

Metamorphosis for 'Critter Crossing' at The New Children's Museum

WEST HARTFORD, Conn (August 25, 2014) - This summer, The New Children's Museum's beloved early childhood resource room, "Critter Crossing", received a full renovation, complete with educational enhancements thanks to a generous grant from Hartford Steam Boiler and The Mortensen Foundation.

Open only to children 4 years old and under, this unique and popular space is a quiet and soothing environment away from the noise and action of older children.

After considerable research and parent input, the museum staff chose a "nature immersion" for the renovation theme. The design, educational materials, décor, and classes held in Critter Crossing educate little visitors about science and nature.

"Critter Crossing now represents the many environments of Connecticut - forest, field and stream," said Jay Kaplan, Wildlife Sanctuary Director at The New Children's Museum and Roaring Brook Nature Center. "The murals and animals reflect that thinking. We find many children know more about a tropical rainforest from movies or television than they do their own backyards."

Kaplan says the exhibit also provides opportunities for young children and their parents/caregivers to interact with native plants and animals while they play.

- One wall features a hand-painted mural, created by an artistic museum member, which shows a variety of natural habitats, from lake to forest to desert.
- Natural colors and materials are used throughout the room, such as muted greens and browns for paint and fabrics.
- The little kitchen was renovated and stocked with educational materials that teach about healthy eating, how vegetables and other nutritious food are grown, stored and cooked.
- Also included in the design is an area where live animals can be brought in and safely touched along with parent/child teaching material.
- The renovation includes new built-in benches with sturdy anchored cushioning for parents who are watching their children play or participating in programs. These benches also provide places off the floor for children to sprawl when absorbed with books and educational toys.

Critter Crossing enables young children to easily connect with nature from which they can learn basic science and vocabulary. This exhibit provides a positive alternative for inner city children, who often have limited access to safe outdoor learning.

The New Children's Museum is currently hosting "Winged Wonders Butterfly House" this summer where visitors become immersed in a world of fluttering butterflies.

The museum is home to over 100 live animals, including the now famous Fennec foxes, hands-on science exhibits, out-of-this-world digital planetarium shows, and programs for younger children and families. The Children's Museum and Roaring Brook Nature Center are the region's premiere destinations for science and nature exploration.

The Children's Museum is located at 950 Trout Brook Drive in West Hartford and at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton. More information is available at www.TheChildrensMuseumCT.org.

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