

outoftown



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The Seuss exhibit at the Children's Discovery Museum encourages interactivity for children to learn the classic tales.

'Oh, Seuss! Off to Great Places'

Children's Discovery Museum's riotous exhibit pays tribute to Dr. Theodor Geisel.

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SAN JOSE — Anyone with young children knows full well that Dr. Seuss is more than an author — he is a full-blown obsession. Sure, anyone can recite "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish," but excited preschoolers and beginning readers can spout the whole canon. And there's no better way to bring these classics to life than by visiting the "Oh, Seuss! Off to Great Places" exhibit at the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose.

The riotously colorful installation commemorating the late Theodor Seuss Geisel's 100th birthday (or "Seussentennial") runs through May.

Those who haven't been to the CDM in a while are in for a real treat. The Seuss exhibit recently moved from the west wing onto the main floor, so there's now plenty of space for kids to move around and enjoy the display's interactive nature. "Green Eggs and Ham" fans can climb aboard a little train ("Could you, would you, on a train?"), ride a wave ("I would not, could not, on a boat"), and steer a car ("Would you, could you, in a car? Eat them! Eat them! Here they are!") while experiencing the story firsthand. On a recent visit, an elementary school teacher

squealed to her young charges, "Look! You're in the book!" and indeed they were.

Horton the Elephant makes a dual appearance both in "Horton Hears a Who!" and "Horton Hatches the Egg." Kids can even manipulate brightly-hued gears and shapes with names like skruux, goor, snor, and snux to help build the Throm-dim-bu-lator from "Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?"

Across the hall you'll find the Circus McGurkus ("the world's greatest show!"), where video screens allow young performers to watch themselves mastering the flying trapeze. A crazy train of mirrors provides a fun-house effect, and costumes are on hand dress-up play. "If I Ran the Circus," the book that inspired this display, sits nearby for reading.

San Jose is the first city outside of New York to host the Seuss exhibit, which was developed by the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

Cathy Fisher, CDM's marketing and community relations manager, says its popularity with Bay Area families has been phenomenal.

"Adults love Seuss for the words, and the kids love to come, play, and stay, and stay," says Fisher. The museum has experienced a spike in membership applications since the Seuss exhibit opened.

Seuss may be this year's big draw, but the museum's per-

Visitors from Santa Cruz who drive to spend the day in downtown San Jose are in good company; in fiscal year 2004-05, more than 10,000 of the CDM's attendees hailed from Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey counties.

manent exhibits are equally engaging. From the WaterWays room, where plastic balls zoom up and atop gushing streams of water, to Bubbalogna, where youngsters experiment with different sizes and shapes of bubbles, there's something to interest children through age 10.

The Wonder Cabinet, geared to those under 4, is a hands-on laboratory for early learners to explore using all their senses. Alcoves throughout the new 3,000-square-foot space, funded by a \$1 million grant from First Five, provide stations for painting, sorting, sifting, reading, and experimenting. A separate crawl space for pre-walkers allows them to explore freely and safely.

"We've really invested in our youngest visitors with the creation of this aesthetically beautiful space," says Audrey Munoz, the museum's early childhood education manager. "It encourages intense parent-child bonding and interaction."

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(THROUGH MAY 30 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday, members' hour 11 a.m.-noon Sunday, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, 180 Woz Way, San Jose. \$7 ages 1-60, \$6 60 and older, free for members and infants under 1. (408) 298-5437 or www.cdm.org)