

## DCM Exhibitions – Staff Training Materials

### Toddler Town (PART B)

#### Exhibition Particulars:

- This exhibition is designed for children from **birth to 5 years old** + parents or caregivers. Older siblings may accompany the family in the exhibition, but they must play with their siblings or act as “helpers” and respect the space as designated for younger children.
- There is a special group of **labels for parents**. These labels have a “Parent Power” header, share the same color (tan), and contain useful pieces of parenting information.
- There is an area designated for **nursing mothers** to the left of the exhibition entrance gate called the *Nursing Nook*. Bottle warmers are provided in this area for bottle feeding.
- There is a **Parent Resource Center** that contains parenting books and resources in the *Reading Zone*.
- **Stroller parking** is just outside the exhibition entrance gate. An art display area is above it.
- There is an **Art Zone** featuring activity tables that provide thematic and developmentally appropriate materials.

#### Component Descriptions:

##### A. Crawl Zone

The *Crawl Zone* provides a safe, padded, age-appropriate area for young visitors from birth to 18 months, and is constructed with covered foam cushions.

A low bench functions as parent seating and doubles as a short enclosing wall, which protects the littlest ones from larger visitors. Parents can watch and interact with the children from this position. Embedded into the interior side of the wall are different textures and small interactives. Loose manipulatives also are provided for additional stimulation and skill-building opportunities.

The *Crawl Zone* features the following elements:

- Low parent seating around the entire area
- A variety of textures to explore
- Mirrors
- Pull-up bar
- Cushions that change elevation and provide physical challenges for pre-walkers
- Peek-a-boo doors
- Bead-tracking interactive
- Loose manipulatives

#### Engagement Tools and Tips

- Use Conversation Cards to facilitate an inquiry-based approach to learning.
- Use products from the retail store that correlate with the Toddler Town experience.
- Use a hand puppet to encourage conversational and imaginary play with guests.
- Introduce textured toys to help children explore different sensations.

- Use a cloth book to facilitate impromptu story times.
- Use magnetic blocks to build structures and explore magnetic concepts.
- Use take-apart toys to encourage experiential learning, and enhance memory skills.
- Use desert animal toys to explore the desert gallery theme and encourage further understanding of animals and habitats.
- Crouch next to the Crawl Zone and engage with infants and babies, displaying an open body posture, a soft tone of voice, gentle gestures, and appropriate facial expressions.
- Use a variety of sensory toys to interact with the infants and babies in the Crawl Zone.
- Encourage parents and little learners to explore the Sensory Activity Boxes located in the Parent Resource Center.

## **B. Climbing Structure & Mining Zone**

The *Climbing Structure & Mining Zone* is an open-ended, thematic climbing environment designed primarily for visitors who are 3-5 years old. Children have opportunities to role-play, climb, slide, play cooperatively or individually, and take in a bird's eye view from atop the structure. A bucket pulley system enables visitors to move mined material up and down, as well as across, the space. The top climbing platform allows access for visitors to load the buckets with mined material and deliver it across the room via a system of bucket gondolas.

The *Climbing Structure* features the following elements:

- Three climbing platform levels
- A slide for exiting the structure
- Access to the rotating bucket gondola interactive at the top of the platform

The *Mining Zone* features the following elements:

- Two runs of bucket gondolas (four towers and two separate runs of buckets and rails); each includes a loading area, a hand crank, and a dump chute
- Foam blocks that serve as the mining material
- Wheelbarrows for movement of mined material around the space
- Storage for wheelbarrows
- A large bin for block storage and sorting
- A block sorting/stacking interactive

### Engagement Tools and Tips

- Use Conversation Cards to facilitate an inquiry-based approach to learning.
- Use products from the retail store that correlate with the Toddler Town experience.
- Role play the part of an engineer to encourage collaborative play in this area.

### Mining Train

The *Mining Train* is a thematic, role-playing environment designed for visitors between 3 and 5 years old. It provides numerous opportunities for role-play, experimentation, and investigation based on the themes of a trains, transportation and mining.

