





Unlikely Play Structure Educates Kids about their Bodies

Design/Build by Cre8play



Have the kids shrunk, or have they come across a Gulliveresque body? The museum is all about imagining and interactive learning, but most of all about just having fun.

The new HealthWorks! Kids' Museum (<http://hwstl.org/>) in St. Louis, Mo., opened May 14, 2016. The museum came into being when the Delta Dental Health Theatre on Laclede's Landing in downtown St. Louis, developed as a program under the Foundation of the Greater St. Louis Dental Society in 1977, closed its doors in 2015. The new museum on Macklind Ave. is a larger facility and has expanded its scope from teeth to the entire human body.

The Delta Dental Health Theatre's main attraction was "the world's largest set of fiberglass teeth," which remains as one of the new museum's attractions, hanging from the ceiling as a gigantic toothbrush moves across the teeth. The brushing creates bubbles that fall down on those observing the teeth cleaning.

Shannon Woodcock, who was the executive director of the original Delta Dental Health Theatre for seven years, is now president and CEO of the new museum. The museum has

been ranked among the Top 10 destinations for parents and educators in St. Louis. Shannon was recently named a Missouri Athletic Club 2017 Women of Distinction.

The HealthWorks! Kids' Museum's main piece is the 55-foot long, 25-foot wide, 8-foot tall human skeletal structure that serves as a universally accessible indoor playground. Cre8Play refers to the unusual play and learning structure as "Dexter," while the museum refers to it as the "Interactive Dude." The entire play space was designed and built by Cre8Play (www.cre8play.com), working in conjunction with Cunningham Recreation (www.cunninghamrec.com). Unlimited Play (www.unlimitedplay.org) consulted on ADA accessibility. The Interactive Dude was funded through a grant awarded to Unlimited Play by the St. Louis Office for Developmental Disabilities (DD Resources). DD Resources serves St. Louis residents diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and intellectual disability.

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The Dude features a leg slide, a bone balance beam and allows children to explore under the rib cage and climb on it.

Top: The museum's largest piece is a glass fiber reinforced concrete "Interactive Dude"—a 55-foot long, 25-foot wide, 8-foot tall human skeletal structure that is an accessible indoor playground.

Left: The interactive LED panel here explains to children the main regions of the brain (frontal, parietal, temporal and occipital lobes, and the cerebellum) and their functions.

Middle: The Dude's right leg bones—femur, patella, tibia and fibula become a boney balance beam.

Right: The "Dudes" left foot below the knee is a slide.



Top, Left: The educational play exhibit at the HealthWorks! Kids' Museum in St. Louis, Mo., lets kids learn about human anatomy, inside and out.

Top, Right: The "scoop on poop" details such statistics as the poundage one produces in a lifetime (14,000 pounds), an elephant's daily tally (300 lbs.) and the physics of floating feces (high gas content).

Left: Kids learn via the interactive Adam's "apple" that the laryngeal prominence is cartilage that protects the vocal chords.

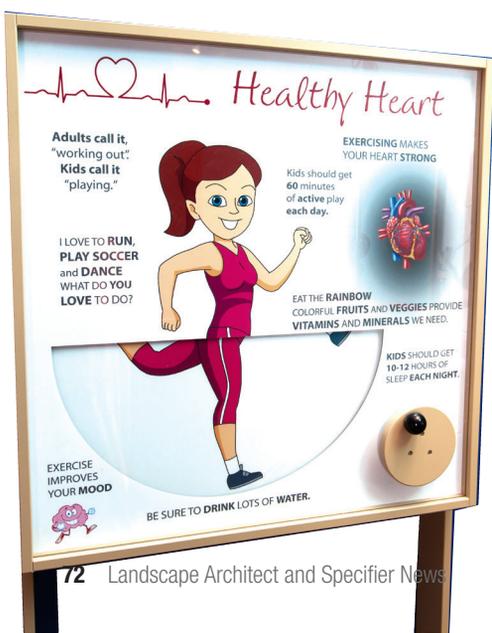


Children can also play an electronic, memory-style healthy eating game attached to the digestive tract. One can walk inside the skull and learn about the frontal, parietal, temporal and occipital lobes, the cerebellum and the brainstem. There are also informative displays about heart health and the harms of smoking.

Kids can play a game of active "Simon Says," while learning about the larynx. There's even education about that most basic human biological function that is usually avoided: pooping. The "all-bout poop" panel includes a passing gas sound effect, which, as we all know, never ceases to entertain kids and adults alike.

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St. Louis is near the bottom in several pediatric rankings, including asthma, diabetes and obesity. Anonymous surveys for museum visitors will be used to collect data about local kids' dietary and exercise habits.



Left: In addition to the "interactive giant dude," there are dozens of interactive displays about health, including showing kids the effects of smoking on the lungs and other organs, and how to keep the heart healthy.