



BACKGROUND

Mission Statement

Pretend City's is a community that builds better brains through fun and whole body learning experiences, empowering children and their grown-ups to meaningfully connect with and expand their world.

Overview

Pretend City Children's Museum is the first educational facility of its kind in California and the largest children's museum in Orange County. It is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and relies on the generous gifts and donations of individuals, corporations and foundations for funding. The 28,000 square foot museum represents a small interconnected city with over 15 permanent exhibits including a grocery store, farm, doctor's office, art studio, amphitheater, beach, marina, restaurant and more. Designed for children ranging from infant through ten years old, Pretend City is a unique community resource where families, educators and community agencies come together to help each child reach their greatest potential. Pretend City also features two birthday party rooms, an observation room to facilitate educational or product research, and private event facilities for up to 500 adults. Classrooms for teacher and parent training and school fieldtrip orientation are available. Pretend City is located in the heart of Orange County in Irvine.

Educational Drivers

Many children today experience the world vicariously by watching TV, using the computer, texting on cell phones and playing video games, while others are tightly scheduled into multiple structured activities. In addition, schools require educators to teach to state standards, essentially teaching children how to pass standardized tests rather than teaching them to think and problem solve. Children are not learning the foundational skills, like critical thinking, creativity, and leadership that interactive and exploratory play helps them learn. Pretend City gives children these opportunities.

Pretend City is most needed today to continue the fundamental education of our children. With the public schools experiencing budget cutbacks and increasing class sizes, we need an educational institution that will teach our children what they cannot receive in their classroom. Pretend City delivers experiences that not only engage children, but meet state education standards through creative learning.

Research has shown that the brain's biggest growth spurt occurs in the first five years of life. Babies are born with all of their organs completely formed, with the exception of their brain. Mindful interaction, talk, touch, play, new challenges, and a variety of other stimulating experiences all have a marked effect on the wiring of a child's brain. Early experiences like these cause certain synaptic connections in the brain to grow and literally build better brains. Pretend City has been designed specifically to provide these early enriching experiences.



Brain Building Blocks

Embedded into each exhibit and all educational programming are the eight essential Brain Building Objectives that will encourage children to learn the following foundational skills:

1. Critical thinking and problem solving
2. Creativity
3. Interconnectivity of the world and processes of everyday life
4. Teamwork, negotiation, collaboration and leadership
5. Awareness of the world's unlimited possibilities
6. Building a lifelong love of learning
7. Cause and effect
8. Appreciation for diversity

Community

Pretend City is a community resource, offering classes for families, children and parents, outreach programs, teacher trainings, and fieldtrip opportunities. The museum has partnerships with many community agencies, such as Healthy Smiles, Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Department of Education, Family Support Network, City of Irvine Police Department, Help Me Grow, and several more.

Pretend City has also partnered with the Orange County Children and Families Commission to create *Good to Go from Head to Toe*, a groundbreaking \$3.5 million, 10-year initiative designed to educate the community and parents about the importance of having children (birth through 5-years-old) receive regular developmental check-ups as part of their routine, well-child visits. Through on-site screenings, parent education and training, and outreach, Pretend City and partners including CHOC Children's, CUIDAR, Help Me Grow, Orange County Medical Association, Family Support Network, and the Orange County Dept. of Education will help parents better understand their children's development and increase the number of young children who receive screenings.

