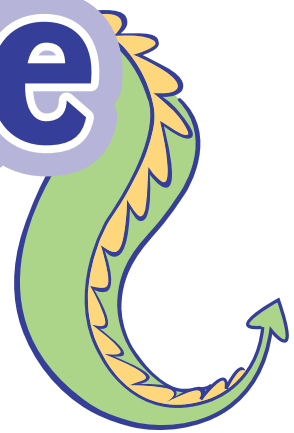




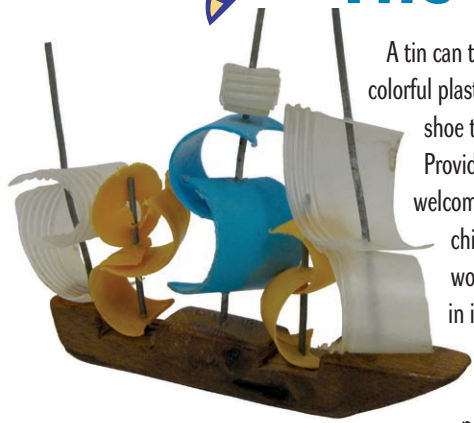
Come play, come learn!

# Dragon's Tale

The Newsletter of Providence Children's Museum  
Fall 2011 • Volume 14 Number 4



## The Universal Power of Play



A tin can truck, a jump rope braided from colorful plastic bags, and a well-worn men's shoe turned into a car. This fall, Providence Children's Museum welcomes toys handcrafted by children from around the world to the window boxes in its atrium walkway.

The charming creations poignantly illustrate

the imagination, flexibility and inventiveness of children's play and serve as a reminder that toys don't need to cost a lot of money – simple everyday materials make wonderful playthings.

The toys are a selection from *The Power to Play: From Trash to Treasure*, an exhibition of more than 350 pieces collected by ChildFund International, a global child development and protection agency. The playthings range from dolls, games and musical instruments to a variety of things that float, roll and fly. They were constructed from materials and objects found around children's homes and villages – bottle caps, twigs,

discarded containers and cardboard, old flip-flops, fabric scraps and bits of wood, wire and string. By sharing children's compelling creations with museums and cultural institutions across the country, ChildFund hopes to inspire appreciation of children's resourcefulness and understanding of the universal importance of play in children's development.

Providence Children's Museum actively advocates for and celebrates the power of children's play; this display provides another way to engage visitors with that message. "Some of the toys

are so intricate and detailed, you can see the children as engineers, figuring out how an axle works so their truck can really move," said Museum Director of Exhibits **Robin Meisner**. "To show children's work that represents cultures from all over the world – and work that is incredibly well designed and functional – demonstrates kids' creativity and ingenuity."



The Museum hosts toys crafted in countries including India, Brazil, Ethiopia and the United States and each one has a story. Some are unique to their place of origin, some reflect the challenging social, economic and political conditions faced in children's countries, and others are universal, like balls and kites made in different places using exactly the same techniques. None of the playthings were made for sale; each came about because a child had the inspiration, the materials and the need to play. Together, the toys demonstrate children's creativity, resiliency and enduring spirit, even in the most difficult situations, and evoke powerful personal reflections and vivid play memories.



Credit: ChildFund International

**"The toys offer dramatic proof that – through it all – children can retain their sense of wonder, their desire to play, their indomitable spirit, and their ability to imagine and create...if they are given the support they need."**  
– Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund International

The toys will be on view from October 4 to January 29, with an opening reception on Friday, October 21 from 6:00 to 7:00 PM. Some larger pieces will be displayed in *Discovery Studio*, where children will also have opportunities to make their own playthings from natural and recycled materials. While visitors delight in the details of the designs, a talk-back board will prompt them to respond to the question, "What kind of toys do you make?," encouraging reflection on and conversation about the common bond children share in their need for play and the ability to create their own playthings.





As Bonnie carefully unwrapped the child-made objects that had arrived from ChildFund International's *Power of Play* exhibit, Museum staff and volunteers exclaimed over their intricacy and charm. And inevitably, each one of us shared some small memory of making playthings out of found objects ourselves. We recalled making doll clothes out of fabric scraps, forts out of boards and branches, telephones out of tin cans, drums out of oatmeal canisters. We range in age from 20s to 60s; it would seem children's ingenuity and joy-in-making is eternal as well as universal.