The cab of the **Mining Train** includes the following elements:

- Steering throttles
- A train whistle button which activates a train whistle sound effect
- Scenic play buttons on dash, including rocker switches and buttons

### Mining & Nevada

Nicknamed the “Silver State,” Nevada’s past is rooted in mining. In 1849, gold was discovered in a stream near Dayton, which later led to the discovery of silver in the Comstock Lode in 1859. Since then, mining has played a vital role in Nevada’s economy. Virginia City is perhaps the most famous boomtown in the country, as it was known not only for gold but also for its mass production of silver found in the Comstock Lode. [Source: <http://travelnevada.com/things-to-do/mining/> ]

See also: Nevada Mining Association <http://www.nevadamining.org/>

### C. Animal Zone

The *Animal Zone* features nine different animals/insects/fish/reptiles/amphibians found in Nevada: **Desert Bighorn Sheep**, **Desert Tortoise**, Black-tailed Jackrabbit, **Vivid Dancer Damselfly**, Red Spotted Toad, Sidewinder Rattlesnake, Great Horned Owl, **Mountain Bluebird** and **Lahontan Cutthroat Trout**. (Animals in **bold** lettering are State Animals/Emblems.)

Four hands-on interactives are featured here to allow visitors to learn more about native Nevada animals. The activities invite visitors to compare and contrast texture, habitat, vocalization and other physical characteristics. Using their senses of sight, sound and touch, visitors access and explore information. [Detailed information about each animal can be found at: [http://www.ndow.org/Nevada\\_Wildlife/Animals/](http://www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/Animals/) [Brief information is provided below.]

The **Mountain Bluebird** (*Sialia currucoides*) lives in the Nevada high country and destroys many harmful insects. It is a member of the thrush family, and its song is a clear, short warble like the caroling of a robin. The male is azure blue with a white belly, while the female is brown with a bluish rump, tail, and wings.

The **Vivid Dancer Damselfly** (*Argia vivida*) is abundant in springs and ponds in all four regions of Nevada. The adult male is a rich blue with clear wings that appear silver when rapidly beating in sunlight, while most females are tan or tan and gray.

The **Desert Tortoise** (*Gopherus agassizii*) lives in the extreme southern parts of Nevada. This reptile spends much of its life in underground burrows to escape the harsh summer heat and winter cold. It can live to be more than 70 years old.

The **Desert Bighorn Sheep** (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) is smaller than its Rocky Mountain cousin, but has a wider spread of horns. The bighorn is well-suited for Nevada's mountainous desert country because it can survive for long periods without water. The large rams stand about 4½ feet tall and can weigh as much as 175 pounds.

The **Lahontan Cutthroat Trout** (*Salmo clarki henshawi*), a native trout found in 14 of Nevada's 17 counties, is adapted to habitats ranging from high mountain creeks and alpine lakes to warm, intermittent lowland streams and alkaline lakes where no other trout can live.

[Source: <http://leg.state.nv.us/General/NVfacts/index.cfm>]

The **Black-tailed Jackrabbit** (*Lepus californicus*) has ears up to 8 inches long that are tipped in black. It has big feet, long hind legs and a bushy black tail. Its long back legs allow it to run at high speeds to escape from danger. It has a prominent black stripe that runs from its rump to the tip of its tail. The soles of a jackrabbit's feet are covered with fur. This cushions their feet on hard ground and insulates them from the scorching heat of the desert sand. The Black-tailed Jackrabbit's fur is silver and tan, which blends in well with the desert habitat it lives in. When asleep during the day, the jackrabbit blends into the desert scenery unnoticed. The jackrabbit's eyes are situated on the sides of its head, giving it all-around vision, which enables it to spot danger coming from any direction.

The **Red-Spotted Toad** (*Bufo punctatus*) is an amphibian. An amphibian is a cold-blooded, smooth skinned vertebrate (has a backbone) that typically hatches in the water and breathes through gills and metamorphosizes, or changes into, an adult that breathes with air-breathing lungs. It is found in Southern Nevada in rocky areas (where it hides in crevices), desert springs, seeps, and floodplains of rivers.

The **Sidewinder Rattlesnake** (*Crotalus cerastes*) is a venomous snake named for its side-winding locomotion. It is Nevada's smallest rattlesnake, reaching up to 31 inches in length and primarily inhabiting valleys and *bajadas* (alluvial fans along mountain fronts). A series of backward J or S shapes left in loose sand indicates one has passed by. It will partially or nearly completely bury itself in loose sand or gravel when at rest. It is sometimes referred to as the "horned rattler" because of the modified scales above its eyes.

The **Great Horned Owl** (*Bubo virginianus*) stands 18 to 25 inches tall and has a wingspan of 36 to 60 inches. They weigh between 2 to 4 pounds. In general they have brown body plumage with white throat feathers. The belly and breast have dark horizontal bars. They have large ear tufts that are set far apart on the head. Their facial disk can range from gray to an orange-tan. They have large yellow eyes with black pupils. They can live to 30 years in captivity, though in the wild the average is 10 to 15 years. They live in a wide variety of habitats ranging from desert canyons to mountain forests.

