from all angles — from the top of their head to the soles of their shoes or the rubber from their wheel chairs. The museum worked with the Center for Creative Play to assess its ability to serve children with disabilities.

Community Access Network

DuPage Children's Museum
Naperville, IL

(2007 Award Recipient)

Sue Broad
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In 1992, DuPage Children's Museum launched its Community Access Network Initiative, which now includes formal partnerships with 50 social service agencies, through 75 different programs, for families living in poverty, recent immigrants, children with physical and other disabilities, children living in residential treatment programs and those who have been designated as at risk of abuse or neglect. Additionally, the museum offers a Third Thursday program for families of children with autism as a way of helping these families to feel more comfortable visiting the museum and as a vehicle to help other families understand the unique challenges and joys of raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Accessible Art Works

Connecticut Children's Museum
New Haven, CT

(2007 Award Recipient)

Sandra Malmquist
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Created based on the principle that art and artists should be accessible to all children. Local artists, some with disabilities, some without, come to the museum to read children's picture books and to perform the book in their own particular artistic genre. An American Sign Language interpreter signs the book and a Braille copy of the book is available. (More than 200 of the museum's collection of picture books are Brailled). Following the book reading, children then are given opportunities to explore the ideas and themes presented in the story. For example, after reading a Tommy dePaola's book *Charlie Needs a Cloak*, children watch museum staff act out the story with authentic props-carding the wool shorn from a life-size sheep and spinning it onto the spool. Later the children are given a small loom and loops with which to work their own weaving magic.

Easter Seals and Museum Partnership

The Children's Museum of Oak Lawn
Oak Lawn, IL

Adam Woodworth
708-423-6709

The Children's Museum of Oak Lawn has established partnerships with Easter Seals and Elim Christian School, a school for children with disabilities, to create an inclusive environment in that all children are able to explore and soar with their newfound knowledge.

Seeking Universal Design

Nevada Discovery Museum
Reno, NV

Vicki Ferrari Ganser
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The Nevada Discovery Museum is seeking funding to research and design a paradigm that will allow the museum to integrate children with disabilities into our mainstream programming effort. The museum's goal is to create programs from the ground level that will enrich the education of all the regions local children.

Building a Welcoming Museum

World of Wonder Children's Museum
Lafayette, CO

Lisa Atallah
303-604-2424

World of Wonder Children's Museum seeks to educate, entertain and encourage children to explore the world through interactive exhibits in art, science and everyday living. The museum will further strive to bring the world and its many wonders to the Hannibal area, while complementing the existing cultural attractions and educational opportunities.

Now You're in Their World Guide

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
Indianapolis, IN

Jennifer Robinson
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The Children's Museum of Indianapolis proposes to develop a Universal Exhibit Development and Design handbook in conjunction with Greg Fehribach, an accessibility consultant to museums, which could be shared with others. The museum will feature its well-received "Dinosphere: Now You're in Their World" exhibit, as a case study in the book. "Dinosphere" is a fully-accessible, Universal Designed exhibit and environment for children and families of all abilities. The book will provide chapters about design considerations, creating institutional guidelines and policies, testing with persons with disabilities and professional development and practices for staff.

Connor's Friends: An Evening for Children with Autism

Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Grand Rapids, MI

Teresa Thome
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In striving to create an accessible environment for all children, the Grand Rapids Children's Museum has partnered with area organizations and individuals serving children with autism to create Connor's Friends: An Evening for Children with Autism. This free program provides appropriately planned sensory-integrated surroundings for autistic children to explore.

Serving Children with Special Needs

Brooklyn Children's Museum
Brooklyn, NY

Carol Enseki
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As the Brooklyn Children's Museum completes a facility expansion that will double its size and capacity, the museum is renewing its commitment to increasing the accessibility of new programs and exhibits for children with physical disabilities and those who have visual, hearing or cognitive/language challenges.

Face to Face: Dealing with Prejudice and Discrimination

Kidsbridge Children's Museum
Trenton, NJ

Lynne Azarchi
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In March, 2006, Kidsbridge created a mini-museum on campus at The College of New Jersey, a highly accredited college. The mini-museum features the exhibit "Face to Face: Dealing with Prejudice and Discrimination." Curriculum includes education and empathy/sensitivity training for cognitive and physical disabilities using art and other media. This model can be replicated by partnering with an educational institution.