

# Zimmer Children's Museum Helps Children Explore Community and Social Responsibility

by Esther Shapiro

The Zimmer Children's Museum of Los Angeles is a cultural institution for children, families, and teachers to explore unique hands-on exhibits about community and social responsibility. It also is an organization that implements arts and education programs at the Museum, in public schools, and in private schools, and at other locations throughout the area.

The Zimmer teaches all children about the Big Ideas of global citizenship, compassion, aid and rescue, respect, visiting the sick, taking care of planet Earth, welcoming the stranger, respecting the elderly, and making a difference. It encourages diversity, multi-ethnic understanding, and generosity of heart.

While the ambience of the Museum is clearly exciting and fun, the exhibits are designed to offer children, and accompanying adults, focused learning opportunities. The Museum provides exhibit guides as tools to assist adults in engaging children in Big Ideas. With appropriate explanations, related quotations and age-appropriate questions, adults are provided the necessary resources to join with the Museum in the educational process.

The Museum partners with private and public schools from pre-school through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade by providing a specifically designed learning opportunity and a play environment that says "please touch." Teachers consult with our Arts and Education Specialist to select a lesson plan that is appropriate for their curriculum, whether it is a holiday- or value-related subject. School group tours to the Museum, involving over 3000 children a year, include a lesson on the chosen theme, an age-appropriate art project using a variety of media, and free time to play in the 16 exhibits. The Museum




reaches 50,000 people annually through all of its programs.

Children's play in the Museum both simulates their experiences and stimulates further exploration. Exhibits ranging from the *Kotel* to the Water Table, the Synagogue to the Airplane, Bubbie's Book Corner to the Music Kiosk, the Home to the *Tikkun Olam* House, and the Park to the Blue Bagel Café offer hundreds of teachable moments.

The Zimmer's "youTHink" program provides a curriculum for public school students using art as the medium to engage students in the exploration of contemporary issues and social responsibility while developing their critical thinking and art skills.

The Zimmer Children's Museum, with its variety of programs and outreach tools, serves to broaden the concept of community and responsibility.

Further information about the museum can be found online at [www.zimmermuseum.org](http://www.zimmermuseum.org). 

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