



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

History of the National Children's Museum

The National Children's Museum (NCM) is founded on the accomplishments of the former Capital Children's Museum (CCM), located near Washington, DC's Union Station. Established in 1974, CCM was an early leader in children's museum development. It served approximately 200,000 visitors annually, including children, their parents, caregivers, and teachers.

CCM offered a wide variety of exhibits and programs, school programs, after school and weekend activities during the school year, and weeklong camp sessions over the summer. It was an innovator and leader in developing children's museum pedagogy and learning resources.

The Museum offered engaging hands-on science programs in partnership with NASA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and other recognized organizations, receiving high marks from professionals in the world of science. In addition, CCM was dedicated to serving area educators, offering professional development services and training to aid teachers with innovative new lessons and resources to better serve children. The Museum also actively promoted world cultures and cultural connections, hosting exhibits from nearly 40 countries on four continents, offering a vibrant collection of art, music, theater, and more.

Notably, the Museum developed an award-winning media arts program where kids created clay animation, video animation, cartoons, and other engaging media arts. CCM teamed up with legendary animator Chuck Jones, creator of Wile E. Coyote, the Road Runner, and other Warner Brothers characters, when he taught a class in the Museum's Young Animator's Program in 1987. In 1992, the Museum started the National Center for Animation, where Jones served on the board of advisors. The group's first major project, sponsored by the Cartoon Network, was an original three-floor exhibit, "Chuck Jones: An Animated Life." The exhibit remained a popular visitor destination where children had an opportunity to learn about the fascinating world of animation.

From 1979 to 2004, CCM was housed in a former convent and nursing home. Although the Museum had proven its value as a respected, vital educational resource, the 125-year-old physical plant proved to be a critical barrier to the Museum's ability to fully serve the region and the nation. Consequently, the CCM board of directors decided to develop a new museum to meet contemporary needs and better serve the national as well as regional community. With the support of the Association of Children's Museums, and through the enactment of H.R. 13, the Museum and Library Services Act of 2003, the United States Congress designated CCM as the country's National Children's Museum.

The following year, the CCM building was closed and resources were redirected to creating a new national institution for children and families. The Museum had originally planned to relocate to L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC, however, after the developer's plans and timelines changed significantly, the NCM board of directors was invited to move the museum to the new National Harbor development in Prince George's County, Md. The Museum looks forward to opening its doors at this larger new facility, featuring abundant outdoor space and a slip on the National Harbor pier, in 2013.

NCM in the Community Today

During the planning and construction phase of the new Museum, the National Children's Museum is reaching out to the region and the nation with school and community outreach programs, traveling exhibitions, and programs in partnership with other organizations, as a *Museum Without Walls*.

On a national level, NCM's *Five Friends from Japan*, an exhibit on contemporary Japanese school and home life, is traveling to museums across the country and was most recently on view at Port Discovery in Baltimore. NCM also recently published *Family Literacy Activities on a Budget*, a train-the-trainer guide for educators looking for ways to create family literacy awareness using children's literature, arts and crafts, music, drama, and low-cost and recycled items. The guide was launched at the National Center for Family Literacy conference in Louisville, Ky., in 2008.

On a local level, NCM has partnered with Imagination Stage, a children's theater in Bethesda, Md., to create a traveling exhibit titled *Language for the Eye*. The exhibit promotes awareness and respect of deafness, deaf culture, and the accomplishments of deaf individuals. Throughout the spring of 2008, *Language for the Eye* traveled to third grade classrooms at ten schools, an arts center, and three public libraries in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Family programs were presented by both NCM and Imagination Stage, including a performance by Imagination Stage's award-winning Teen Deaf Access Company.

Recently, NCM brought *Blood and Guts*, a traveling exhibit about human physiology, to four Title I Prince George's County Schools. The Museum also co-presented a summer camp with the Accokeek Foundation in Prince George's County.

In addition, the Museum presented kids and family programming at National Harbor's *American Market*, featuring a variety of regional vendors, every Saturday from May through October 2008. After a successful summer series, the Museum was invited to participate in National Harbor's *Tree Lighting Ceremony* and *Holiday Market* on Saturdays during the winter season, and will partake in both 2009 markets as well.

