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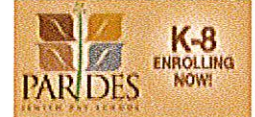
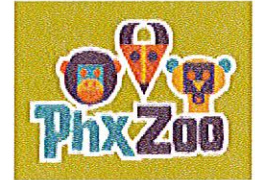
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Barness donation furthers progress of kids' museum

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One day, months from now, children across the Valley will be able to visit a museum in Phoenix devoted solely to them.

Construction is under way for the Children's Museum of Phoenix, which will be located at Seventh and Van Buren streets and is scheduled to open in late 2007.

In April, the Daron and Ron Barness Family Foundation announced their own contribution to the project: a \$1 million donation.

The gift "enables us to focus on what we need to do, which is make the best possible museum," says Deborah Gilpin, the museum's president and CEO. "When we get a gift of this magnitude, it just makes a huge difference in how we can move forward."

The idea for the museum was born in 1998; the founding board of directors formed a nonprofit organization in 1999. In 2001, Phoenix voters approved Proposition 6, which gave \$10.5 million to the museum to purchase and renovate the historic Monroe School building. The next few years were spent raising funds, doing research on museums around the country, brainstorming and holding events for children in the community.

In 2005, the museum came to the attention of the Barness foundation.

For the Barnesses, the impetus to get involved was twofold.

"Daron and I are very concerned about children and our community's ability to provide opportunities to young people in order for them to be able to fulfill their potential," Ron Barness says. "So when we find projects that speak to creating better opportunities for children, we always look at those very closely."

Also, "we believe as members of this community that Phoenix has an opportunity to become one of the great American cities of the 21st century.

"Along those lines, we see that our city, as great as it can become, is the only major city in the United States without a children's museum."

Gilpin says the exhibit team, which includes an early childhood educator, an elementary school art teacher and a museum education director, visited about 50 children's museums around the country to gather ideas.

The museum, when completed, will be geared toward children up to 8 years of age. The exhibits will be hands-on, and many will be arts-based. There will be a room of building

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blocks, a "cafe" where children can make their own meals, art projects to work on and much more.

"We expect to have about 300,000 visitors a year, but that's probably a low estimate," Gilpin says. "Children's museums are the most highly visited of all kinds of museums. It's probably because kids like to come back. They want to visit the things that they love and do it again, and then they want to try something new, too."

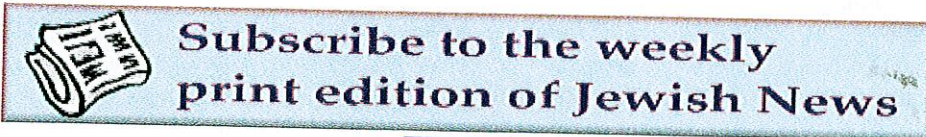
Both Gilpin and Barness say the museum will be a huge asset to the community.

"We think it'll have a tremendous impact," says Barness. "Number one, we think it'll help young children in their development and their educational process. Number two, we think it'll help the psyche of the city as it strives to rise up to this level of greatness as we build a museum that will be a crown jewel of our city."

Gilpin says, "People who grow up and go to museums were typically museum-goers as children. But children's museums are the place where that status quo has changed; you may be a family who never goes to museums, but you'll take your child to one of these, and it changes the future of that family.

"We have this moment to get (the museum) in Phoenix so that 30 years from now, we've changed how children experienced growing up here. I know it can happen. It's very powerful, and we need it here."

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