

The Great Indoors; Children's Museum of Phoenix

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In greener parts of the country, the art of tree climbing as a child is often a classic and treasured pastime. Here in the desert however, suitable trees are few and far between, namely due to the dominance of cacti (one word-thorns), and that's where The Children's Museum of Phoenix steps in.

The Children's Museum of Phoenix recently announced their ongoing campaign to "Raise the Climber," a centerpiece exhibit composed of a one-of-a-kind, three-story climbing structure designed to provide the desert with something Mother Nature neglected to give.

The structure's design includes a rowboat, a bathtub, a rooftop and even the ultimate dream adventure—a rocket ship. While a 37-foot tall glorified jungle gym doesn't exactly scream safety, the builders are hard at work putting this fear to rest; all of the play areas will be enclosed with wire mesh.

What the Climber also provides is a tree-climbing experience for those with limited mobility. Included in the design is a platform on the third floor for easy access. Why is this experience so essential? Josie Young, Children's Museum of Phoenix Board Member, Founder and teacher, says the experience of climbing a tree teaches children an infinite number of lessons. She believes children learn to see the world from an alternative perspective, learn to take risks and find joy in physical challenge, learn to daydream and practice balance.

"Most of the trees here in our desert do not lend themselves easily to being climbed," Young said in a recent press release. "Our answer to this dilemma is to build this amazing Climber that meets as many of those needs as possible."

The museum has already received two-thirds of the \$1.5 million required to finish this project with donations from Schuff Steel Company, Perini Building Company, Target and private donors. The Museum has now turned to the public for help raising the additional \$500,000 needed for completion of the Climber with a unique spin art on the community art project.

The Museum's Decorate A Bottle Cap Promotion offers 50,000 bottle caps for purchase at one dollar a cap. After purchasing the cap, the buyer can use the Museum's Art Studio to decorate the cap with everything from glitter to paper to create their own miniature work of art. Not only do the proceeds go to the completion of the Climber, but the caps themselves will be used to decorate the structure, adding beauty and love to an already ideal playground.



Construction of the Climber will begin this August in the atrium, which will be closed during this time but viewing of the structure's progress will be allowed for the public. The Grand opening of the Climber along with two other exhibits scheduled for the same location, 10,000 Blocks and Building Big, is estimated in early 2010—a small time to wait for such a large, influential gift. www.childrensmuseumofphoenix.org