

"Please Touch" Museum

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*At the new Hawai'i
Children's Museum, learning and
fun are one and the same*

By Diana Lomont

Every state should have a children's museum, a place where youngsters can learn about themselves and the world around them while, above all, having fun. Until recently, though, Hawai'i was without such a place. Five years ago, caring Island residents set out to fill that gap. Educators, scientists, archaeologists, doctors, lawyers, business people and parents in general came together to create what is today The Hawai'i Children's Museum of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology.

Located in the newly developed Dole Cannery Square in Iwilei, a few minutes' drive from downtown Honolulu, The Hawai'i Children's Museum is a stop worth making for kids and their parents alike. Here, all are sure to learn something they didn't know before. Did you know that scorpions glow in the dark because of an ultraviolet light they emit? Or that the human eye receives an image upside down on the retina, and the brain transmits the image right side up? These are just a couple of interesting facts that the museum shares through an impressive array of interactive exhibits.

Loretta Yajima, president of The Hawai'i Children's Museum, likes to call the place a "hands-on, minds-on museum." From a giant bubble-blower and a bug zoo to exhibits demonstrating different types of energy and technology, the museum seeks to reach a wide age range of

Facing page: Children's art, depicting things they enjoyed at the museum, adorns one of its walls.

Right: Other attractions at Dole Cannery Square are a food court for casual dining and an array of shops.



Children's Museum

I LIKED
THE APPLE COMPUTER
FROM
GREGORY

I really liked it!
I especially liked the
message code machine
where you could send
a message to the
other person!
Alan

I Really enjoyed the boat!
It felt like I was really
sailing in the ocean!

sincerely,
chantalle

I REALLY ENJOYED
THE TRIP TO THE
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM.
THEY MADE A PICTURE
OF A PLACE YOU MAKE
A PICTURE MAKE
WITH COLOR
GREEN, RED,
YELLOW, BROWN

EYE OF THE STORM

I really enjoyed
the museum. I...

This is The Jack

In the "Big Mouth Theater," children learn about dental care by watching a cartoon video.

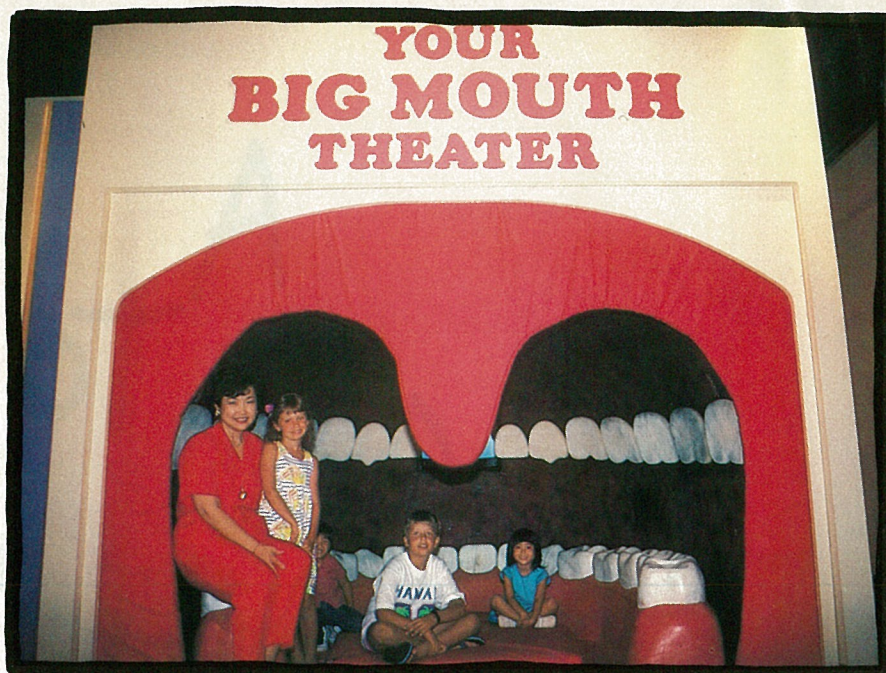
children from 3 to 13, of which there are more than 150,000 in the Islands. Having just opened in January, the museum is off to a running start attracting this audience. By the end of the school year, Yajima projects that some 8,000 children will have blown giant bubbles and enjoyed the "hands-on" learning experiences.

