



VCM

The Valley Children's Museum portable site sees an average of 4,000 visitors a year, but it sometimes needs to put exhibits outside to accommodate guests. Finding a permanent home in Dublin Crossing Park would help solve those issues and more.

Valley Children's Museum

Mobile learning center's long road to permanent home hits critical juncture

By RYAN J. DEGAN

After nearly 20 years of moving from location to location, the Valley Children's Museum is looking to leave its nomadic ways behind and establish a permanent, non-mobile home in Dublin.

The museum's Board of Directors is currently campaigning to raise enough funds to help build the museum, and organizers need to collect at least \$1.5 million by July in order to keep the project alive.

"2018 marks a critical year for this endeavor: to build a children's museum that brings together today's young learners and the many cultural attributes of the Tri-Valley," said San Ramon City Councilman Harry Sachs, who sits on the museum board.

The Valley Children's Museum (VCM) was founded in 1999 when a group of parents and educators introduced it as an exhibit at a local children's fair in Livermore.

By 2006, VCM volunteers were able to purchase their current educational trailer, but it wasn't until 2011 that the portable museum found its home at Emerald Glen Park in Dublin. Since then, an estimated 4,000 schoolchildren have visited the museum every year, according to VCM board president Ed Duarte.

In line with the mission of its parent organization, the Association of Children's Museums, the goal of the VCM is to help foster the healthy social, emotional and cognitive development of children, through play and interactive education.

Tri-Valley children might best remember the VCM for its California Missions exhibits, where students would learn about the Spanish missionaries of early America, as well as Native American culture.

"In our early days, we gathered up a bunch of relics and replicated artifacts of the California Mission experience ... and we drove (the portable museum) all around California," Duarte said.

Historically a part of the fourth-grade curriculum, study of the California Missions has begun to phase out as schools focus on other subjects. Duarte said that state educators are de-emphasizing education on the missions in order to "focus on what some would call more politically correct (studies). You see the Native Americans were terribly taken advantage of."

Exhibits at the VCM are following suit with this statewide shift, and in the coming season, the museum will have exhibits focusing on

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MUSEUM

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energy and water conservation, as well as interactive displays geared toward science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies.

Currently the VCM's mobile location is open Saturdays from May through September in conjunction with the city of Dublin Farmers Market from 4-8 p.m. at Emerald Glen Park. The mobile museum, newly renovated for 2018, is set to open its doors for the season this Saturday.

The trailer may not be the only source for children's interactive education in the Tri-Valley for long, however, as the VCM board is closer than ever to potentially building a permanent museum.

The Dublin City Council last August approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the VCM, reserving a spot for a permanent museum in the future 30-acre Dublin Crossing Park near Dublin Boulevard, on a portion of Parks Reserve Forces Training Area (Camp Parks) property.

The piece of land is reserved for the VCM under the MOU as long as the nonprofit provides the council with proof of adequate funding by July 1 — \$1.5 million in fundraising dollars toward the estimated \$34 million project. Other key contract stipulations include that the museum does not exceed a footprint of 25,000 square feet or a building size of 50,000 square feet, it provides a minimum 167 parking spaces, and it abides by all city rules, processes and procedures.

"I am very supportive of the Valley Children's Museum, I think they can be a very

strong regional draw and a regional asset. I am happy to devote city public land for the site that they can develop," Dublin Mayor David Haubert said. "They will need all the help that they can get and I am also willing to help them. But I can't do it for them; they need to take the leadership role on (fundraising)."

The MOU only saves the land until July 1 if VCM board doesn't reach its fundraising total, unless the Dublin council grants a deadline extension.

"It is going to be tough. We are not business heavyweights. We need to build a network of people who can write six-figure checks (and) that's an uphill battle we are facing," Duarte said last week. "For 17 years we've really been a mom-and-pop operation, only working with volunteers. A lot of people still don't know about us. We've got a long ways to go."

If the VCM is unable to reach its fundraising goal, the council could revoke the land guarantee, and a design concept is available that would see the museum site replaced with a plaza that would hold events or local programs.

"If they cannot raise the money, then we will have to do something with the land eventually," Haubert said.

VCM supporters do say, however, that signing the MOU has greatly increased their chances of finding funding. According to board vice president Patrick Constanzo, donors will be much more receptive toward funding the permanent location now that there is an actual location identified.

Concept art for the proposed permanent museum, created by the architecture firm Dahlin Group, shows what the Valley



Children check out the interior of the VCM mobile museum during a past exhibit. The inside of the trailer has been renovated and is set to reopen this Saturday in Dublin.

VCM

Children's Museum may one day be. The envisioned brick-and-mortar museum is a 46,000-square-foot facility within the future Dublin Crossing Park.

"This project has always been about inspiration and education and we want the building to (depict) just that," said Mario Aiello, senior principal of Pleasanton-based Dahlin.

According to the architects, the conceptual design features a modern distinctive building that will create a focal point at the entry to the park.