Leadership

- Bill H. Lyon, Chair, Board of Directors
- Pam Shambra, President
- Linda Hunter, Vice President and COO
- Chantal Lamourelle, Director of Education

Location

Pretend City Children's Museum
29 Hubble
Irvine, CA 92618
(949) 428-3900
www.pretendcity.org



FUN FACTS

- The Association of Children's Museums states that there are 248 children's museums in the US. There are now 249!
- There are 21 states with fewer children than we have here in Orange County, and yet some of those very states have three, four or five children's museums. Nebraska and Iowa have five children's museums. Kansas, Utah and Montana each have three.
- Research has shown that the brain's biggest growth spurt occurs in the first five years of life. Early experiences like those offered at Pretend City cause certain synaptic connections in the brain to grow and literally build better brains.
- Pretend City Children's Museum is the first educational facility of its kind in California and the largest children's museum in Orange County.
- Pretend City features 28,000 square feet of space, 15 permanent exhibits and a 2,000 square foot traveling exhibit space.
- Pretend City drew its 100,000th guest on March 13, 2010, within the first six months of its opening!
- Pretend City has a unique "next generation" board of directors. The average age of the board members is 40 years old. But, even more significantly, the average gift of board members is an extraordinary \$246,000.
- NBA star Kobe Bryant and his family were special honorees at Pretend City's grand opening ceremony on August 28, 2009, receiving the keys to the city and designated the "first family" to enter the museum.
- Pretend City is an unforgettable place to hold events for children and adults. Set against a colorful backdrop of beaches, marinas, and more, Pretend City provides an ideal setting for holiday celebrations, corporate events, fundraisers, anniversaries, birthdays, reunions, winter formals, high school proms and more. The museum has also partnered with leading vendors in production, floral design, music, entertainment and photography to offer guests a comprehensive, customized package for any celebration. Pretend City can accommodate up to 500 adults and offers on-site catering and beverage services.



FAQ

Q: How is Pretend City Children's Museum funded?

A: Pretend City is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and relies on the generous gifts and donations of individuals, corporations and foundations for funding. Ticket sales only account for about half of Pretend City's budget.

Q: How much money has Pretend City Children's Museum raised to date? How has the museum been impacted by the recent economic climate?

A: Approximately \$11 million has been raised toward this effort. Due to the economic climate we have lengthened our campaign timeline in order to successfully complete the \$17.5 million campaign.

Q: What kinds of exhibits and programs does Pretend City Children's Museum offer?

A: Pretend City is designed as a small city with a grocery store, construction site, art studio, house, café, bank, emergency services, health center, farm and more. Visitors can dress up as a police officer, deliver the mail, make a pizza, pick strawberries, put out a fire —the opportunities abound. Pretend City also offers a variety of educational programs and classes on topics such as art, dance, music, nutrition, fitness and more. Pretend City also has a 2,000 square foot space reserved for traveling exhibits, family events, parenting seminars, community events and more.

Q: What makes Pretend City Children's Museum different from other children's museums?

A: There are three key differentiators:

1. Pretend City is an integrated city — children will experience the interconnectedness of all professions of a community, and how every person is essential to the well being of a community.
2. Pretend City has embedded eight essential brain building blocks into each and every one of its exhibits, encouraging children to learn foundational skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, interconnectivity, teamwork, cause and effect, and more..
3. Pretend City's *Good to Go from Head to Toe* program, a collaborative effort with the Orange County Children and Families Commission, helps parents understand their children's developmental milestones. *Good To Go From Head To Toe* programs offer a variety of tools and resources easily accessible at Pretend City to help parents understand their children's development, every step of the way.

Q: Who are Pretend City Children's Museum corporate sponsors?

A: M&M/Mars, Ralphs, Kaiser Permanente and Rancho Mission Viejo to name a few.

Q: What is the museum's admission cost?

A: \$10 per child or adult. Children twelve months and younger are \$2. Parking is free.

Q: When is Pretend City open?

A: The museum is open 362 days a year.

Monday 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily



EXHIBIT DESCRIPTIONS

Amphitheater sponsored by Christina and Bill Lyon

This amphitheater, nestled in a park setting hosts storytellers, musical entertainers, and music and drama experiences geared towards young children. The amphitheater includes a stage, a child-friendly sound and lighting panel, and audience seating. This area is a place where children and families can act, create and perform their own songs, dances and stories. With the backdrop, music, prop boxes, and a variety of costumes, children can dance to their own beat, be the stars of their own plays, and give life to their wildest imaginings!

