

PLAY DATE

Discovery museum to play host to game day

By Becky Krystal
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WINCHESTER — While video games threaten to checkmate more traditional board games, they haven't quite yet succeeded.

So in keeping with its goal of interactive learning for children, the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum will hold a game day Sunday afternoon to encourage creative and social play through classics such as chess, Candy Land and other activities.

The event will coincide with National Games Week, set for Nov. 19-25, which had more than 4,000 events and almost 120,000 individuals participate last year, according to its Web site.

"We thought it would be fun to do a little celebration at the museum," said Niki Wilson, the Discovery Museum's director of marketing and development. "We're going to have all kinds of board games for the kids."

"It definitely fits with our mission to learn through play," she said. "Kids definitely learn a lot through playing board games."

Laura K. Zimmermann, a professor at Shenandoah University who specializes in developmental psychology, agreed.

"Social interactions are very helpful to development," Zimmermann said. "Obviously, when you go back to games, you get the social interaction. We are a society built on relationships."

That social interaction doesn't take place in the generally solitary nature of video games, she said.

"There's definitely no video games" scheduled for the game day, Wilson said. "We'll even have some games like Risk that take a lot of thought and strategy."

The museum may also offer children the opportunity to come up with their own games.

"We had a summer camp this past summer that focused on games," Wilson said. "That was extremely popular."

One creation to come out of the camp that will be on display is horse socks, a kid-friendly version of horse shoes.

Zimmermann said it's that kind of innovation that children need to develop properly.

"Imagination and creativity is what we're losing right now in the school system," she said. "They're not imagining and pretending."

Creativity is "a cornerstone to our cognitive development," Zimmermann said.

She said "cognitive development is based in play," contributing to the growth of language and social skills.

Some of those opportunities for growth, however, may be getting left behind as children live in an increasingly technological and fast-paced world.

"We have too much TV and too much computers and too much over-scheduling," Zimmermann said.

The Discovery Museum event will take place Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. It is free with the \$5 museum admission fee.

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