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The Important Role of the DuPage Children's Museum

by Lily Nicholson

(Honors English 1101)

November 4, 2009 Debby Dogooder Bloomingdale Church 264 Glen Ellyn Rd. Bloomingdale, IL 60108

Greetings from the DuPage Children's Museum (DCM)! During the seven years I have known you, you have shared with me your passion for helping children. Fortunately, I have had the privilege to volunteer side by side with you at Bloomingdale Church for three years; your ability to lead the AWANA children in prayer, music, crafts, and Bible study has been truly a great opportunity that I am thankful for. Because of your commitment to children, I would like to ask you for a \$100 donation that will leave a lasting impact on the DuPage Children's Museum. I come to you for your support because my experience at the museum shares similarities with the AWANA program. Much like the generous donations that have gone towards the addition to our church, donations to the museum have provided a means to improve its many intricate exhibits. Considering that I have volunteered at the DCM for two months now, I know that your contribution will be a great help in achieving the DCM's mission; I hope that this letter will provide you with a clear explanation as to why and how your donation will enhance the award-winning museum.

As you may know, the DuPage Children's Museum is "an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which relies on business, foundation, government, and individual donations and sponsorships to cover about 40% of [their] budget each year" (www.dupagechildrensmuseum.org). Any donation that the DCM receives only further enhances and contributes to the DCM's mission of "stimulating curiosity, creativity, thinking, and problem solving in young children" (www.dupagechildrensmuseum.org). Each day that I volunteer at the museum, I read words mounted in colorful block lettering that remind all of the staff of DCM's consistent goals as well as of the parents that come into the museum. Without the help of many generous donations, the DCM would not be able to create such memorable artworks as these. As a donor, you can add to the crucial development of children's lives and ensure that there are enough quality educational resources for all the bright children that the DCM has the pleasure of serving.

Of course, I am aware of the economic problems of today that hinder many people's ability to help a cause financially. Every dollar helps the museum; no donation is insignificant. As money management has become more challenging these days, I know that my parents have reorganized the funds that they use for charity; now they have chosen to help only an exceptional few instead of many small donations to numerous ones. Here, I use this personal example so that you might consider making the DCM one of your main recipients of your charitable contributions. This new way of budgeting money has also been reaffirmed by columnist Jude Stewart who offers, "Numerous experts agree: It's most effective to give consistently to a few organizations than to spread your dough too thin- that way, you make more of a dent in the cause" (1). With your financial assistance, you can make a positive dent in the DCM's development.

Although I am not the head of the fundraising department of the DCM, I still feel as though I

am a part of every department of the DCM. This idea has arisen from the inspiring book *One Day*. *All Children* by Wendy Kopp about her creation of Teach for America, an organization dedicated to providing quality education to the underprivileged. As Kopp reflects on her extensive fundraising, she highlights that she was successful in raising substantial amounts of money because she "was bold enough to ask for [it]" (61). This simple statement has served as motivation to inquire about a \$100 donation; the sacrifice you make now during this unfortunate recession will ultimately pay off profoundly for the youth who visit the DCM. As a Museum Assistant, I can see the extreme efforts of my coworkers and the great influence of the DCM in a child's life. For this, I want to share some reasons as to why you would want to make a donation.

Over the years, I have known that you are a firm believer in aiding the growth of a child through spiritual and educational influences. At the DuPage Children's Museum, my coworkers work day in and day out for the same reasons: to provide a healthy environment that combines creativity and learning for young children. Our staff even includes hundreds of volunteers who sincerely believe in the work of the DCM as a whole. Louise Beem and Dorothy Carpenter, the pioneers of the DCM, symbolize the hard work of the DCM team; their innovative journey began as a traveling museum in the back of their car. Where would they be without the generous donors who have helped turn the museum from a small exhibition to a three-story, colorful building? As you know from your contribution to AWANA at Bloomingdale Church, it takes the utmost efforts of many people to provide a stimulating environment for the youth of today.

Looking back on my childhood years, I strive to remember what profound experiences I had that have shaped my current self. As memories fade over time, we slowly recall what deeply impacted our current selves. Often we don't realize how significant our upbringing is until we are much older. As a child, I remember going to the Wheaton Park District Community Center which included one of the earlier stages of the current DCM. I remember being surrounded by my classmates in a visually stunning arts and crafts room. More importantly, I was able to imagine myself as a carpenter through building wood creations with hammers, nails, screws, and more. These seemingly small memories have had a large bearing on who I am today. It is for this reason that I chose to volunteer at the DCM. Although I was impressed with the many different rooms that the park district had when I was a child, I am astounded by the extensive exhibits that are now available to the DCM visitors. The DuPage Children's Museum is unlike so many other children's attractions; it stimulates children's minds through creative learning and social interaction.

Even more important, it illustrates the significance that family adds to a child's development by offering a strong parent-child association with its innovative events. The DCM offers every family a special membership that includes unlimited visits for each child and their parents for only \$100 a year. Every month, there is at least one event that encourages family members to join their children and engage in crafts, music, and plays. Clearly, the DCM encourages family bonding unlike many other children's places; finding an organization like the DCM is like searching for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. There are numerous events that contribute to the positive, stimulating environment such as "Family Fun Friday Nights," which allows parents to spend time with their children after work until 8 o'clock PM. Such events are necessary in order to develop lasting connections between family members. As a contributor to the DCM, you would increase the means by which the DCM can facilitate these unique events.

Furthermore, I consider my voluntary role at the DuPage Children's Museum to be that of an activist for the DCM'S goals as well. I am a part of their family. Each day I come into the museum ready to greet customers, play with the children, socialize with the adults that accompany them, and set up toys for the children's exhibitions. Although I initially started volunteering for the DCM to fulfill my fifteen hour requirement for my Service Learning English Composition 1 Honors course, I plan to continue volunteering there after my hours are completed. I believe that the DCM enriches children's lives, and I have been blessed to learn about the positive consequences of helping others.

This experience has not just been another "box to check on the climb of life" (Ramos-Mrosovsky). I find myself growing more and more attached to each child that calls me their new best friend as well as to the parents who truly appreciate me taking the time to play with their child.

Just as well, my experience at the DCM has given me the insight to realize that I love helping others, and as a result, I might major in psychology. I have become a firm believer in the necessity of education and a creative environment for children to interact with others. For example, one occasion that sticks out was when I had the opportunity to play "pretend" with a group of six children. During this hour, I got to travel to places all over the world with them. They told me we were going to England, Australia, and China to find a golden rock that will make everyone happy forever. The massive castle exhibit, life size cars, and theatre stage made this game of "pretend" come to life. All children of different races, ages, and genders were together in one place under one special roof: The roof of the DCM. It was amazing to see how extensive these children's minds were and how the exhibits served as a vehicle for this unique experience. What book could have taught me this major life lesson? Thanks to the DuPage Children's Museum, I have had the opportunity to discover a new passion for serving others through my position as a Museum Assistant.

Please stop by the Museum at any time, as we would love to accommodate you by showing you around; you are welcome to bring your granddaughters to the "Family Fun Friday Night" on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. On this special day, the DCM will have the honor to provide children and their parents with a performance by the Naperville Park District Dance Academy. I would also recommend that you visit the Air Works exhibit and the three Young Explorers rooms while you are at the DCM; these are very popular among children around your granddaughters' ages. I know I can attest to the magnitude by which the DCM has contributed to the children of tomorrow, yet viewing a special event yourself will be even better than my personal anecdotes. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope that you have an opportunity to help us through a generous donation of \$100.

Sincerely,

Lily Nicholson Museum Assistant

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