STEPPING OUT

Photos courtesy LICM

In the Orion spacecraft, future astronauts interact with buttons, levers and sounds as they learn facts about what it takes to bring humans to the Moon, and eventually to Mars.

Intergalactic adventures take flight.

Space explorers need to utilize limited resources on the moon to live and survive. At this work station, children transport objects to and from the surface using foam blocks.

BLASTING OFF for an out-of-this-world adventure

'Moon to Mars' touches down at Long Island Children's Museum

By Danielle Schwab

Calling all future space explorers! It's time to set course to the moon, and beyond, with opportunities for kids to fuel their imaginations and dream bigger — and farther — than ever before.

"Moon to Mars" has rocketed into Long Island Children's Museum, on view through May 4. The traveling exhibit, — created by Omaha Children's Museum and designed with support from NASA's Deep Space Exploration Systems at Johnson Space Center — brings the wonders of space to life for young learners. Through six immersive play zones, future explorers get a first-hand look at current space technology and discover the possibilities of future missions.

"We have the resources to bring a really complex topic to life for children, where they can understand what makes a mission possible like what tools are used or why astronauts need to wear protective clothing," says Ashley Niver, the museum's director of education.

Inspired by the current realities and the future dreams of space travel, the exhibit's connection to real NASA technology is what makes it so compelling. Kids can climb aboard the Orion Spacecraft, designed to carry astronauts on future Artemis missions — using buttons, levers and sounds — or take the wheel of the Lunar Rover to explore the moon's rugged surface.

"With the recent advancements in space exploration, like the launch of the James Webb telescope and the evolution of SpaceX, it's the perfect time to introduce an exhibit focused on the future Artemis Mission," Niver says. "We have so many leaps in space exploration and so many new things on the horizon."

Clearly, creating advanced space technology is no simple feat. It involves creativity, problem-solving and much trial and error on the part of a diverse team. Young space explorers have the chance to dive into that engineering process, designing and building their very own rockets, and then launching their creations across the room.

"There's a lot of engineering components that come into this, involving critical thinking for kids. These people [the spacecraft systems developers] have an incredible amount of skill and knowledge about space and creating these structures, but there are still things that they might realize don't work, and to solve the problem," Niver adds.

"The exhibit offers children endless opportunities to nurture their curiosity through the most effective way we know they learn: play. It also provides a valuable opportunity for parents to discover ways to incorporate big concepts like space exploration, physics and engineering into play at home. Whether it's building a Martian landscape with pillows or creating a rocket ship out of a cardboard box, these activities spark storytelling that encourages imagination and inspires the 'big thinkers' of tomorrow."

After young "explorers" have landed at their destination, there's still much to be discovered. Visitors can get geared up in a spacesuit and explore a new world.

Among the components, kids can construct a new base using pulleys and blocks at the Moon Base Builder to make the planet or moon inhabitable.

Once the base is complete, step through the lunar leaps and feel the changes in gravity as you walk — or jump.

WHERE & WHEN

- Now until May 4
- $18 museum admission, $16 seniors 65 and older
- View the LICM events calendar at licm.org for additional information or call (516) 224-5800
- Long Island Children's Museum, Museum Row, Garden City

"You could take a leap and you have to work really hard to jump far on the moon. You wouldn't have to do that because you don't have the gravitational force pulling you as strong," Niver explains.

Additional learning opportunities are found at the Space Academy Kiosk video display. It covers all things space exploration such as life in space, spacesuits, and real-life astronauts.

Each activity shows the boundless nature of space in kid-friendly fashion, perhaps even inspiring some future astronauts and space engineers.

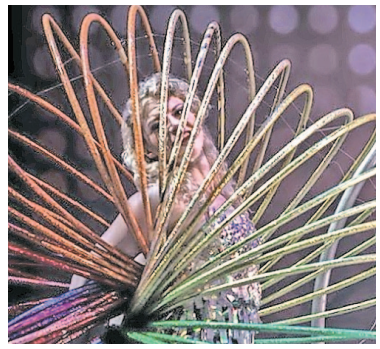
"They can step into the role. It helps kids to connect to something that isn't exactly what they know, they could put on a costume or a spacesuit and really embody that character. Hands-on play is a great way to engage them in content or topics that may be a little bit more foreign to them," Niver says.

"The astronauts, at one point, were kids too. They dreamed of the same thing as you. You can understand the path that they went through that led them to their current career," she adds.

As always, related programming enhances the exhibit experience. This time around, the museum is partnering with its Museum Row neighbor, Cradle of Aviation Museum.The Cradle's portable, inflatable planetarium dome, the Digitalis Planetarium, will be in residence Feb. 17-21, for more space exploration. Families can discover the majesty of the stars and our universe during a 30-minute presentation led by a trained Cradle of Aviation educator. Four planetarium performances will be offered each day.

The LICM stage also gets in on the act with the futuristic production of "Interstellar Cinderella," Feb. 7-March 21. Set in 3017, Cinderella is a space engineer who is looking to revolutionize space travel with her new invention.

While the exhibit is "in orbit" be sure to check out more related programming; information is on the museum's website.



Acrobats of Cirque-tacular

Families will enjoy a new take on circus-style thrills when the Acrobats of Cirque-tacular visits the Landmark stage,. Cirque-tacular features one dazzling circus feat after another in a high-energy, family-friendly flurry of fun. Indulge your curiosity and celebrate your senses as this troupe of acrobats, aerialists and circus specialty artists bend, twist, flip, and fly into everyone' hearts. Cirque-tacular's performers — an ever-changing cast of elite aerialists, acrobats, contortionists, jugglers, specialty acts and world-record holders from Broadway and Las Vegas stages — are hailed as "mesmerizing", "incredible", and "truly impressive." The performers are revered as cutting edge leaders of the new American vaudeville movement. Explosive music that complements the performance and act adds to the fun.

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2 p.m. $38. Jeanne Rimsky Theater at Landmark on Main Street, 232 Main St., Port Washington. Tickets available at landmarkonmainstreet.org or (516) 767-6444.

'Dancing with the Stars'

Dancing with the Stars is back on tour to heat up winter with a dazzling live production. See the ballroom brought to life in this new edition featuring everyone's favorite Dancing with the Stars pros and special guests. They'll perform glittering new numbers as well as some of the unbelievable showstoppers featured in season 33. The high-energy show puts the dancers in the spotlight, showcase their dynamic moves as seen during the series, along with some lively new twists. The tour delivers an unforgettable night of electrifying dance performances from world-renowned dancers who topped the leaderboard.

Tuesday, Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m. Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, LIU Post campus, 720 Northern Boulevard, Brookville. Tickets available at ticketmaster.com, tillescenter.org or (516) 299-3100.