



PHOTO BY AMELIA REISING

A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

Paving the way in Eugene for Adventure! Children's Museum

When Adventure! Children's Museum founder and board president Amelia Reising was home with her small son, they got a little stir crazy. "I'd stopped working and was hanging out with him, and we were just trying to get out of the house," Reising recalls.

The two were regulars at the public library as well as Eugene's offering of art, science and natural history museums. And mother and son took daytrips, far and wide, to places like the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) in Portland, and to the A.C. Gilbert's Discovery Village in Salem, a warren of Victorian homes that has been converted into lively learning spaces with one of the coolest playgrounds in the state.

"It was so fun to spend all day at a place like that where my son could explore his various interests and play as long as he liked," Reising says. "We decided we really should have something like that in Eugene."

After securing 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in November of last year, Reising and her fellow board members wasted no time launching programs, even before their museum has a permanent home.

"This summer we had pop-up exhibits at fairs and festivals, like the 'dinosaur dig' at the [Oregon] County Fair," Reising says, "and our midcentury newspaper office that kids could explore, with old rotary telephones, typewriters and a usable printing press."

A graphic designer by trade, Reising graduated from

the University of Oregon with a degree in art and interests in archaeology, costume design and anthropology. She's always been interested in mural and decorative painting, sewing "and crafting of things," she says.

Turns out, it's a terrific background for museum work.

Reising's organization recently received its first grant through the city of Eugene-Lane Arts Council's Community Arts Grants program to create to-go boxes for educators and families. "The museum box project, Adventures To Go, provides an exhibit and lesson plans in a box," Reising explains.

The boxes take a visual art and social sciences spin, with materials provided in partnership with the Materials Exchange Center for Community Arts (MECCA).

But Reising and her nine-member board of directors and 25-member advisory board dream of something bigger: They envision a 30,000 square-foot brick-and-mortar space.

"We would like to have our own museum with fully immersive exhibits dedicated to travel and culture, and the social sciences, throughout history," Reising says, adding that "we need 20K to open, which would include our lease, insurance, exhibit design and building."

To that end, the organization will hold two fundraisers: 6 to 9 pm Saturday, Oct. 1, at Sam Bond's Brewing (\$1 per pint goes to the museum) as well as a Halloween party and auction 5 to 8 pm Oct. 16 at Washington Park Community Center.

Reising says she hopes folks will check out the organization's website (adventurechildrensmuseum.org) and follow them on Facebook. She says they're looking for a bank, credit union or real estate developer with vacant property that might let the museum lease space. "And we're always looking for volunteers," she says.

"I'm interested in giving children a broader world view," Reising says. "There's so much out there for people to see." ■

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