DIY Exhibit Design

for Tight Budgets

Presenters:

**Collette Michaud**  
Founder & CEO  
Children’s Museum of Sonoma County, California  
collette@cmosc.org

**Kara Mackey**  
General Manager  
Bellaboo’s Play and Discovery Center, Indiana  
karam@lakecountyparks.com

**Matt Niland**  
Maker in Residence  
Kidcity Children’s Museum, Connecticut  
maker@kidcitymuseum.com
• Overview & Goal
Empower small and midsize Museums to design and build exhibits.

• Key Principles
  - Serve a PLAYpose
  - Fun + SmART
  - SustainABLE

• Questions and Brainstorm
Serve a PLAYpose
Kara Mackey
General Manager
Lake County
Indiana (488,000)
23,000 sq ft + 120 acres
$800,000/#80,000
mybellaboos.com
Where?

Why?

How?
WHY?

Build a new exhibit
Serve a PLAYpose
WHERE?

Best places for a new exhibit
Serve a PLAYpose
Serve a **PLAYpose**

DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets
Go Outside & PLAY!

Where there’s a will there’s a WAY!

Serve a PLAYpose

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Serve a PLAYpose
Serve a **PLAY**pose
Serve a PLAYpose

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Serve a PLAYpose
HOW?

Are we going to do it?!?
Serve a **PLAY**ose

DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets
Today we read in the tub.
Serve a PLAYpose for Tight Budgets
DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets

Matt Niland
Maker in Residence
110,000 visitors a year
80% are age 5 and younger 1% are groups
13,500 square feet (9000 exhibit space)
Almost 100% earned income
Kidcity is exhibit based - no programs, not many groups, no birthday parties, no cafe, no gift store. What?
Parenting doesn’t have to be hard all the time
Give parents everything they need for a good day
Let's Party!

For: 
Date: 
Time: 
Chuck E. Cheese's Address: 
RSVP to: 

Your party host will provide pizza, drinks, and _____ FREE TOKENS for two hours of FUN.

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Conceptualize, Design, Build Yourself
we ♥ Kidcity
Collette Michaud
CEO & Founder
Children’s Museum of Sonoma County
Santa Rosa, CA

Demographics
500,000
multiple cities in rural setting

Size
42,000 sq ft
(indoor and outdoor)

Annual Budget
$1.5M

Number of Annual Visitors
150,000
• Vision

• Reflect local area

• Story
DIY Exhibit Design
for Tight Budgets
Serve a **PLAY**pose

DIY Exhibit Design
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Children's Museum of Sonoma County
Interior Exhibit ideas

Narrative – Exploring our world

Central Character - Museum on the Go Robot

Style: Playful, Steam punk, gadgets

Air Gallery:
- Bernoulli Blowers
- Large scale Hopper Popper
- Wind tubes
- Wind Wall/air cannon
- Hot Air balloon

Bubbles:
- Stand inside a bubble
- Bubble tables

Science Gallery:
- Physical science
- Magnet table
- Electricity
- Life science – telescopes

Changing Gallery:
- “How things work” animation, heart, body
- Ramps and Railways
- Building forts
- Space
- Health
- Exploratorium

Sonoma History
- Agriculture
- Water
- Redwood forests
- Apples, orchards
- Wine, grapes

Art Room
- Recycle/Reuse Gallery
- painting

Ocean/fishing/water
- Light house
- Telescope
- Fishing boat
- Clouds and scenery
- Pulley’s
- Sonoma Coast Touch Tank
- Ghost Crab/Sand crab tunnels

Front Entryway:
- Ned Kahn interactive sculpture/fountain
- Michael McGinnis’s Perplexus

Outdoors Exhibit Ideas

Simple Varied Natural Areas:
- Grassy hillocks
- Tall grasses/bamboo
- Willow house/path/tunnel
- Fort building materials
- Wet area with stepping-stones
- Grapevine maze?
- Wild flowers
- Birdhouses everywhere
- A worm farm and crawl through area
- Dirt digging area
- Tractor tire for climbing
- Tire swings
- Trees?
- Tree stumps for climbing
- Evaporating Art Pieces using slate

Fabricated:
- Shade Structure
- Large rock sculpture/stone stacking
- Sand or gravel area
- Garden boxes
- Fort/tree house
- Tunnel
- Zip line
- Climbing structure/Luckey Climber/ Rope spider web climber
- Fog garden – Ned
- Trail made of different path materials
- Brick/stone path with donor names engraved
- Gate designed by Ms. Eames

Water
- Shallow creek/waterfall
- Water cycle/play area
- Water wall

Fence:
- Grapevines growing along fence
- Simple post and hogwire
- Shrubs
- Plant a flower/donor opportunity
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Mary's Garden

Featured Programs
- Metamorphosis
- Buglandia!
- Pollination
- Nature at Work
- Nature's Three R's
- Not Developed:
  - Trees
  - Food Chain
  - The Nature of Art

