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My name is Connor Reese, and I am the Program Director of Kid Time Discovery Experience. We provide learning experiences through the act of play and are a safe place for many families who need such a place. Our visitors include members, walk in customers, and people involved in our “Bus is Us” bus program, which helps provide preschool level education for those in need or those unable to acquire such services. Inside the museum, you’ll find exhibits that engage children and their families, and encourage the use of play to achieve their goals. These exhibits range from a Vet Clinic to a Pirate Ship. These exhibits are designed to draw the most creative forces out of those who interact with them.

These exhibits might be engaging by themselves, but the fun really kicks in when we have one of our programs going on. We offer over 35 programs each week, that are drop in classes that anyone can attend. These classes include art programs, music programs, Lego-building programs, Super Hero Training programs, and so much more.

One example program that does a great job of bringing an exhibit to life, is the “Teddy Bear Clinic With Teacher Autumn”. In this program, Dr. Autumn comes out in her doctors’ coat, and brings along teddy bears as well as new, special tools for the kids to use on their ailing bears. She hangs in the Vet Clinic for an hour, and writes prescriptions for the animals, helps assist the other “doctors”, and really is just an aid to keep the game going by introducing tools and concepts.

Why does this matter, you may ask? Well, play is the greatest way we learn things. It’s the most natural way to test out ideas and fully internalize them. It’s a continuing testing of skills, the ultimate problem solving builder. It flows and moves far more naturally than a “lesson” does. Because it might not have an exact end result, the child playing is able to alter and change the direction that the game goes. Plus, it’s an incredibly easy social skill builder. There’s no need for introductions, or awkward ice breakers when you’re both trying to save the world in Teacher Xane’s Super Hero Training, or are singing along to a song in a story with Teacher Britt. And, these skills go deeper than just interacting with others.

Five days a week, we host a Master Builder program, which is a Lego Building class. Here’s an example of an everyday interaction from that: Two kids sit in my Master Builder class, sorting through the Legos. One describes the spaceship he intends to build and describes how crucial the correct window is for his master piece. What size it has to be, what movie it’s from, what color is needed to ward off the invading aliens. The other child shuffles through the “people bin” searching for the perfect minifigure combination. Is this the right hair? Can these be the right pants? Should a Lego Apple go on her head? But, beyond these basic, and important questions, lies more. Little do they know, they are working on their fine motor skills by putting together tiny pieces, social skills by communicating with the others, math skills by counting the number of “pips” on the legos, and problem solving when trying to figure out how to properly snap two troublesome pieces together.

That being said, we are predominantly funded by grants, and the future of Kid Time goes hand in hand with the future of funding for early childhood education. Without these grants and the aid that they provide, we’d be unable to make the connection we have with these

families, and their safe space might disappear.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Connor Reese

Program Director

Kid Time! Discovery Experience