Some of my most intense play memories involve scavenging and constructing my playthings. I loved gathering up small scraps from my father's woodworking and incorporating them into environments for my toy animals. I vividly remember a pail filled with tiny ends of wooden pegs that I used to make miniature fences. With the creativity of children, who see the possibilities in all things, shoes became cars for our Ginny dolls to drive and perfume bottles served as fancy lamps on building block tables.

Those were ideas of the moment, suggested by the perceived similarity of one object (an ornate bottle) to another (a glass lamp). There was also, in kid culture, knowledge that passed from child to child. Maybe there still is. When we moved from the country, we copied the suburban kids who clothes-pinned baseball cards to their bicycle wheels. They made a wonderful motorcycle sound as they hit the spokes, *rrrrrrrr*. A neighborhood boy showed me how to make a skateboard. We took apart outgrown roller skates and screwed the wheels to boards. I learned to measure, saw and sand making my first skateboard; I learned to measure more carefully making my second one.

We learned a lot more than that. We learned to be resourceful and think creatively. We learned to fail and to try again. We learned about the joy of accomplishment. We learned self-reliance and how to learn from others. Really important lessons that children learn best by doing it themselves.

Next time you're thinking of giving a child a fancy new toy or gadget, consider DIY materials instead: cardboard tubes, a pad of paper and lots of tape; a set of simple wooden blocks; woodworking tools; a sewing kit and fabric scraps; art supplies. Give them the gift of making their own play.

*Janice O'Donnell*

– Janice O'Donnell, Executive Director



The verdict is in: visitors LOVE *Discovery Studio*! The Museum's vibrant new art and science exploration space opened on July 7 to rave reviews from kids and grown-ups alike. Ever since, Museum staff and volunteers have enjoyed watching children from ages 2 to 13 and of a wide range of abilities deeply engaged in imaginative play.

Drop into *Discovery Studio* this fall to see what it's all about. *Discovery Studio* is open for self-guided exploration most days from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, with some facilitated activities. Explore a different theme each week – see the calendar for details.

The mission of Providence Children's Museum is to inspire and celebrate learning through active play and exploration.

Providence Children's Museum  
100 South Street  
Providence, RI 02903

[www.ChildrenMuseum.org](http://www.ChildrenMuseum.org)  
(401) 273-KIDS (5437)

#### Fall/Winter Hours:

Open Tuesday - Sunday and Monday school holidays, 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

#### Admission:

\$8.50 per person 12 months and older.  
Members are always free.

#### For more information:

#### General Information, Birthday Parties & Group Visits

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Jennifer Laurelli ext. 120

#### Fundraising Events

Wendy Gray ext. 121

#### Communications & Media Relations

Megan Fischer ext. 126

To contact staff members by email, use last name @ChildrenMuseum.org. For a full staff phone directory, visit the Museum's website.

## Stay Connected

Join the conversation with Providence Children's Museum and others who care about kids' play and learning:



PlayWatch community discussion listserv  
[www.PlayWatch.org](http://www.PlayWatch.org)



Sign up for the Museum's monthly e-newsletter (at [www.ChildrenMuseum.org](http://www.ChildrenMuseum.org)) to keep up with the latest news and events!

#### Editor:

Megan Fischer

#### Designer:

Valerie Haggerty-Silva

Five-year-old Kaleb picked up a large clamshell, reached across the table and scooped up some paint from the palette. He placed it on his paper, using his fist to pound on the shell to make sure it was printing on the paper. "It made a circle!" he exclaimed. Then he decided to use his own hands as painting tools. When I asked him how the paint felt between his fingers, he said, "Squishy!"

Next he grabbed a pinecone, rolled it on top of his painted paper, and observed, "It makes lines." With an expression of concentration and fascination, he continued to roll the pinecone and feel the paint with his hands. After his hands were totally coated, he placed them carefully on either side of the paper to make handprints. A grin on his face, he held up his paint-covered hands to show his mom.

This moment is a window into the learning that goes on in an open-ended play environment and how children who visit *Discovery Studio* understand what it's all about: discovering through hands-on exploration.



