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B16

Have A Ball!

NEW EXHIBIT AT LONG ISLAND
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Hovercraft ride 'From

Hands-on exhibit at LI Children's Museum a thrill

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After a Long Island Children's Museum educator releases a second-grade class into the new "From Here to There" exhibit, it's clear which station will be most popular with visitors: The children rush for a chance to ride the hovercraft.

However, the Simple Machines Ball Pit, with its play dump truck and bucket on a pulley, is a favored choice as well: The traveling exhibit offers 11 stations focusing on how things move by land, sea and air. It was developed by the Rochester Museum & Science Center and the Sciencenter of Ithaca, and it will be included with the cost of admission to the Garden City museum through Jan. 5.

"The beauty of this exhibit is that it takes a really complex subject like hydraulics or pneumatics or lift and illustrates in a very clear and simple way how these things work," says Jeanmarie Mansfield, associate director of education.

Here's a closer look at six of the hands-on stations:

HOVERCRAFT

Kids sit in a chair attached to a long, snakelike tube. When the "on" button is



Lance Gomez, a third-grader from the Academy Charter School in Uniondale, tries out the hovercraft chair at Long Island Children's Museum.

pressed, the tube noisily blows air underneath the chair and rider, lifting them to float on a cushion of air just above the ground. They can then glide back and forth on a prescribed track. "I feel like a vacuum cleaner," says Salimah Grace, 7, after her ride during a field trip for the second- and third-graders at The Academy Charter School of Uniondale.

HYDRAULICS

Salimah moves on to explore a podium, on top of which are three containers, each filled with discs totaling 15 pounds. She braces one black patent leather shoe against the podium, using that foot for leverage as she alternately pulls ropes tied to each set of weights. The display attempts to show users how different

pulleys make lifting objects easier. "This one is heavy," Salimah proclaims about the first set. "This one is lighter, and this one is the lightest."

SAIL INTO THE WIND

Ellashia Spaulding, a student information specialist at the Academy, plays with children at the miniature sailboat exhibit, adjusting wind and water

force, sail position and rudder to make her boat move in different directions. "It's teaching kids about science in a way they can understand," she says. "Instead of sitting down learning, they are able to touch and feel and understand right away."

HOW PLANES FLY

Kids can see how air flow

Here to There'



Second-grader Elton Burns tries out a pulley system at the "From Here to There" exhibit, a tactile way for kids to learn about the way things move on land, air and sea.

Second-grader Salimah Grace (left) tries to use air to move the miniature sailboats at the hands-on display.

ON THE COVER. Amare Daisley, a second-grader at The Academy Charter School in Uniondale, plays at Long Island Children's Museum.

affects the wing of an airplane, creating lift. "That's going to be big, especially because it seems really magical, how things fly," Mansfield predicts. "Kids wonder how this giant hunk of metal gets into the air. They see how they can adjust to make things better or worse."

HOT AIR BALLOON

Another flight-related station lets kids use hot air to make a colorful hot-air balloon rise into the air. It teaches them that because hot air weighs less than cold air, the balloon gets lighter and lighter as the air inside heats up and comes down again as the air inside cools.

SIMPLE MACHINES BALL PIT

The ball pit is geared toward even toddlers; it offers an "entry-level" introduction to STEM, says Maureen Mangan, director of communications and marketing at the museum. In it are play trucks, a bucket on a pulley that kids can fill

with balls, and an inclined plane that kids can send balls down. "Kids at a really young age have an instinctual interest in how things get from here to there, how things work," Mansfield says. "There's a real gap in STEM-based programming and learning in those ages."

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