VOICES

THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Children's museum ready for play

Today, a 10-year dream becomes a reality, and because of that, children in this area will take play to an entirely new level. The Children's Museum of the Upstate opens its doors this morning, and in doing so will thrill and inspire children with its motto: "I can be anything."

It's been a long time coming for the museum that will complete the three-piece addition to Greenville's Heritage Green. Based on early reviews, the wait certainly was worth it.

As of this morning, children will learn by doing in an interactive environment that will be healthy and nurturing. As Carol Scott, the museum's president and CEO, wrote on our pages a couple of months ago, "Our museum's mission is to ignite a passion for learning — empowering all children to discover their full potential and expand their view of themselves and the world."

So how will that mission be accomplished?

Take one exhibit, the Reedy River Bend. Children will discover, according to museum literature, "the wonders of water through an interactive system of pulleys, pumps, wheels and pipes that demonstrate how we manipulate the power of the Earth's most abundant resource." In addition to learning how we harness the power of water, children will get a glimpse of the Upstate's lush beauty.

Or another exhibit: Grandma Betty's Farm. Here toddlers will get to pretend they are farmers and can pick vegetables and feed animals. And in the Talkin' Trash exhibit, children will learn how to reduce, reuse and recycle so they can treat the environment more kindly.

There's more: In the Bi-Lo Market, children encounter a scaled-down grocery store where they are encouraged to make healthy food selections. The Children's Hospital will give young museum visitors an overview of their heart, lungs, bones and digestive system, while Teddy Bear Clinic will help kids learn about our animal friends. The Construction Zone Gallery will simulate a real construction site, and Start Your Engines will introduce children to a Formula 1 race car.

In all there will be 18 highly interactive exhibits, and throughout the year there will be special programs that will expand the museum's reach.

The Children's Museum is a labor of love for a number of dedicated volunteers in this community. The dream started 10 years ago with one mother's desire for a children's museum. A modest plan grew tremendously, and in December 2003 the Hughes family donated the former main county library for the museum.

It took extraordinary determination to raise the $21 million to complete this project. The museum that opens this morning will have exhibits and classrooms that cover 79,000 square feet, making this one of the 25 largest children's museums in the country out of the 350 that exist.

So as children start their fun-filled adventure this morning, adults in Greenville should take a few moments to celebrate another special project that makes this community stand out in so many ways.

The Children's Museum will inspire learning and cultivate curiosity among our youngest residents, but it also will make this an even better place to live and one that attracts more visitors.

With the completion of The Children's Museum, Heritage Green now welcomes the last of three new attractions that were in the works for years.

The Upcountry History Museum opened in the fall of 2007, and the Museum and Gallery at Heritage Green, featuring rotating exhibitions from the world-renowned art collection from the Museum and Gallery at Bob Jones University, recently celebrated its first anniversary.

These three newcomers join the existing cultural destinations at Heritage Green: the Greenville County Art Museum, the Greenville Little Theatre and the Hughes Main Library. These combine to form a powerful cultural attraction that proves this community, like the children now rushing excitedly through The Children's Museum, can "be anything."