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## Education



### Officials break ground on Delaware's 1st kids museum

Monday, September 21st, 2009

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Children from Wilmington's Kuumba Academy helped

state leaders break ground on the new museum along Wilmington's Riverfront. Museum officials say the museum should officially open its doors to the public on April 24, 2010.

When completed the 37,000 sq. ft. museum will feature seven different exhibits, including a 24-foot tall climbing structure called the **Stratosphere**. Other learning areas **technology, biology and nutrition, nature, banking and finance, and art**. The museum's Executive Director Julie Van Blarcom says the effort has received tremendous support from the community. "This is something people really want. They really want it enough, even in a down economy like we've had, people have been very, very generous." The museum has already raised 100% of its capital needs for phase one of the project and 91% of the operating goal through 2012.

The museum has been a long time in the making. President of the museum's board of directors Lisa Lessner says she's been working to get the idea off the ground for 13 years. "It's been a fabulous process, it's been a great group of people all with a common vision to develop a place just for kids." Senator Tom Carper (D-Delaware) says he first heard about the ideas for a museum for kids along the river during the latter years of his term as governor in the 1990's. "I was excited about it, but we had too much other things going on so we turned it over to the next administration, but we continued to work on it from Washington." Some of that work from Washington included securing funding for the museum through the process that's been much maligned in recent years: the earmark. "This is not a bridge to nowhere," Carper says, "this is something that's going to help train and motivate a whole generation of scientists and engineers."

Governor Jack Markell (D) says adding the museum to restaurants, the baseball stadium, and other activities now available at the riverfront, really makes it a destination for families to enjoy. "It's obviously great for kids, it's also great for families, it's great for our economy because people want to be located in places where there are fun and interesting outlets for their kids." Markell says in addition to learning through activities at the museum, children could learn a great lesson by following the example of the leaders of the museum. "These people have done such a fantastic job. They've been so persistent and persuasive. It's taken them a very long time, but they never gave up, and there's a lesson in there for all of us."

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