

THE RYE RECORD



NEWS OF RYE

AND ITS PEOPLE

The Campaign Edges Closer to a Real Museum

– By Robin Jovanovich, June 11, 2010 –

Eight years in the making, the Westchester Children’s Museum could open in 2011 on the site of the former Playland Bathhouses. The big if is whether the museum receives site approval on designated parkland. On Monday, June 7, the County Board of Legislators approved a home rule request to the New York State Legislature. The project has the support of State Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, Assemblyman George Latimer, County Legislator Judy Myers, Mayor Doug French, and many other officials as well as local residents. County Executive Rob Astorino supports the project but has not yet said whether he is prepared to move forward on a long-term lease for the museum; his Administration is weighing the future of Playland Park.

Renovations to the Bathhouses by the County, at a cost of close to \$7,000,000, began in 2009 and are nearly complete. The Campaign for the Westchester Children’s Museum has more than met the County’s challenge to raise the same amount. At their most recent benefit, May 20, on the Playland Boardwalk, the Campaign raised over \$125,000. To date, they’ve raised over \$8,000,000. Many organizations have expressed their desire to partner with the museum and there are funds waiting in the wings from a number of individuals have pledged their support pending site approval, according to Board President Corinne Zola.

“The support is there for a vibrant, interactive cultural institution for children and their families and a dynamic resource for schools,” said Tracy Kay, Executive Director.

In an email to constituents who have written Legislator Myers in support of the museum in the past few days, she wrote, “You have my promise that I will take it upon myself to convince my fellow legislators of having this educational asset located in the Playland site. I truly believe this is the right place and the right time for this resource to be added to Westchester County’s list of treasures.”

While waiting for approval, museum staff, committee members and volunteers have created a “museum without walls”. They do fee-free programs at the Carver Center, the Boys and Girls Club in New Rochelle and the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester, thanks to support from the Junior League, Con Ed, Wachovia Wells Fargo, Lego and many other organizations. In the last month they’ve done 20 programs and they soon plan to offer traveling exhibits.

“We’ve tested the model out,” said Kay, “and we’re now ready for it to be a revenue stream.”

The community is invited to enjoy some of the “Exploration Stations” modeled after future museum exhibits at the fourth annual Explore-a-thon on the Playland Boardwalk Sunday, June 13, 9 a.m. to noon. It’s the museum’s signature family event.

As the museum approaches a major milestone in its journey, from a campaign to a museum, its board asks County residents to voice their support by taking a minute and clicking <http://www.votervoice.net/Core.aspx?AID=1261&APP=GAC&IssueID=22128&SiteID=-1> and send a quick message to your legislator asking that they support an Act which will allow WCM to enter into a lease agreement with Westchester County for the Bathhouses at Rye.