In addition to the Museum's outreach programs, children from around the region and across the country have an opportunity for hands-on participation in the Museum's development. The Museum opened the *Launch Zone* at National Harbor, a 2,700 square-foot storefront space on Waterfront Street, which has attracted over 23,000 visitors since the 2009 grand opening. Open to the public seven days a week, the *Launch Zone* is a place where children can prototype exhibit components and programs, share their ideas about what should be included in the new Museum, and participate in programs related to the Museum's core content areas.

Through the use of images, table-top interactive exhibits, and computer kiosks, NCM introduces select areas of the Museum, while soliciting feedback and input from constituents. Visitors learn about the Museum's mission and areas of engagement, in addition to other family friendly programs and partner organizations. The *Launch Zone* also hosts ongoing *Museum Without Walls* programming, professional development workshops and trainings, and community learning events for parents and caregivers.

Complementing the *Launch Zone* is a new "virtual *Launch Zone*" on the NCM website where kids from across the country and around the world have an opportunity to test exhibit and program content and help shape the Museum through an interactive experience. NCM belongs to the nation's children and this online experience provides another powerful opportunity for them to share their voices and influence the Museum's exhibit and program content. Eventually, the online *Launch Zone* will also link parents, caregivers, and educators with Museum-related content that supports family and school learning as well as information on issues affecting children locally, nationally, and globally.

NCM at National Harbor

The new museum for children and families is scheduled to open in 2013 at Prince George's County's National Harbor – a \$2 billion, 300-acre, mixed-use waterfront development – to transform the banks of the Potomac into a gateway to the Washington region for kids and families.

As part of the National Harbor development, NCM is regarded as an anchor for the many nearby hotels, restaurants, and retail stores. It will occupy a prominent spot on American Way, the main thoroughfare of the National Harbor town center, and will offer access to a forested area as well as a designated slip on the main pier on the Potomac River. NCM will serve an audience of over 1.2 million children living in the local community and the 17.7 million tourists who visit the Washington region each year (ages 6 months to 12 years). The Museum is projected to attract 600,000 visitors annually, 75 percent of whom will be from the region, and many times that many on its website.

Pelli, Clarke, Pelli (PCP), the project architect, is a world-renowned firm with many critically acclaimed buildings, including Reagan National Airport. PCP has the experience and qualifications needed to create workable solutions for the Museum's facility needs.

Furthermore, the National Children's Museum will establish sustainable goals, practices, and guidelines institution wide. NCM has developed strategies for sustainable design practices with the goal of creating the most sustainable exhibits possible with NCM's current and future resources. The NCM team will continue to research and adopt best practices for sustainability including those recommended by leading professionals in the field and organizations such as the U.S. Green Building Council.

When completed, the new 150,000-square-foot Museum will house some the most exciting and engaging exhibits, programs, and resources ever designed to spark the imagination, feed the soul, and celebrate the power of children and their families. Ten permanent interactive exhibits, a rotating complement of temporary interactive exhibits, and their complimentary online experiences will give children the opportunity to learn, explore, and get involved on a wide range of issues in core content areas: the environment, health and well-being, play, civic engagement, the arts, and the global neighborhood.

Developed by exhibit design firms Amaze Design, Roto Studios, and Aldrich Pears, permanent and temporary exhibits, as well as public programming, will reflect the Museum's mission, purpose, and values through three experience concepts:

- *Being Me*

Encouraging healthy self-awareness and self-esteem so children learn to make good choices and are motivated to care for themselves and others.

- *Kids' Nation*

Connecting kids to American Democracy and demonstrating how all of us are connected to our environment.

- *Kids' World*

Encouraging a global perspective – the idea that we are all citizens of multiple communities, so children learn empathy and understand their purpose and place in the human family.

The National Children's Museum will be a world-class cultural and educational center dedicated to engaging children and empowering them to make a difference. The Museum will serve millions of children and their families each year through a new experiential place at National Harbor, an engaging online experience, and partnerships and programs spreading across the country. Every experience associated with NCM – from the permanent, hands-on exhibits inside the Museum to its online "e-zibits" and national programs – will reflect the themes identified by research as critical to inspiring and supporting children's efforts to be engaged and active in their communities.

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