

The Jersey Explorer Children's Museum



Empowerment For Youth By Youth

BY GIOYA MCRAE

The Jersey Explorer Children's Museum (JECM) located at 192 Dodd Street in East Orange, NJ, is one of the first non-profit children's museums in the country to display true-to-life, interactive exhibits ranging from ancient Egypt to space travel to playful puppet shows to opportunities to write and perform newscasts in the museum's TV studio.

Even more amazing than the exhibits and performances is the fact that they are all the handiwork of at-risk youth. New Jersey Youth Corps and AmeriCorps participants build displays and staff the Museum as they receive on-the-job training and develop interpersonal skills in preparation for their high school equivalency diplomas. The Jersey Explorer is the only children's museum in the country that was built by young people and the first to pioneer the concept of using youth as staff.

Over 19,000 children residing in the local inner cities and surrounding areas visit the museum or participate in the museum's outreach programs annually. As a result of Jersey Explorer's efforts, these young people are empowered to seek and achieve the best quality of life possible.

Visit the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum to experience the following exhibits and activities:



Arts & Crafts

The Jersey Explorer offers a wide array of seasonal arts & crafts projects suitable for school groups and birthday parties.

Time Traveler

In the Time Traveler exhibit children take an educational journey where they see themselves flashing through time on the ship's front "viewscreen." The ship's computer brings up a "training film" that orients the time travelers to the time and place of their destination. Once the ship lands, the young travelers exit and find themselves in the past—not as observers but as participants.

Time Travel destinations include:

- An 1851 Tennessee station on the Underground Railroad where time travelers may suddenly find that they need to locate the old hiding places...quickly.
- The basement of a church in 1963 Birmingham where children are gathering for a day of civil rights demonstrations, confrontations and maybe a trip to the Birmingham jail.
- The Jukebox Jamboree where the kids learn to enjoy 1950's music.

Museum Manager, Ricky Matthews added "Don't miss our most recent addition to the Time Traveler exhibit, a 1940's Café where the time travelers write letters to World War II's Black soldiers."

Tomb of the Ancient Kings

Visitors travel back to ancient Egypt as they explore dark passages, hidden doors, and secret chambers looking for clues that may lead them to the treasure of an ancient pharaoh.

Stargazer

Take a trip as part of the crew of a space ship in 2075 as it travels through an imaginary and distant galaxy. Teamwork and quick-thinking are needed to get through an adventure that is filled with unexpected twists and exciting challenges.

Village on Main Street

It's a whole town just for kids. Visitors can shop for groceries, be firefighters, or have lunch in the diner. With so many places to explore and play, adventure is always around the corner.

WJEX TV

At the WJEX TV studio kids help write news stories and then deliver them into the camera from the news desk. They can also report "from the field" while standing in front of a blue screen that may sometimes contain surprises even for the reporters.

Off the Page Theater performs puppet and storytelling shows both in house and at off site locations like schools and libraries.

Scienceworks

Electrical adventures, the magic of magnetism, optical illusions and more. Hands-on activities and demonstrations help visitors learn the relevance of science in daily life.

Children's Parties

The Jersey Explorer hosts entertaining parties, including hands-on exhibits and a Party Room, for children aged 2-13 years old. Contact the museum for details.

For a stimulating, educational adventure at every turn, visit the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum. Come for fun and leave with knowledge. It's the opportunity of a lifetime for kids of all ages.

The museum is open to the public on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Other days are open to groups by reservation. For more information on the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum please visit their website at www.jerseyexplorer.org or call 973-673-6900. ■

