



A quarterly publication of the Association of Children's Museums

Mr. Farrell's Pickle Video

Peter Kisilik, Visitor Services Manager, Miami Children's Museum

This article first appeared in the Winter 2006 Volume 20 Number 4 issue, "Keeping It Real: Stories from the Floor." © Association of Children's Museums. All rights reserved. Mary Maher is the *Hand to Hand* editor; MMaher2049@aol.com.

One of the most effective customer training videos that used at the Miami Children's Museum is the pickle video. In it the CEO of Farrell's restaurant chain, Mr. Farrell himself, describes his epiphany after receiving an angry letter from a customer. As standard operating procedure, Farrell's put pickles on the table for every customer. One loyal customer, who loved his pickles, asked for some more only to hear the waitress answer that there would be a side order charge of seventy-five cents for more pickles. He wrote a letter to Mr. Farrell stating that if this was the way he ran his restaurant then he would take his business elsewhere. Reading the letter, Mr. Farrell realized the secret, *just give him the pickles!* Our customers are our bosses and their repeat business is much more valuable than the price of a pickle.

What are the pickles children's museums offer, and what should we give away to make our customers happy?

Most children's museums have some kind of store exhibit, and everyone knows the issue of "restocking." On a busy day things fly off the shelves faster than you can put them back. Of our two types of shopping containers, hand-held baskets and mini shopping carts, the most beloved are those shopping carts. Unfortunately four industrious children can quickly put all of the stock in their carts, leaving the store looking like the bottled water aisle before a hurricane in Florida. To combat this, we have put false Plexiglas bottoms in the carts, effectively halving the total volume of the baskets. This works to a degree, but during peak crunch hours we still have to put the carts away and children can only use the hand-held baskets until the numbers have dropped. Ideally we would like to have all the shopping carts out all of the time, but sometimes they can actually limit the number of children who can play at shopping.

One day, a parent who wanted all four of her children to have carts. The museum educator pointed out that plenty of baskets were available but the parent insisted on having carts. Knowing that this would mean an all-hands-on-deck call to restock items on the food shelves the museum educator said, "Of course we can get the carts out for you." She realized that for this customer *the carts were the pickle!* No matter how much extra effort it would entail, it was worth it. On this day with this mom, this was a pickle we could easily give.