## Exploration

*Coming to Rhode Island* is a time-traveling adventure that celebrates cultural diversity and the stories, customs and objects of different groups who have come here from many lands. The exhibit culminates in the *Story Center*, where children and families can reflect on cultural traditions – their own and others' – through books and activities. Visitors can choose from an assortment of activity kits that explore games played around the world, encouraging them to reflect on the similarities and differences in the ways kids play.

### Try these global games:

- In **mankala**, players move stones or seeds from one cup to another across a game board to see who can capture the most. Try versions of mankala and other stone games from Ghana, Kenya and the Philippines.
- Different games of **dominos** are played all over the world. Explore three variations: block dominos, Inuit dominos and matador or Russian dominos.
- People have always played **games of chance**, which depend on luck rather than on speed, strength or coordination. Play knuckle bones – popular in colonial America as well as all over the Roman Empire and in ancient Greece, India and Egypt – and the peach pit game, a traditional game of chance for many Native Americans.



## Museum News



Kimberly I. McCarthy, Children's Friend Board Chairman; Janice O'Donnell, Museum Executive Director; Cheryl Lepre, Families Together Consulting Clinician; Nedria Greco, Families Together Clinician; Shannon Doherty, Families Together Visitation Specialist; Cassandra Kane, AmeriCorps Museum Educator; Mary Scott Hackman, Early Childhood Programs Coordinator; David Caprio, Children's Friend President and CEO.

- Families Together, a Museum program connecting children in foster care with their families, will add a homelike setting for family healing this fall. Families Together staff will manage and conduct some of their therapeutic family visits at "Nina's House," a former Providence residence purchased and renovated by The Nina Foundation.
- Children's Friend recognized Providence Children's Museum (pictured) with its highest honor – the Michelle Norris Memorial Award – for the Museum's work toward improving the futures of Rhode Island's most vulnerable children. The Museum provides interactive educational programs for Children's Friend Head Start preschoolers and serves children and families in need through its Families Together program, in partnership with Children's Friend.
- Providence Children's Museum is one of only nine children's museums nationally selected to participate in the SAFE (Strengthening Arts Facilities Effectively) initiative, a partnership between The Kresge Foundation and the Nonprofit Finance Fund to help organizations address building and systems maintenance needs and better understand their overall capitalization. The Museum will make regular deposits in a reserve fund for building maintenance, which will be matched up to \$11,000 annually for six years by the SAFE program.
- The Museum was recognized in the New England Museum Association Publication Awards Competition for "excellence in design, production, and effective communication" for last year's annual report and gala invitation.

# Talking Back

Meet **Bonnie Schultz Platzer**, a former Museum AmeriCorps member who brought *The Power to Play: From Trash to Treasure* to the Museum this fall.



## What's your background?

I served with the Peace Corps in Togo, West Africa from 1969 to 1971, after graduating from college, then again in Morocco from 2006 to 2008. When I came back from Morocco, I wanted to continue working for a non-profit organization and Providence Children's Museum intrigued and impressed me.

## Describe your year of AmeriCorps service.

I was on the team that created activities for preschool children at Head Start centers, led them on field trips to the Museum, and organized family nights to encourage parents to bring children back to the Museum throughout the year. Everything in the classroom was wonderful: having children looking at you with excitement and concentration as you lead an activity and tell a story; their attention to and delight in everything we brought to them. On field trips, they were so excited to be at the Museum, they could hardly contain themselves.

It was satisfying to see children who were given a chance to enjoy a school setting in preparation for kindergarten, interesting to see the situation teachers face in preparing them for school, and wonderful to meet the parents who were giving their children opportunities for the future.

## Talk about your weaving that hangs in Discovery Studio.

In West Africa, I was fascinated by the beauty of textiles and started taking classes in spinning and weaving. I studied Gobelin tapestry weaving techniques that enabled me to produce woven portraits.

When I returned to Rhode Island, I wove portraits including the little girl at the Hope Street farmer's market, which took about a year. The Museum is a place of discovery, and I love having it hang here and having people respond to the image. I love the connection to

something that women have done from the beginning of time; it makes me proud to continue that tradition.

## What inspired you to bring *The Power to Play* exhibit to the Museum?

When I saw the Museum's atrium, I thought about a toy exhibit my late brother initiated when he worked for ChildFund International. My brother and I lived in Kenya for a few years and, on a later trip, a child gave him a boat made from a flip-flop. He was struck that, in the midst of a traumatic situation, this child still had the need to play. [ChildFund] put out a request for toys made by children around the globe and they started pouring in.