But children aren't the only ones coming. Yajima has seen senior citizens venture through alone, and parents and grandparents who come back a second time to take in the museum by themselves. "What we've discovered is that the adults, teachers, parents come in and their jaws drop to the ground and they say, 'Where was this museum when I was growing up?'"

What pleases Yajima most about the museum is the opportunity it provides for positive family time. "What happens is the schoolchildren come with school groups during the week, and then we see the children come back on the weekend because they want to show their brother or sister and their mom and dad, and that's really good quality family time."

The Hawai'i Children's Museum was founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1985. It took five years of brainstorming, planning and fundraising to make what started as a dream become a reality. Yajima stresses how the generosity of hundreds of individuals and corporate donors made it all possible, including Dole Cannery Square's landlord, Oceanic Properties, which donated the 5,100-square-foot site for the museum's first two years.

To date, the museum has raised \$1.5 million for site renovation and exhibit construction. Yajima says the museum welcomes further donations to purchase additional exhibits. It also welcomes more volunteers, without whom the museum couldn't run. There are 130 trained volunteers, or PALs (People Assisting Learning), as they're called. Yajima appreciates every single one of them, as it takes eight to 10 of them a day to staff the museum, including the gift shop.



Brett Uprichard

Clearly, the museum already has a solid place in the community. A run-down of individuals associated with it reveals the strong community and business support it enjoys. Hawai'i's first lady, Lynn Waihee, is honorary chairperson of the museum. The corporation's business plan task force is chaired by C. Dudley Pratt, president of Hawaiian Electric Industries. Other members include Walter Dods, president of First Hawaiian Bank, and representatives from Bank of Hawai'i, Capital Investment of Hawai'i, Oceanic Properties and Economic Development Corp. of Honolulu.

The response so far to the state's newest museum has not only been large in numbers but loud in praise. Yajima has heard from many out-of-state visitors and military families who say The Hawai'i Children's Museum at Dole Cannery Square is the best "little person" museum they've been to. Says Yajima, "I understand why because we really have been able to incorporate the arts, culture, science and technology," which explains the museum's long name.

Indeed, there is such a variety of exhibits that the museum does warrant its long name. In the "Fantastic You" gallery, children can see how their bodies work inside. There are models of the heart and lungs, a giant wood block puzzle of the brain, and a plastic skeleton on a bike that moves in unison with its live partner on a bike facing it, to show how a human body's joints move. In the "Big Mouth Theater," there's enough room for 10 or so little ones to sit on cushioned

teeth and watch a cartoon video about dental care.

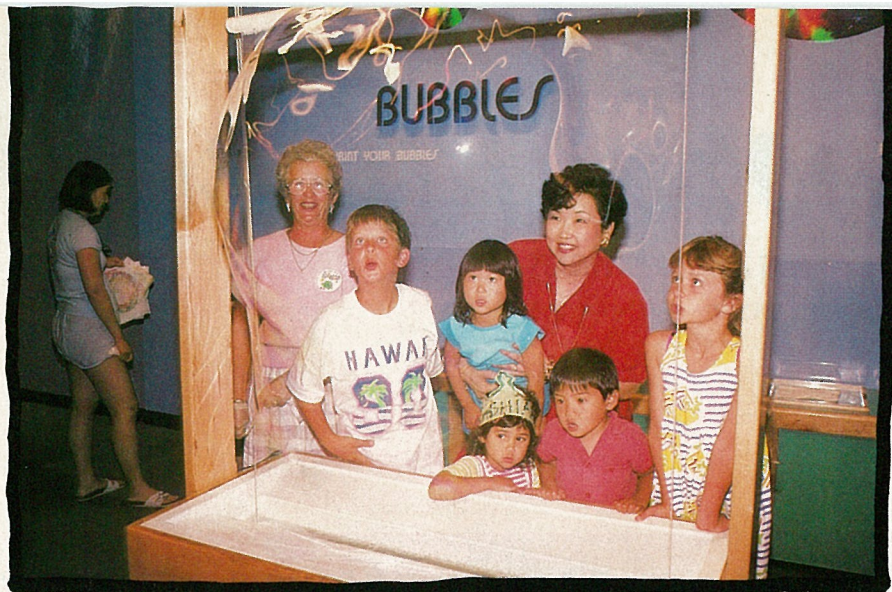
Children learn about other cultures by seeing themselves in different costumes in a booth that takes their picture in the traditional dress of China, Japan, Hawai'i, the Philippines or Europe. There are also baby dolls from around the world, and a set of miniature houses where the kitchens show how food is prepared and served differently in Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and European households. The most minute details down to the silverware, sushi and poi pounders were all made by volunteers.

