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[Back To Home Page](#)

Museum hosts its 10th gala kickoff

By F.C. Lowe
The Winchester Star

Winchester — Anne Buettner has been taking her children to the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum for just about the entire time it's been open.

She considers it a real asset to the community and that's why she agreed to chair the Oct. 27 gala celebrating the museum's 10th anniversary.

"It is a great place for kids, with a great learning environment," Buettner said, noting that her children — Zach, 10, Liza, 9, and Riley, 7 — can choose what they want to do.

"We always look for children's museums on vacation," she added.

The annual fund-raiser will benefit the programs at the museum. Its theme is borrowed from Maurice Sendak's book "Where the Wild Things Are," and music is by Right On, 1970s-style performers who will echo the theme with their animal-print hats.

And participants are encouraged to dress the part in "creative black tie."

The setting is unique this year — under a tent at the historic Selma residence owned by the Dick family.

"We are looking forward to a wonderful 10th anniversary gala here to benefit all of the programs for the children at the Discovery Museum," said Thomas J. Dick, trustee for the family.

"When Dad and Mother purchased Selma in 1953, they began wonderful years of happiness at Selma for themselves, their seven children, extended family and friends," he said. "Selma has always been the most special place for all of us, our children, and now great-grandchildren."



Emily Fishchbach, 9, and her brother Peter, 6, play in the honey comb at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum. A 10th anniversary gala will be held Oct. 27 at Selma in Winchester with a kick off Saturday on the Loudoun Street Mall.
(Photo by Ginger Perry)

He sees the museum's programs as benefiting all the children in the community of Winchester, Frederick and Clarke counties, and the surrounding areas.

PROGRAMS

ARTIST SERIES: Artists demonstrate crafts from sculpture to bead making to water color and basket weaving. These two-day workshops are held on the second weekend of each month and are free with museum admission.

HANDS-ON PROGRAMS: The museum offers 19 different programs ranging from magnets to weather, and even star lab. All school programs correlate with the Virginia Standards of Learning.

FIRST FRIDAY: Free admission and events take place from 5 to 7:30 p.m. the first Friday of the month. Activities include a heart program from Winchester Cardiology science experiments with Diagnostics and an outdoor movie night in October presented by Magic Lantern Theater.

WEE DISCOVERERS: This is a weekly program for ages 3 to 5 and their parents. They will explore the world through song, story, art, science, and humor.

PARTIES: The museum hosts birthday parties, employee parties, and all types of group parties. Nine different party themes are available including a sleep over party.

SUMMER CAMPS: Campers explore a variety of topics including dinosaurs, math, theater, art, and science.

MORE INFORMATION: Call 722-2020 or visit www.discoverymuseum.net.

And Kelly Kremer definitely agrees.

The Winchester native has been taking her three children — ages 3, 5, and 7 — to the museum since the oldest was 3.

While her children enjoy the exhibits, she finds the classes and camps especially worthwhile.

“We have done the spring and fall sessions of ‘Wee Discoverers,’” Kremer said, describing the program as a mixture of science experiments with crafts and games. “Mr. Mark has a way of pulling it together and making it special.”

(Mark Lawson is gallery manager at the museum.)

Kremer also praised the camps, which include field trips with parent assistance.

She has served on the annual campaign committee and chaired last year's gala.

“We love the Discovery Museum,” Kremer said. “It has made wonderful memories for my children.”

To begin the gala event, a celebration will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday outside the entrance of the museum on the Loudoun Street Mall.

A city trolley will be at the front gate of Selma at 1:15 p.m. on Saturday to take riders to the

celebration on the mall.

The public is invited to a pizza party, provided by Anthony's, with art activities on the mall.

Raffle tickets (\$1 each) will be sold for \$100 gift certificates to these mall merchants: Village Square, Door Mouse, Bell's, Snow White Grill, Winchester Book Gallery, and Kimberly's — along with two tickets to the gala.

The raffle tickets will be available on Saturday during the kickoff and at Confetti, 160 N. Loudoun St.

The proceeds from the raffle and the gala will also fund 150 free memberships for area families through organizations such as Head Start, Stepping Stones, and various churches.

The winners of the raffles will be drawn on Oct. 21 at the museum.

The attractions at the museum are varied, with exhibits ranging from simple machines to a medical room and a climbing wall.

“It is hard to say which is the most popular,” said Niki Wilson, director of marketing, but she said the climbing wall is a busy spot and the building boards are good for families.

“The museum is all about imagination — letting it take over and learn the aspects of art,” she added.

Children aged 2 to 12 are the target for the museum, Wilson said. “It is amazing to see their interaction as they assign each other roles in the apple-packing exhibit.”



Kelsie Utz, 8, (left) and her sister Genesis, 9, try the Chaotic Pendulum at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum. The public is invited to a kickoff Saturday for the 10th anniversary gala celebration Oct. 27. (Photo by Ginger Perry)

She also likes to see the young imaginations at work, Wilson said. “I love it here. There is a great atmosphere. When I need a break, I come out of my office and play with the kids.”

The museum is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 1-5 p.m. on Sunday. Attendance averages from 50 to 100 a day in the summer.

“Visitors spend an average of two hours,” Wilson said. “They come in, go for lunch, and come back. We are like a big family down here on the mall.”

While she finds the downtown mall a great location, the museum is working to raise funds to build at Jim Barnett Park.

While the funds for the gala are entirely for programs and not the building fund, Buettner emphasized that more contributions can be offered when the move to the park is made.

A bigger museum is needed due to the increase in attendance, Wilson said. From April to July, more than 17,000 visitors frequented the museum.

The public is invited to Saturday's free events and activities in front of the museum on the Loudoun Street Mall. For more information or to purchase gala tickets (\$85 per person), call 540-722-2020 or e-mail nwilson@discoverymuseum.net.