The Muzzy Family Art Studio

Colors ebb and flow with the brush strokes of children creating palettes of every color. Will we witness the work of the next Renoir, Michelangelo or Chagall? Perhaps! This distinct area in Pretend City is unlike any other in that it is not about *pretending*. In this authentic art studio, children indeed ARE artists in their own right! We will definitely see the creative enthusiasm on faces young and old as they render life to their imaginings and take home their creations for all of the family to admire.

Bank ATM

Financial literacy or “money managing smarts” is a life-long process that begins in early childhood and thrives at Pretend City Bank’s ATM. After working at the Construction Site or Health Center, when children receive their “Pretend City paycheck” they will deposit it in a Pretend City ATM. Just like their parents do, children can then withdraw cash from the ATM to use at the Grocery Store, Gas Station or Café. Since the brain learns by doing and practice makes permanent, children will begin to develop “money smart skills” that will help them to understand and use the concept of working for money and using it wisely to make purchases.

Beach sponsored by Miocean Foundation

Preserving the environmental integrity of Orange County beaches is one of the central messages that is conveyed at the Pretend City Beach. Children can explore and test the concept of cause and effect by observing what happens when the beach gets polluted with trash. By looking through a “transparent street” children will be able to follow the path of litter and pollutants as they are washed down the drain and out on to Pretend City’s Beach. When the Beach is polluted, it will be closed. As budding environmentalists, children will be motivated to pick up the trash and dispose of it properly in the trash bin. When the trash is disposed of properly, the Pretend City Beach will be reopened for fun beach activities!

A Meruelo Family Restaurant

One of the most popular places in the city is the café. Role-play opportunities abound in an area rich with pretend menus, ovens, stoves, and a variety of pretend foods just waiting to be prepared and served up to eager parents and grandparents.



Construction Site

Imagine children experiencing physics, geometry, and math all while playing! Our Construction Site includes a challenging pipe building activity and wooden planks for building structures large and small. The Pretend City Construction Site is undoubtedly a bustling hub of fun for builders young and old!

Emergency Services

Fire Station sponsored by the Hiram and Reesa Emadi Family

Police Station sponsored by Blake and Jill Berteau

Dispatch Station sponsored by Bob and Tara Mayer

For so many children today, the sound of an ambulance or fire truck means only that someone needs help. In Pretend City, children experience first hand what really happens in an emergency as they pretend to be firefighters, dispatch operators, and police officers. When 911 calls are received at the dispatch desk, the calls will be routed to the fire and police stations, where children will zoom to the rescue in a child-size police car or fire truck. They can jump into action and save the day, hooking up their hose to the hydrant to fight blazing fires or rushing to help someone at the scene of a fender-bender. Then back to the firehouse and police station they will go, to prepare for the next emergency.

Farm sponsored by Seeds of Change

Our Pretend City Farm allows children to reconnect with nature and to see how food is grown, harvested and prepared for family meals. Children get a direct experience with the origin of the foods they eat. As Pretend City farmers, children can harvest crops and observe the life cycle of a chicken while watching chickens grow and hatch in the incubator. They can even pick oranges and deliver them to market!

Gas Station sponsored by Gigi and Craig Barto

Washing windows, pumping gas, checking tires, these activities and more will engage children and grown-ups alike at our Pretend City Gas Station. And how much per gallon did you say the price of gasoline was today? Children will find out first hand as they use the money they've earned "working" in Pretend City to fill up their own gas tanks!

Ralphs Grocery Store

Childhood obesity is one of the most pressing problems facing Orange County families today. Where better for children to really learn about good eating habits than in the Pretend City Grocery Store! Children will have fun shopping for five fruits and vegetables a day with their Pretend City grocery lists made up of foods from the California State *Five-a-Day Nutrition Initiative*. In addition, children will learn and use the red light, yellow light and green light foods system for making healthy food choices. Children working in the Pretend City Farm will deliver the healthy crops they pick to the Grocery Store and learn by participating in the farm to table food cycle.