The technology part of the museum includes a control board of different energy systems—electric, battery and even miniature solar panels that power a light. Children can also learn that lifting is made easier with a lever or pulley.

"We want to inspire children to realize that some of these things which seem so totally mysterious to them can really be broken down into very simple explanations," says Yajima.

Parents need not worry about being bored either. Adults can get eternally stalled at two computers, one with desk-top publishing and graphic art capabilities, another with the Compu-Serve program that presents world headlines, travel advisories and various games.

Children can even learn about the different modes of communication. They can fax a message or drawing from one table to another across the room. A set of headphones lets them hear greetings in foreign languages.



Left: A giant bubble-blower is a popular exhibit at the museum.

Below: The cannery's long-time landmark is the Pineapple Tower, a 200-foot-high water tower.

Brett Uprichard

They can also try using a braille machine and a telecommunication device for the deaf.

In a full-wall global panel, visitors can find out what the weather is like in various countries worldwide. A laser disk recording kept up-to-date with the changing seasons compares the world's varying climates to Honolulu's.

There are, in fact, so many gadgets, toys, instruments and displays in the 5,100-square-foot floor space that it's a tribute to the museum's interior design and space planning that so much does fit in the relatively small area with ample walking space. Architect Len Piper spent a lot of time studying other children's museums to figure out which exhibits would work best.

While The Hawai'i Children's Museum is off to a successful start, Yajima emphasizes that it is only a beginning. In a couple of years, she would like to see the museum expand to make room for more exhibits. And she would like to see the hours extended with more staff help. Currently, the museum is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the weekends. Admission costs \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 2 to 17.

This summer (July 2-Aug. 28), the museum will present an exhibit at Honolulu Hale (City Hall) called "Visions," illustrating the properties and capabilities of lenses and mirrors. Yajima hopes to see traveling exhibits become a regular part of the museum to reach children in rural O'ahu and the Neighbor Islands. McDonald's of Hawai'i, in addition to its other contributions to the museum, has pledged \$100,000 for the development of traveling exhibits.



The Hawai'i Children's Museum may be a highlight at Dole Cannery Square, but it's by no means the only attraction of the 1-year-old, \$7 million mall. The shiny new, brightly designed center is best known for its tour of the on-site pineapple cannery. The tour costs \$5 for out-of-state visitors and \$2.50 for Island residents (children 12 and under are admitted free). It starts with a 10-minute high-tech video that traces the life of James Dole, who turned the "fruit of kings" into a popular food served on tables across America. A 45-minute tour of the factory, staffed by some 800 employees—a reduction from its heyday—shows how the locally harvested pineapple is processed into 2 million cans a day. One attraction is the cannery's landmark, the Pineapple Tower. Built in Chicago in 1928, it stands nearly 200 feet high, weighs 28 tons and holds 100,000 gallons of water.

For those in the mood for a little shopping, Dole Cannery Square offers a variety of specialty shops, from Mamo Howell's Hawai'i-designed fashions and Island Mu'umu'u Works to The Little Hawaiian Craft Shop that sells custom-made jewelry and handcrafted items. You can harvest your own pearl from an oyster at The Pearl Factory, or see how fine jewelry is made at Hawaiian Island Gems. There are plenty of gift ideas, such as Island Princess candies, Hawaiian Island cookies, original cartoon-designed T-shirts at Folksy Animals or Island-made beef jerky at Jungle Jerky Marketplace. There are 20 shops to browse through, and a ground-level food court, lit by an overhead skylight, for casual dining.

Cathy Chan, who heads retail development at the mall for Oceanic Properties, says that Dole Cannery Square is already a destination for Hawai'i residents as well as tourists. Every month, the center holds a family weekend with free activities such as clown entertainment, face-painting for kids and prize drawings for adults. Chan says she has seen many residents who once worked for Dole Cannery come back to reminisce and share their personal memories with their children.

Dole Cannery Square has Pineapple Transit mini-buses to and from Waikiki, and validated parking across the street for those who drive. ❀

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