

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Working Wonders Children's Museum Suspends Operations

BEND, OR – September 25, 2009 - Working Wonders Children's Museum is closing operations as of Saturday, October 3, 2009. The board of directors of the local non-profit organization made the difficult decision after failing to meet its fundraising goals for the year. The museum has been operating a major fundraising campaign for several months in order to maintain operations and continue bringing their outstanding children's programming to the Central Oregon community.

"It's a heart-breaking decision to close, but we don't have another choice at this point," said DeeDee Erhard, executive director at Working Wonders Children's Museum. "Our staff, and the unique programming they bring to the museum, is what has made this such a special place for our community."

"We've always run a tight ship and have been fiscally responsible" said Lucinda Fournier, current board president. "This is a decision that we don't take lightly. Right now the museum has no outstanding debts and we're taking care of our employees and sponsors."

The board of directors has been working on a new financial model for the museum that's more sustainable, and less dependent on annual fundraising efforts. Unfortunately, they cannot remain open while working on a possible reorganization plan. In the past, the children's museum has successfully raised up to 60% of its operating budget through exhibit sponsorships, donations, grants and events. However, over this past year the fundraising challenges are tied to today's economic conditions.

A Five Year History of Reaching Central Oregon Children

The non-profit organization opened its doors in September of 2004. It has since welcomed over 170,000 kids and their grown-ups, while over 40,000 people enjoyed Working Wonders' activities via community events such as the Bend Summer Festival, Deschutes Dash Kids' Splash 'N Dash, Week of the Young Child, and the Deschutes Children's Festival. Since its inception in 2005, the Working Wonders Family Access Program, which provides low and no-cost admittance to our communities most at risk families, has increased from 13% in 2007 to 23% of admissions in 2008. In all, more than 20 non-profit organizations have worked with Working Wonders to help serve the children of Central Oregon.

Come and Play Through October 3rd

The museum will be open through October 3rd and will have several celebratory events in honor of their five year history. Some of the activities include:

- Wednesday September 30 – Wiggly Wednesday at 11am; Africa exhibit activities will also be featured

- Thursday October 1 – Preschool Story Time at 11am with the Deschutes Public Library; Japan exhibit activities will all be featured
- Friday October 2 – Japanese Origami creations and special music from Amy James of Develop Music at 11:00
- Saturday October 3 – Kids’ Gala Costume Party, dress up your favorite look for Static Science in Mindstein’s Lab, Papel Picado and Tissue Paper Flowers; Cake will also be served from 10 – 3:00 p.m.

Hours of operation during the Birthday Celebration are Wednesday – Saturday from 10:00 – 5:00 p.m. All activities are free with a discounted admission of \$5 per person thanks to a sponsorship from D.A. Davidson & Co.

If you are interested in hearing more about Working Wonders and talking with a board member about opportunities to help, please contact: DeeDee Erhard, executive director at (541)389-4500 or derhard@workingwonders.org.

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