

Today's headlines

Sunday, March 11, 2001 Sponsor puts wind in Children's Museum sails

By LEHA BYRD Observer-Dispatch

UTICA — The Children's Museum is designed for young people to have fun, but keeping it running financially is a serious matter.

So museum supporters welcome the addition of another sponsor-backed exhibit, adding to its list of companies that help pay for such displays and activity areas at the Main Street museum.

Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. now has a Wind Energy Model Exhibit on the museum's first floor as part of its sponsorship commitment this year. The utility also presented a \$15,000 check to help with initial maintenance of the exhibit and the museum's operation costs. A sponsorship commitment also includes a \$1,000 contribution each year a company has an exhibit on display.

"We want to sponsor and promote what happens there, and this is also an excellent vehicle for the children to learn," said Dennis Elsenbeck, Niagara Mohawk regional manager of energy delivery.

The commitment of such sponsors brings funding that is critical to the museum. The museum has a \$200,000 budget and receives supplemental funds from various grants and contributions. The staff includes two full-time employees, five part-timers and an artist-in-residence.

Business contributions enable the museum to provide different hands-on educational opportunities for the children to view and experience, said Marlene Brown, museum board of directors vice president. "They can have fun and learn and be interactive with the exhibits," she said. "Contributions help the museum provide a variety of things in a positive sense."

Other companies with exhibits include WUTR-TV Channel 20, which has a weather room, and Tops Market, with a grocery store room. The hands-on interaction with exhibits is a major attraction for museum visitors.

Anthony Clementi, museum executive director, said funding from businesses gives the museum much needed stability. "It costs about \$550 a day to run the museum, and we don't get that through admissions, so we need these types of agreements to get by," he said. Admission is \$3.50 a person. Children 12 months or younger are free.

Margaret Murphy commuted nearly an hour from Syracuse to bring her grandchildren to the museum. "The exhibits are child-friendly," Murphy said. "They can run and jump and touch, and I don't have to worry about them breaking anything." Lorraine Eady of Utica brought her niece and a friend to the museum. "It's such a great place. The kids get to touch stuff which makes them happy," she said. Her niece, Olivia Waszkiewicz, 10, said she likes the museum for that very reason. "Here, you can touch stuff and play. At most museums you can't do that," she said.