I was struck by how similar the goals of ChildFund's exhibit were to the Museum's: helping children thrive, meeting the needs of children in the community, giving kids a safe environment to play and learn. And for *all* children to feel welcome in that environment.

## How did the project progress?

We selected 20 toys that would fit in the cases but also represented diversity of cultures and of purpose – plus some larger toys to display in *Discovery Studio*. Then we thought about how to show them off using materials that are either recycled – since all of the toys are made from bits and pieces kids found around them – or that kids might find in their countries, like raffia, jute or bamboo.

I'm pleased that the Museum was open to the idea and I hope the international community in Providence will come to see it and feel this is a place for them.

## Gift Shop Picks

Choose from a selection of open-ended playful items in the Museum Gift Shop – perfect for holidays, birthdays or any special occasion.

### Maple Blocks Set *Ages 1 and up*

Children practice hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and color and shape matching and recognition with this colorful set of 50 lightweight wooden blocks. Great for building, stacking and sorting! **\$25.00**



### Georello Toolbox *Ages 5 and up*

Budding engineers will love to construct creative working structures with this 165-piece gear set. Gears, cranks and other moving parts come in a toolbox that provides easy storage and a unique building foundation. **\$39.95**

### Magic Penny Magnet Kit *Ages 8 and up*

Explore the fascinating power of magnetism as you make pennies spin at 1,000 revolutions per minute, move coins up ramps and across bridges, and much more. This exciting set contains a 64-page activity guide full of fun experiments, two extra strong magnet towers, and 24 authentic British pennies. **\$21.95**



Can't decide from the exciting array of items? Opt for Museum Dollars in increments of \$1 to \$5 or a gift certificate in any amount. Purchase gift certificates online at [www.ChildrenMuseum.org/GiftShop.asp](http://www.ChildrenMuseum.org/GiftShop.asp).

# LET'S MOVE!



## Let's Play!

Active play is an important part of children's healthy growth and development and Providence Children's Museum is a proud new member of the national "Let's Move!" initiative. The Museum is committed to offering interactive play and learning experiences that promote physical activity each month, and to providing parents with resources about nurturing kids' growth through play. This fall, look for the new "Let's Move" physical activity sheet, plus for "Let's Move, Let's Play!" programs such as performances by JUMP! Dance Company and Rolie Polie Guacamole.

# Give the Gift of Play

This holiday season, give a full year of fun-filled play and learning to children, parents and grandparents with a Providence Children's Museum membership. Purchase by November 30 and give an extra month *free!*

Opt for a Family PLUS Membership to give reciprocal admission to nearly 200 children's museums nationwide and over 300 science and technology centers worldwide. A Supporting Play Membership includes the remarkable value of a reciprocal membership *and* a \$100 tax-deductible gift to fund a membership for a low-income family.

Honor a special person with a charitable contribution to the Museum in his or her name or an inscribed brick in the Museum's atrium walkway. Gifts in any amount help make inspiring, joyful play and learning experiences available to children and families who need them most. Those honored will be listed in the Museum's Annual Report.

Purchase a gift membership or donate online at [www.ChildrenMuseum.org](http://www.ChildrenMuseum.org).



John Bowen, President, Johnson & Wales University; Joe Nagle, CEO, Delta Dental of Rhode Island; Ted Almon, CEO, Claffin Co.; and Jon Duffy, President, Duffy & Shanley

## Helping Kids Thrive

Many thanks to everyone who supported the Museum's first Thrive Drive and helped raise over \$3,000 for the vibrant new *Discovery Studio*, now bustling with children of all ages engaged in creative play and learning.

As of the end of July, 77 donors contributed to this new online fundraising effort, 83 percent of whom are new Museum supporters. Congratulations to Henry Silva and Susan and Geoffrey Gunter, top Thrive Drive fundraisers and each winners of a Family Membership.

Visit the Museum's website for more details and a list of Thrive Drive donors.

## Golf Tournament Raises \$40,000

In August, 120 golfers took part in the 28th Annual Allen H. Chatterton Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament at the world-famous Carnegie Abbey Club in Portsmouth. The tournament netted \$40,000 to benefit the Museum's hands-on exhibits and innovative educational programs.