[Source: [http://www.ndow.org/Nevada\\_Wildlife/Animals/](http://www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/Animals/)]

### Animal Sounds

A detailed graphic display features six panels, each hiding an animal that is pictured in its natural habitat. Visitors push a button above each panel to hear an animal sound and guess the animal associated with the sound. Lifting the door reveals the animal. Animal sounds include: Sheep, Jackrabbit, Toad, Great Horned Owl, Mountain Bluebird, and Rattlesnake.

### Touch and Feel

Visitors touch and feel four synthetic animal textures: rattlesnake skin, tortoise shell, rabbit fur and sheep's wool. A graphic panel prompts visitors to guess which animal matches each skin. Slide-up doors reveal the answers.

### Habitats (Magnetic Activity)

A large, metal-backed image represents a combination of the habitats of each of the nine animals featured in the *Animal Zone*. Magnetic pictures of each animal are stored in a bin, and visitors use the magnets to match the animal to its habitat. Visitors also can create stories and scenes with the different animal characters.

### Engagement Tools and Tips

- Use Conversation Cards to facilitate an inquiry-based approach to learning.
- Use products from the retail store that correlate with the Toddler Town experience.
- Use a hand puppet to encourage conversational and imaginary play with guests.
- Use desert animal toys to explore the desert gallery theme and encourage further understanding of animals and habitats.
- Encourage children to describe the properties of the textures on the Touch and Feel wall.
- Encourage children to compare and contrast the sounds of the animals on the Animal Sound wall.
- Use the Habitat wall to encourage further conversation about the characteristics and adaptations of desert animals. How do they move? What do they eat? When do they sleep? How long do they live?

## **D. Art Zone**

The *Art Zone* is a space devoted to open-ended, drop-in art projects as well as staff-guided art projects. There are four tables, 16 chairs, a sensory table, a sink and a restroom for clean-up, and a storage closet. This area supports the development of children's creativity and imagination, as well their communication and small-motor skills.

Table activities are thematic in nature, and align with weekly Museum programming to encourage a Museum-wide integrated learning experience. Activities provided are centered around the following concepts of learning: art; language; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); and sensory learning experiences.

### Parent Resource Center

A *Parent Resource Center* is located here and features information about child development, parenting, early childhood learning and community resources. **Sensory Activity Boxes** are available in this area, providing a more intimate and guided learning experience for parents and children ages birth through five years. The Activity Boxes provide a multitude of developmentally appropriate materials for sensory exploration.

### Vivid Dancer Damselfly Wings (Stand In/Photo Op)

At this activity, visitors find the oversized wings and antennae of a Vivid Dancer Damselfly attached to a panel on the wall. Young visitors can stand, sit or crouch in front of the panel and imagine they are the Damselfly. The activity encourages role-playing and imagination and is a natural photo opportunity for adults! An in-depth variation on this activity combines it with a project in the *Art Zone*. Visitors use wing-shaped paper to create their own wing designs that can be attached to the dimensional shapes to create a customized photo.

### Reading Zone

In the *Reading Zone*, visitors find a variety of books and comfortable seating. Here, families can explore a new book, read a favorite story together, or just take a break. The *Reading Zone* is located in one corner of the *Art Zone* behind a taller wall to provide a quieter space. This area supports the development of children's language and pre-reading skills.

### Engagement Tools and Tips

- Use Conversation Cards to facilitate an inquiry-based approach to learning.
- Use products from the retail store that correlate with the Toddler Town experience.
- Use a hand puppet to encourage conversational and imaginary play with guests.
- Use textured toys to help children explore different sensations.
- Use a cloth book to facilitate impromptu story times.
- Use magnetic blocks to build structures and explore magnetic concepts.
- Use take-apart toys to encourage experiential learning, and enhance memory skills.
- Use desert animal toys to explore the desert gallery theme and encourage further understanding of animals and habitats.
- Use the weekly thematic materials and activities provided to tailor your interactions with parents and children. Offer small, interesting informational facts about the subject matter presented.

### **E. Nursing Nook**

The *Nursing Nook* provides a quiet, semi-private space for nursing mothers, and bottle warmers for bottle-feeding. Located to the left of the exhibition entrance, the *Nursing Nook* includes a small couch, a toy area, a train mat and a bookcase. An older sibling may accompany his or her mother and select a book from the bookcase, or play with the available props and toys while waiting.