The museum will be built to host both permanent and traveling exhibits as well as several revenue generating amenities such as a museum cafe, an event facility room designed to hold visiting speakers, lectures and other events as well as private party rentals, and an outdoor courtyard for activities and party rentals. Designs include the latest in green technology.

Due to its location near the Pleasanton/Dublin BART station, the museum will be within easy walking distance of public transportation, making it more accessible to the Tri-Valley community.

"We already have an agreement with the city to go build the park...and we would like to commence construction by the end of the year," said Joe Guerra, Dublin Crossing LLC representative.

Guerra also said that his group is under contractual obligation to finish construction on the park project in 13 months — making it possible for the museum to be open by the end of 2019, if funding goes through.

The VCM does not plan to stop educating the region's children while it waits for its permanent location. In January, Sandia National Laboratories donated \$25,000 to help renovate and upgrade the mobile site.

"Sandia is honored to be a partner in bringing the world of engineering to San Francisco Bay Area youth and adults," said Madeline Burchard, community relations officer at Sandia's California site in Livermore. "We believe science and engineering is fun and we are excited to inspire children to believe so too. This grant is one of many ways Sandia is supporting our local communities."

Not only is the grant being used to upgrade the facilities and lighting of the mobile site, but also to create more exhibits geared toward STEM.

"We hope to have an energy conservation exhibit and one on water conservation," Duarte said. "STEM is very important when it comes to educating kids...We need builders and engineers."

In addition to the financial support, Sandia will offer the VCM access to its staff of scientific minds. Rachel Wallace, an executive strategy specialist at Sandia and VCM board member, said that the scientists and engineers from Sandia have been invited to join the museum's advisory committee to assist with the museums exhibit makeover.

"The access to STEM is such a tremendous benefit to everyone in our region," Wallace said. "I hope this will inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers in our community to change the world." ■

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Thinking of a career in TV production?

TV30 offering two summer camp sessions for teens

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Community station TV30 is offering its Tri-Valley TV Summer Camp again this summer, a chance for middle and high school students to learn about video and TV production.

"This is the only video camp available locally that provides students with a real life experience in a working television station," said Melissa Tench-Stevens, executive director at TV30.

This hands-on TV camp will give participants an overall picture of the production process, help them prepare for related courses in video and provide an edge for a future in the broadcasting industry, TV30 officials said.

Now in its 10th year, Tri-Valley TV Summer Camp includes an introduction to studio production, field production, writing, producing and digital video-editing.

The day camp is 20 hours, open to grades 6-12. The students will work within a group to produce a TV program that will air on TV30.

"The campers' edited program will be broadcast on television via Comcast and AT&T U-Verse and may also be viewed all over the world on our website," Tench-Stevens said.

TV30 is offering two 20-hour camps this summer, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day, from June



Each session of Tri-Valley TV Summer Camp produces a program that is aired on TV30.

11-15 and from July 9-13. The camp fee is \$558 per camp, and registration is limited.

For more information and to register, go to www.tv30.org or call the station at 462-3030.

Organized by the nonprofit Tri-Valley Community Television, the camp will take place at the Television Broadcasting Studios of TV28, TV29 and TV30, 663 Bernal Ave. in Pleasanton. ■

Children's Theatre offering new camp

Intensive two-week program ends with musical at Bankhead

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Bay Area Children's Theatre, which partners with the Pleasanton Civic Arts Stage Company for its youth productions, is holding a two-week intensive musical theater camp this summer at Bothwell Arts Center in Livermore for the first time.

This camp, with professional instructors and designed for students entering second through eighth grade, begins July 30 and will end with a production of "Madagascar, A Musical Adventure Jr." onstage at the Bankhead Theater at 7 p.m. Aug. 9 and 10.

The students in BACT's fun and fast-paced program will work with a director, choreographer and music director to learn vocal technique, basic dance vocabulary and storytelling skills as they prepare for the production, BACT officials said. Instruction will focus on teaching students how to support each other on stage and off, to strengthen their empathy and self-confidence as well as acting, musical, creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

The camp runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., July 30 to Aug. 10. Tuition is \$715. Special prices are available for Livermore residents

and a limited number of scholarships are available through the LVPAC Education Fund; contact education program manager Kiran Guleria at 583-2312 or kguleria@lvpac.org.

The program plays to the company's particular strengths at ensemble building and engages students in the exhilarating process of putting on a show, noted Annie Clark, director of education for BACT, which was founded in 2004. Since then, its programs have reached more than 110,000 children and adults throughout the Bay Area with a variety of programs, production and performances.

This is just one of the summer enrichment programs for students in grades 3-12 at the Bothwell Arts Center and Bankhead Theater in Livermore, which include "Some Have Greatness Thrust Upon Them" summer theater camp, presented by teaching artists from Livermore Shakespeare Festival.

In Pleasanton, a Shakespeare camp for ages 7 to 13 is offered July 23 to Aug. 3 by San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, which also culminates in a performance. ■

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