

I Love the Mohawk Valley: 5 things to look for at the Children's Museum



Marlene Brown Executive Director of the Children's Museum

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UTICA — When Marlene Brown dreams up visions for the future of The Children's Museum of History, Science & Technology, she dreams big. Like solar-system big. A new addition with a planetarium is just one of the projects Brown has planned for the interactive museum, where she serves as executive director. She gave us a list of four things to look for in the future, and the details on one new exhibit that's already in place.

1. Planetarium - Brown hopes to begin construction on a planetarium in the area behind the existing museum next year. "We're going to build a building out back and the bottom of it is going to be an eco-pond and a butterfly pond, and there's going to be solar exhibits there and above that is the planetarium," she said. "I've always wanted to put a planetarium in here."

2. Expanding Train Exhibit - The museum is currently looking for sponsors for the expansion of its train exhibit. It is building a Dog Bone track above the current Standard O track. "It will go straight in the middle, down to the other end, curve, come back and then curve again (in the shape of a dog bone). We will have that in addition to the six floor pedals (that operate the trains)," she said. "The trains just kept growing and expanding incredibly."

3. Million Minds Theater - A conference room/theater called the Million Minds Theater is already in the final stages of completion. It is located on the fourth floor of the facility and was created in response to interest from community members who wish to conduct meetings and programs at the museum, Brown said. "The only place we had where they could have a meeting was in the kitchen, but we didn't have any AV equipment in there," she said. "So, that will now serve as a meeting place for people who wish to rent it out and also for school groups who want to pay a little extra to have a special program done."

4. Healthy Kids Hut - The museum's grocery store was turned into a "Healthy Kids Hut," completely stocked with healthy play foods and other items such as carts and aprons. "They're educated while they're being entertained," Brown said. "There are some really neat videos, posters and hand-outs that teach kids how to eat and exercise and how to live a healthy life."

5. Bagg's Square Growth - Brown says she's very motivated by the recent growth in Bagg's Square and she looks forward to possibly forming a committee to help continue that forward momentum in the area. "I'm very excited about the growth down here at Bagg's Square East," she said. "We're unlimited with what we can do in bringing people down here. We are sitting on some of the most prime property in the city of Utica, because we have an unobstructed view of the trains and the Erie Canal and the Mohawk River."

The I "Heart" Mohawk Valley series features places and people that make the Mohawk Valley a special place to live. View the video series at www.uticaod.com.