



Busy Brains Children's Museum looks for home of its own

By Abby Scalf | Daily Herald Staff

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While the first plans to build a children's museum in Lake County fell through, Alison Price said she is moving on.

Volunteer organizers instead are planning exhibits, looking again for a site to build or lease and raising funds to build a resource they feel is needed in the county.

Brent Roberts of Mundelein said while Lake County offers parks and other recreational options for families, a children's museum is needed here.

"For the kids of Lake County to learn in a fun, safe environment is not only good for the kids but also parents as well," said Roberts, who volunteers for the museum.

Plans to build a permanent children's museum in Lake Villa fell through last April when a the request build a recreation center was not approved by voters.

"So with that, we were left without a home again," said Price, who co-founded the museum with Kathy Goers.

They instead changed their focus to designing a building, how exhibits would appear and what they could fit inside the building. They hired William Greaves from Architects in Design and Jay Paulus from Paulus Design Group to create the designs.

"The big point is he makes every children's museum he worked on unique to the area," Price said.

What they created is a space at least 12,000 square feet where 60 percent of the space is devoted to three exhibit galleries.

"We want to create enough activity to keep the entire family busy from 0 to age 10," Price said.

The first gallery features science, focusing on physical sciences more than natural sciences. One expands on their most popular traveling exhibit. The Bernoulli Box teaches kids about air flow and how airplanes stay aloft.

"It fits who we want to be but also who we are," Price said.

The second explores social studies and what makes up the community. In places like the market, modeling farmers markets across the county, children role play what they see parents do every day.

The third room will explore the arts through crafts and music.

As former teachers, Price said she and Goers want to enhance what children study in school but also offer topics schools may not explore fully.

"We want to create well-rounded kids," she said.

The rest of the space will be used to host birthday parties, office space and as multi-purpose rooms where school groups begin field trips or where civic groups can meet.

With ideas in hand, Price said they started again earlier this year to find land to build or current space to house the museum. Price said they have sent out letters to village leaders across Lake County to share the museum's vision.

While they seek a permanent space, Price said their traveling exhibits continue to receive a good response. They are scheduled to appear at five events each month through September including the Round Lake Streets of Summer festival, Grayslake farmers market and birthday parties.

"Every parent now realizes the need in this area beyond Chuck E. Cheese and a jump place to provide a place to interact as a family," she said.

Another big push is raising funds. In addition to applying for grants, Price said they will begin a capital campaign next May to seek support from corporate donations and foundations.

A fundraiser created last year where people buy and decorate tiles also continues. Tiles will be displayed in the museum although a location is not determined, Price said.

Price hopes she will be able to announce a permanent site by the end of this summer and to open the museum in 2009.

While the first plan fell through, Price said they are not stopping. They have come back with more community support and will continue working to bring a museum to Lake County.

"We are committed to create an educational place for kids in Lake County," she said.

For more information, visit the Web site at busybrains.org.