Guests bid \$7,600 on exciting live auction items including a weekend getaway and rounds of golf at exclusive courses. A raffle and contest holes around the course brought in an additional \$5,280.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges Allen H. Chatterton III, who chaired the tournament for the 22nd consecutive year in memory of his father, and major event sponsors Admirals Bank, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI and Nortek Inc. Thanks to all of the other generous sponsors, in-kind donors and volunteers for making the tournament a terrific success!

Visit the Museum's website for a full list of event sponsors, tournament winners and committee members.

### Member Corner

Providence Children's Museum welcomed **255** new and **219** renewing member families in June, July and August!

**Bring a Friend!** Members, on November 13 bring an adult friend and his or her family to the Museum for **FREE** to enjoy exciting hands-on fun and other special offers. Watch your email for details.

**Save BIG!** From November 25 - December 9 receive a double discount (20%) in the Museum's Gift Shop with your Providence Children's Museum membership card.

Visit [www.ChildrenMuseum.org](http://www.ChildrenMuseum.org) to join or renew today. Contact (401) 273-5437 ext. 221 or [Membership@ChildrenMuseum.org](mailto:Membership@ChildrenMuseum.org) for more information.

### Special Offer on Family Travel

See the world and have an unforgettable family adventure while supporting Providence Children's Museum. Learn about Collette Vacation's all-inclusive family-friendly trips to amazing destinations like London, Paris, Italy, Costa Rica, the Galapagos, Kenya and more. Each tour has discounted rates for kids *and* the Museum receives a percentage of the proceeds!

Join an information session  
Sunday, October 2 at 1:00 PM  
at Providence Children's Museum

Please RSVP to Megan Fischer, [Fischer@ChildrenMuseum.org](mailto:Fischer@ChildrenMuseum.org).

## Grants & Gifts

of \$1,500 or more for operating support received June 1 through September 9, 2011

**Bank of America Foundation**  
\$25,000 for general operating support

**June Rockwell Levy Foundation**  
\$12,000 for *Discovery Studio*

**The Dominion Foundation**  
\$10,000 to help underwrite "No Time to Waste" and *Play Power* programs

**The Collis Foundation**  
\$7,500 for general operating support

**Narragansett Bay Commission**  
\$7,500 for upkeep of *Water Ways*

**The Providence Shelter**  
\$3,000 to support Head Start/Good Start

**John D. & Katherine A. Johnston Foundation, Bank of America, N.A. Trustee**  
\$2,500 to support inclusion trainings for staff and volunteers

**Harry M., Miriam C. & William C. Horton Fund, Bank of America, N.A. Trustee**  
\$2,000 to support Learning Clubs and Head Start/Good Start

The Museum welcomes charitable gifts of all sizes. For information, please contact Jennifer Laurelli at (401) 273-5437 ext. 120.

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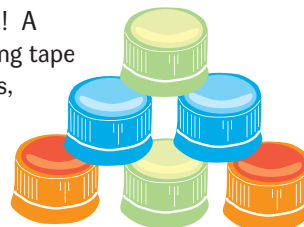
If your address has a star (★) by it, it's time to renew your membership. Renew before your expiration date and get an extra month FREE!

**Try it**  
at home!

## Re-Constructors

There are amazing building materials all around us. Creating with everyday objects opens up possibilities and encourages a spirit of invention! Try these ideas:

- **Caps and containers** – Collect large caps (from milk, juice and detergent bottles) mixed with containers of a variety of sizes (from yogurt, hummus, take out) for young builders to sort, stack and nest. Bring them into the bathtub to pour and play.
- **Cups** – Disposable cups of one type (like tiny paper or big plastic cups) make great reusable building toys when inverted and stacked in towers.
- **Newspaper** – Roll it, fold it, shred it! A stack of newspapers and a roll of masking tape present endless flexible play possibilities, from costume making to building tall structures with rolled newspaper rods.
- **Cardboard tubes** – Gather toilet paper and paper towel tubes and use scissors to snip multiple slits on each open end to create interlocking structures.
- **Playing cards** – Building a castle from a deck of cards is a fun challenge that rewards practice! A carpeted surface helps build a base of cards that lean against one another.



For more playful inspiration, check out "Steven Caney's Ultimate Building Book."

