

TRAVEL

Museum offers hands-on fun for kids

BY DIANE HANSON
SPECIAL WRITER

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." That old Chinese proverb is basic to the philosophy on which the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum was developed.

And there is plenty to do at the museum in the old fire station on East Huron Ave. The firehouse, built in 1882, is on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Cynthia Yao, director of the museum, wrote the proposal for the hands-on facility 15 years ago.

"Interactive science was just sort of an idea in people's heads," Leslie Kimmel. "She (Yao) was very, very excited about it and conveyed that excitement to the rest of the community, and the response that we got was just incredible. The whole community just pitched in and made this work."

The museum has expanded over the years to four floors of fasci-

inating exhibits and is undergoing even more expansion with the recent purchase of adjacent buildings on East Huron. A preschool gallery and a multi-cultural gallery have already been added.

There is also space for traveling exhibitions. Currently, that space is cleared for the museum's annual fund-raising auction, but new exhibits should be coming in again in November.

Tiffany Mapes of Dearborn was at the museum on a bright Saturday afternoon with her husband, Daniel and sons, Ryan, 11, and Adam, 6.

They have a family membership, and Tiffany confessed, "We come here often because there's so much for them to do. This is fairly inexpensive. It's safe. They can touch everything. They can play with it. They're not going to break anything. You can be here for hours. We usually stay about three hours."

According to Kimmel, "This museum probably never has an

exhibit down. You can imagine how sturdy the exhibits have to be to take all these thousands and thousands of hands that are pushing and pulling buttons."

What a marvelous way for kids to experience first hand so many scientific principles. And adults need not be a science slave to explain the workings since each exhibit has a sign posted nearby with the facts in layman's terms.

With more than 75 exhibits, everyone has a favorite. Ryan Mapes liked everything, but one particular favorite was the echo chamber. Adam Mapes' favorite was, "the globe thing." Better known as the Star Sculpture, it's a glass globe with constantly fluctuating electrical currents, kind of like a continuous lightning storm. From the giggles of delight, it was obvious that four-year-old Lindsey Schwartz loved being enveloped in the giant bubble. Obvious to the principles of surface tension and light reflection through the swirling panels of soap film, she may be able to call on that experience in years to come.

Lindsey and sister, Blair 7, had come with their grandmother, Lola Howard of West Bloomfield. This was their first trip to the museum.

"Their parents are out of town, and we wanted to find a hands-on type place, and we were very pleased," said Howard. "It's very cleverly done. Children are not afraid to touch."

The shadow wall is another intriguing exhibit that attracts kids and adults alike. A bright flash of light leaves a full-sized silhouette on the white wall for several minutes. Oddly contorted body positions result in hearty laughter at the images left behind. For Ben would certainly have no trouble finding his shadow there.

From the hot air balloon that rises on air heated by double toasters to the holographic images to the preschool gallery to the periscope peering onto the floor



Visiting:
Lindsey
Schwartz of
West Bloom-
field sur-
rounds her-
self in a gi-
ant bubble at
the Ann Ar-
bor Hands-On
Museum.

Exhibit celebrates architect

House Beautiful will present "A Lasting Vision: The Legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright," a nationwide exhibit to celebrate the work of America's revered architect, Oct. 31 to Nov. 2 at Meadow Brook Hall.

For information, call (810) 370-3140. Meadow Brook Hall is on the Oakland University campus in Rochester.

Underwritten by the Chrysler-Plymouth Division of Chrysler Corp., the exhibit explores Wright's life work and the continuing influence he has had on architecture and design. In addition, the exhibit highlights the architect's relatively unknown fascination with the automobile.

"The Legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright" focuses on many of Wright's architectural and design works that were completed after his death in 1959. Wright's love of cars is also explored, as are the many buildings he designed to accommodate them. The exhibit includes a photographic survey as well as a selection of Wright deco-

native arts objects. David Hanks, noted Wright scholar, is curator of the show.

"Throughout the magazine's history, our editors have had an abiding devotion to Frank Lloyd Wright and his work, and have shared his philosophy that 'a beautiful home furthered the good life,'" said Louis Oliver Gropp, editor in chief of House Beautiful.

"It's only fitting that House Beautiful co-sponsor this extraordinary exhibition," said Jeff Burch, publisher of the Hearst title. "Wright's home furnishings were first introduced to the American public through the pages of House Beautiful in the 1930s. We are proud to continue to provide a platform for his most notable designs and are honored to partner with Chrysler on this landmark project."

The exhibit traveled to nine cities during the past year and will travel to an additional nine cities during 1995-96. It premieres in the Detroit area in November 1994.



Portrait: Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, Spring Green, Wis., 1937 Hedrich-Blessing photograph.

above to the geometric patterns created in the white sand by vibrations, there is something for every one and every age. If you're looking for quality family time and a fun learning experience, you need look no further than the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum.

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How to get there

The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum

Where: In the old firehouse at 219 East Huron Street, Ann Arbor (corner of North Fifth Avenue)

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays; 1-6 p.m. Sundays.

Admission: \$2.50 for children ages three and up, students and senior citizens. Adults, \$4. For more information call:

(313) 995-KIDS.

Halloween fun: For children ages 3-12, 6:30-7:30 p.m. & 7:30-9 p.m. Monday, Oct. 30. Ghosts and goblins will be handing out "treats" as you visit your favorite exhibits and participate in spooky activities including a visit with County Dracula. You can have your face painted, and get an animal balloon at Clowm Alley. Cost \$6 per person. Call (313) 995-5439 for ticket information.

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