

Children's Museum Is Growing

Seeks to raise \$2 million to expand

BY ERIN MCKINLEY

The Children's Museum of the East End has launched a fund-raising campaign to add new interactive exhibits for patrons and also to support the overall future of the Bridgehampton facility, which opened in 2005.

The goal of the new campaign, which was officially announced on Saturday, is to raise \$2 million. To date, the museum has raised half of that, and it hopes to be able to break ground on the new exhibits in 2014, as well as to expand current programs and establish an endowment.

"We are still going to be focused on our goal, to enrich the lives of children and families and strengthen the East End community by promoting learning

through play," museum director Stephen Long said in an interview this week. "This is in response to our members and visitors who have expressed an interest in having us do more science and math education. We want to use play to promote learning and science and math."

The first phase of the project, according to Mr. Long, is the installation of a new outdoor miniature golf course. Slated to open on the museum grounds by next summer, it is designed to teach physics and math concepts.

"People often think about coming to our museum on rainy days, but an attraction like miniature golf will bring people here more often," said Amy Tarr, pres-

See **MUSEUM**, Page A18



Children build stomp rocket at the Children's Museum of the East End's Rocket Day event held on Saturday.

DANA SHAW

A18 EASTERN EDITION

MUSEUM: *New Fundraiser To Support Interactive Displays*

FROM PAGE A1

ident of the board of trustees. "It will balance out our traffic."

Other new attractions, on which the museum hopes to begin construction in the fall of 2014, will include a new energy exhibit, where kids manipulate wind, water and solar power; a redesigned ship exhibit that allows children to climb ropes and cables; a new "maker space," where older kids can create stop-motion animation films; and an expanded space where infants and toddlers can play interactively on a tractor. The lobby and visitor services area will also be renovated.

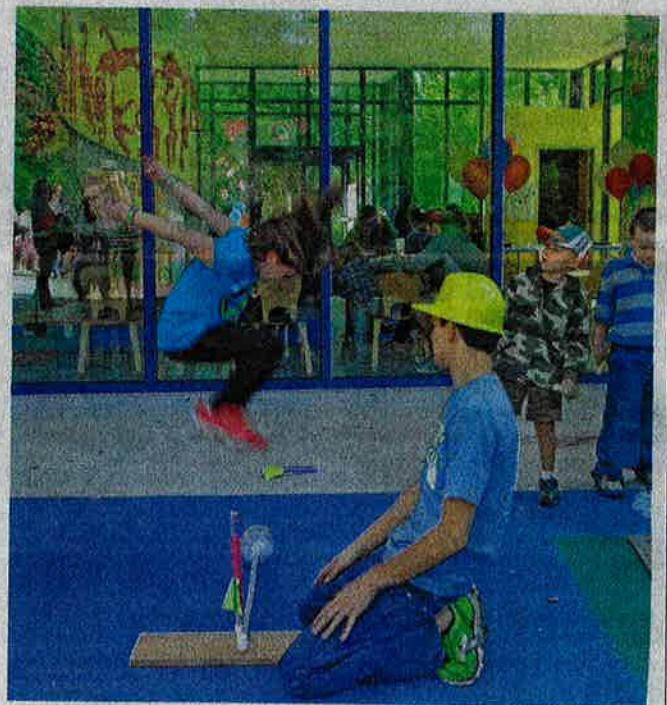
This week, both Mr. Long and Ms. Tarr said the project, which has been discussed for several years, is the next step in securing the future of the museum. Mr. Long explained that an endowment fund will be established via donations, and that will allow a more stable fiscal picture for years to come. "We would be able to guarantee our long-term

sustainability through this endowment," he said.

Museum officials said they are meeting with potential donors to raise the remaining \$1 million. According to Ms. Tarr, the museum plans to host fundraising events in the spring, but nothing has been finalized. Anyone wishing to contribute to the cause should contact Mr. Long at the Children's Museum at 537-8250, extension 204.

"Our attendance has been steadily increasing over the last few years," Mr. Long said. "This is a great opportunity for us to take stock of where we have come from and what children and families need moving forward, and how the Children's Museum of the East End can address those needs."

A portion of the funds raised also will help the museum expand efforts to pair up with social service organizations to address such issues as domestic violence, educating young families about childhood obesity and the importance of nutrition, and



Kids launch their stomp rockets at the Children's Museum of the East End on Saturday.

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promoting literacy and language acquisition for immigrants.

"We are just really excited and looking forward to taking this great museum that serves the community well, and making it

better to serve even more people," Ms. Tarr said. "We are a great story of growth and success on the East End, and we are preparing for the next phase of that."