

the sandbox

A Hilton Head Area Children's Museum

Fundraisers **DIG IN**

Campaign kicks off for new children's museum

If you're the parent or grandparent of a young child, you've certainly heard your little one say, "I don't have anything to do!" Beginning next summer, there will be something new "to do," as a group of dedicated residents are planning to open a children's museum.

"**The Sandbox: A Hilton Head Area Children's Museum,**" is the brainchild of Melissa Malami Jones, a mother of two. Jones moved to the area five years ago and found activities for young children to be limited, as well as the opportunities for parents of pre-school children to meet and develop relationships both for themselves and their children.

So she and a few like-minded individuals began to explore the idea of a children's museum, similar to one she had visited in Raleigh.

"Young children learn primarily through the process of play, so the museum will be an indoor play space with exhibits that help children to develop both fine and gross motor skills, and social skills" said Jones, who now serves as the museum board president. While the exhibits are not specifically chosen yet, they will be designed for children eight and under and will range from entire themed rooms to simple puzzles or educational toys in the infant area.

"They will include things like a pirate boat with costumes and treasure," said Jones. "A five-year-old may be able to dress up and pretend to be a captain; a two-year-old may just enjoy jumping off the end of a foot high plank into the sea of blue and green balls below. Along with exhibits, we have discussed having a reading and homework room for elementary school-aged children that would be manned by volunteer retired educators in the afternoons."

Charlie the Alligator, who has come to life in books by author Kim Likins, will be the museum's "mascot."

A final decision about the location hasn't been made yet, but it will most likely be on the south end of the island. Right now the board is planning fundraising activities, including an evening out for ladies at Shell Hall in Bluffton on September 17th, and a capital campaign is scheduled to kickoff next month.

"Our goal is to raise at least \$300,000 by May 2005 in order to bring a quality, community-based children's museum to the area," said Jones. "The Sandbox will be dedicated to the most serious business of childhood — PLAY!"

For more information, call 757-8799 or email to TheSandbox@hargray.com. — Terry Bergeron

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