Mars, Incorporated Lobby

Each year an estimated 150,000 people will arrive, plan their day and eventually leave through the Pretend City Lobby. Designed to include a City Hall, children will receive their Pretend City time card at the Lobby ticketing area. This is also where visitors can learn about upcoming programs and classes, become a member or book a corporate event or birthday party.

The Crean Family Marina

Any day in Pretend City is a great day for sailing! Children make their own sailboats to sail in the Pretend City Marina. Using wind and water for power, children will race their boats and chart unique sailing courses through the waters of Pretend City's Newport to Dana Point marinas. In another area of the Marina, visitors will experiment with changing the flow of water or fish for the "catch of the day" which they can wrap up at the fish stand to take to the grocery store to sell. Or of course, visitors can simply bask in the fun of playing in the water with a variety of interesting water toys.

Orange Plaza sponsored by the Alexandra and Alan Airth Family

Pretend City embraces the concept of the town center in our very own Orange Plaza, providing children an idea of a common community meeting area for all to enjoy. In Pretend City's Orange Plaza, people will gather to listen to storytelling, watch live performances, greet long time friends and make new ones before going on to visit the rest of the City.

The Pretend City Home sponsored by Willa Dean and William Lyon

The home is at the heart of every family and it is no different in Pretend City. Our Home reflects the diversity of Orange County and will showcase elements of many of the interesting cultures in our community. Three times each year, the interior of the Pretend City Our Home exhibit will completely change to reflect the real lives of a featured Orange County family. Our exhibit features the family's customs, decor, rituals, celebrations, food, and even their challenges and successes.

Post Office sponsored by David and Cristin Gianulias

"Snail" mail is still vital to the smooth running of our communities and children need to experience how it all works. Post Office "play" contributes to children's sorting, categorizing and reasoning skill-building – and, of course, it's fun too! In Pretend City, parents and children will pick up mail from around town, sort it and deliver it. At a special Post Office table, children can also mail postcards home to themselves so that they can actively engage in a real-life experience of mail moving from one place to another.

Pretend City Park sponsored by the Arman and Azin Rashtchi Family

The Pretend City Park, located next to Orange Plaza, is a gathering place for children and families and an area where discovery, play and exciting programming occur. The park is a hub of fun activities where children can take part in games and interact with one another. The park will be a familiar area for children and will definitely be one of the major highlights of the exhibit floor, made even more prestigious when the Climbing Tree is installed next year!



The Real Café sponsored by Kai and Sinan Kanatsiz

Unlike the Meruelo Family Restaurant in Pretend City, this café has real food, snacks and refreshments. It provides an opportunity for children and families to recharge and refuel and then head back out onto the exhibit floor for more playing and learning!

Health Center sponsored by Kaiser Permanente

Children are often reluctant to enter an exam room or a doctor's office. At Pretend City, children can pretend to be doctors and gain a sense of those "scary" places from an entirely different perspective – one of curiosity and excitement! Instruments, procedures and medical equipment will become familiar as children engage with them - and their fears will begin to fade.

Dental Center sponsored by Jon Marashi, DDS, Zachary Orthodontics, Erica and John De Lorme

In Pretend City's Dentist's Office, children will learn the importance of having good oral hygiene in a creative and fun environment. They will play with dentist's equipment and begin to see that dentists are willing to help us stay healthy through prevention. Children will be able to measure the amount of sugar in our favorite foods, donate their pacifier for teeth research and brush all 32 teeth in our giant mouth replica.

Lifeguard Station sponsored by Anne Marie and Jim Leonard

Rising over Pretend City Beach, the Lifeguard Station is a place where visitors can check out the current beach conditions for a day of fun in the sand and sun.