Permanent Exhibits and Features
- Giant caterpillar
- Giant butterfly wings
- Giant pupa
- Native Habitat Garden
- WaterPlay Areas and creek bed
- Interactive Simple Machines
- Renewable Energy
- Simulated Ant Tunnels
- Sand, Soil and Gravel Play
- Tree Fort/Bird House
- Raised Planting Gardens
- Composting
- Water Reclamation

Daily Activities
- Watering garden
- Workshops
- Outdoor Theater productions

Garden Steward Programs
- Earn Your Wings
- Planting Seeds and Trees
- Composting and Recycling
- Wildlife Safari

Seasonal Activities/Celebrations
- The Great Backyard Bird Count
- Winter Celebration
- The Great Pumpkin Patch
Serve a PLAYpose

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Collette Michaud
Founder & CEO
Children's Museum of Sonoma County, California
Serve a PLAYpose

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Serve a PLAYpose
Serve a PLAYpose
Fun + SmART

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Fun + SmART

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Matt Niland
Maker in Residence
You know your audience better than this guy
Check the handout for ideas on where to find weird people to help you build crazy stuff.
Collette Michaud
CEO & Founder
• Do your own concept drawings

• Prototype

• Get real, Don’t reinvent the wheel

• Loop the action
Fun + SmART

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Fun + SmART
Kara Mackey
General Manager
PLAY before work
WORK for better play
ARTstanding Design
PLAY before Work

Life is more fun that way
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Fun + SmART

DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets
WORK for Better Play

“It’s amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t care who gets the credit.”
Fun + SmART

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Fun + SmART DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets
Fun + SmART

DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets
Collette Michaud
CEO & Founder
- Work with local trades, craftsmen, artists

- Serendipity!

- Budget, Sponsorships & Maintenance
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SustainABLE
DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets

SustainABLE
Exhibit sponsorship calculation:

\[
\text{construction cost} + \text{square feet cost (\# x $)} + \text{pizazz cost*} = \text{Total sponsorship cost of exhibit}
\]

*Pizazz covers all the things no one wants to sponsor!
- Infrastructure
- Maintenance
- Programming
Exhibit cost = construction $ + (total sq.ft x $/sq ft) + pizazz$

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<th>DONOR OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>Option A</th>
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<tr>
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<td>EST. Build Out $</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXHIBITS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonoma County Main Street - 5 YEAR SPONSORSHIP</td>
<td>162,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Diner</td>
<td>Whole Foods?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Victorian House and Bridge</td>
<td>Friedman's?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Hardware Store</td>
<td>Friedman's?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Train Station</td>
<td>Williams</td>
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<td>5 Elevated Train Track</td>
<td>Train Society</td>
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<td>6 Crocodile Clinic</td>
<td>Dr. Rael Bernstein</td>
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<td>Tentative Science Lab</td>
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<td>7 Auto pit stop</td>
<td>Jon Jordan Foundation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Race Car Transformation</td>
<td>Jon Jordan Foundation?</td>
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<td>9 Tree with spiral stairway</td>
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<td>10 BeeHive Structure/staircase</td>
<td>Mark Dolan</td>
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<td>11 Bee hive Demonstration</td>
<td>SoCo Bee Keepers</td>
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<td>12 Light Writing Tunnel</td>
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<td>13 Thomas Tank Engine World</td>
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<td>NAMING RIGHTS IN PERPETUITY</td>
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Kara Mackey
General Manager
Plan for the Worst

Build is better

Play for ALL
Plan for the Worst
SustainABLE

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DIY Exhibit Design
for Tight Budgets
Build it Better

Safety 1st!
DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets

SustainABLE
Play for ALL

ALL the Time
DIY Exhibit Design for Tight Budgets

SELLabrate!
Never underestimate your opponent
Check the handout for other great material sources
Reorder spare parts
So we have spare parts
McMaster Carr Part Number:
*Driver Roller Low Profile 2488K86
You're going to need lots of specialized equipment for casting your own props.
Saw dust and welders don’t mix.
Shop Tip:
Use a sheet of 2” rigid under your part to be jigsawed
Scott’s Favorite Stuff

Magic-Sculpt

For Crafts and Hobbies, Magic-Sculpt is both a medium and an ingredient for any project requiring sculpting. Don’t forget about Magic-Smooth, a great Texturing and Foam Coat Material!

- Your imagination is the only limit when it comes to devising uses for Magic-Sculpt. We have letters from all around the country telling us the ways Magic-Sculpt is being used—including ways we never expected to hear about! Some people use it so frequently they purchase it in 20 pound kits, others buy a one pound kit and have a lifetime supply for their needs.

- When you purchase a kit you will have a miracle in a jar for just about any hobby or repair job you might have. And the best part is that it replaces so many other compounds that can cost hundreds of dollars when you buy a "little of this and a little of that."
Greg’s favorite stuff
Matt’s Pick
PLC Trainers
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Questions and Brainstorm

What are helpful resources?

Where do you look for inspiration?

Favorite materials?

Unexpected outcome of an intended design?

Design take-aways?

Pros and Cons of DIY Exhibits?

How do you calculate sponsorship of exhibits?