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Written by Jane Lehrman, Silver and Sage coordinator

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM moves focus to youth of all ages

Grandparents, are you wondering about an interesting place you can take your visiting grandchildren for a pleasant time this summer? Jim Peckham, executive director of the Children's Museum of Northern Nevada, has an answer.

He has been with the Children's Museum for 15 months, previously employed in business as director of human resources in United States and overseas multinational companies.

The pleasant man with a wry sense of humor that pops out once in awhile, has a master's degree in human resources management and a bachelor's degree in business.

"The museum is changing its focus from preschool and elementary children to the entire family – adults, teens, high school students and college folks. However, we don't serve too many people over 99," Peckham said.

"We are growing by word-of-mouth and becoming more appealing recently. We want to bring people into a community environment."

"We focus on the entertainment and education. There is something for all ages. I call it 'educatement [sic. 'edu-tainment'].' We try to make the exhibits apply to the curriculum of the Nevada schools. We get field trips from all over the state when students come to the state capital to see the buildings and finish up with enjoyable hands-on time at the museum."

"Several of our most interesting exhibits have been made possible by donation. The wooden space shuttle was donated by a group of cub scouts and we added the computer for flight simulation."

"We received an anonymous grant from a generous donor for the virtual reality maze. The original price was \$35,000. The maze, set up on the stage, can be addictive and adults, as well as young people, may be seen spending their time trying to solve it as they walk along and try to keep the virtual ball from going down the virtual hole making them lose their turns."

"Another favorite is the giant keyboard, played by stepping on the keys, and the climbing wall, or Treadwall, also donated, is popular with all ages."

"The museum is open space, so parents can view what is going on at all the stations in the large room. Children should be accompanied by an adult, but sometimes we allow teens to come in alone as long as they behave properly. Grandparents especially like to take their grandchildren here this summer. It's air conditioned."

For younger children there is the governor's office, a bank, Smith's grocery, an Asian café, a dress-up area, a sheriff's office and a jail – just meant for pretending with friends. The Nevada exhibit and the Carson River booth are both fun and educational.

"Most of our funds come from entrance fees. We do have a well-stocked gift shop, run by Mary Ann Weiss for about 10 years, and that helps a little with finances, but is more of a convenience. However, we also have fundraisers put on by the loyal board of directors who add emotional support and sweat equity."

"Right now we are working on a cookbook, there is the kid's carnival, a luau at the Elk's Lodge, craft events, rent for the theater groups such as the Wildhorse Children's Theater and a garage sale. Even after we have the exhibits in place it costs money for cleaning, air conditioning, heat and other expenses. A number of volunteers are assigned from RSVP, but we are looking for more volunteers to serve as docents."

The admission prices are \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and military, \$3 for children and there is a special discount for school field trips. The museum is open seven days a week, except for major holidays, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There are some evening programs and there is plenty of parking around the building with a paved and dirt lot nearby.

For information, visit www.cmnn.org or call 884-2226.