



## Arizona Museum for Youth

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# News Release

## America's First Fine Arts Museum for Children Turns the "Big 3-0" . . . and It's Right Here in Arizona!

*"Art is humanity's most essential, most universal language.*

*It is not a frill but a necessary part of communication. The quality of civilization can be measured through its music, dance, drama, architecture, visual art, and literature. We must give our children knowledge and understanding of civilization's most profound works."*

-Ernest L. Boyer,

Former President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

**Mesa, AZ – November 25, 2008.** That's right, my fellow Arizonans, we have not just a world-renowned art museum for children but the country's very first, right here, in our own backyard . . . and yes, it's turning 30. Where have you been?

Hey, I didn't even know about it. It appears—to me, anyway—that the powers-that-be carefully concealed this cloak-and-dagger, covert breath of colorful fresh air, from all of us. Like many of you, I hadn't a clue that the Arizona Museum for Youth, more fondly known as AMY, even existed—and I'm a native! I find this to be the sentiment of many Arizonans.

AMY is the Valley's very own national treasure and its best kept secret that, after 30 years, is finally being revealed to the rest of us, young and not-so-young, art connoisseurs.

Now, just who is this artistic force for children that "many have tried to imitate but that none have been able to replicate," so I've been told as of late? Nationally and internationally recognized, AMY is the first interactive art museum in the country designed especially for children and their families, and it is about to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. So now, we're officially all in the "know!"

Resurrected from an old Basha's Grocery Store, you could say that AMY is also one of the first "Green Museums," as well. Conveniently located in Historic Downtown Mesa, the museum has achieved an international reputation for designing visual art exhibitions that introduce and educate visitors about a variety of engaging art themes, artists, artistic media, and creative art processes.

"Art enhances the quality of life, facilitates self-expression and elevates the human spirit," explains Museum Director Sunnee Spencer. "At AMY, each child can learn how to make aesthetic choices about the world around them."



*"Pog is my Co-Pilot 2008," by Scottsdale Artist Matt Mays is part of one of the exhibitions now on display— **Full Circle: Recycled into Art** through May 31, 2009.*



"Wake Up and See the Light," by Scott McNeill now on display in the exhibition— **Way to Glow!** through February 8, 2009.

Through world-class exhibitions that change throughout the year and interactive programming, children learn to view art as a language with a myriad of opportunities for conversation between the art on display and themselves, reflecting their growing life experiences. The museum gives children a chance to interact with a variety of high quality art through activities that stimulate them to use their imagination through directed play and provides them with an understanding of the ideas being presented. On the whole, all exhibitions chosen allow the visitor to "see the world through the eyes of an artist."

Begun as a private museum in 1978 by a group of concerned citizens, it was acquired by the City of Mesa in 1987 to meet the need of a lack of arts education for school-aged children. Since then, the public-private partnership with the City of Mesa and the Arizona Museum for Youth Friends (*a non-profit organization developed to benefit the museum*) has grown to provide families with interactive art experiences and an international model of success for children's museums throughout the world.

Today the museum continues to build upon this creative foundation. With the addition of the Township of *ArtVille* in 2004, AMY has sustained increased attendance, membership and acclaim for providing unique educational experiences to early learners (ages 4 and under) and their adult caregivers. AMY now serves over 75,000 people annually and is a respected resource in the community.



The colorful Township of *Artville*, an interactive and permanent exhibition for ages 4 and under and their caregivers.

With 30 years of solid experience designing and developing activities that accompany exhibitions that are created on-site, AMY is also able to provide training to staff of traditional museums on interactive exhibit design. The workshop facility at AMY is one of the best-equipped in the country to show educators how to use hands-on activities to fabricate any idea that arises. Earlier this year, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) requested the activities that AMY developed for *Jim Henson's Fantastic World* to become part of the national display in Washington, D.C. They have also discussed the possibility of future collaborations.

AMY is a unique museum that blends the best practices of the art museum world with the best practices of the children's museum profession.

Still, funding challenges and budget reductions in 2006-07 and again, just recently, due to the current economic slowdown have produced paradigm shifts in roles and responsibilities for the organization. While the museum is poised for continued achievement with a variety of opportunities and challenges, it is in a period of transition as it enters the fourth decade of educating one child at a time.

*"The arts must be at the heart of every child's learning experience if...they are to have a chance to dream and to create, to have beliefs, to carry a sense of cultural identity."*

– James D Wolfensohn,  
Former Chairman of The Kennedy Center

With the recent publication, *Bright Start* by Jill Stamm, a local professor at Arizona State University, there is an ever-growing awareness of the need to develop programs that provide experiences that support very early learners. This knowledge, coupled with a current absence of available hands-on, minds-on activities for preschool children, means the museum is poised to resolve, what is still, a current societal need.

*“The arts are fundamental resources through which the world is viewed, meaning is created, and the mind developed.”*

– Elliot W Eisner,  
Professor of Education and Art, Stanford University



Children participating in one of AMY's hands-on classes along with their parents.

In order to reach these goals, AMY is consistently seeking and securing new financial and human resources. If you would like to support AMY and all of its fantastic endeavors, please contact Lindsay Hochhalter, Development Assistant at 480.644.5564 or email her at [Lindsay.Hochhalter@mesaaz.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Hochhalter@mesaaz.gov).

### **Birthday Celebration!**

Please join AMY from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday, December 6, 2008 at the museum to officially celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday. There'll be balloon twisters, cupcake decorating, party gift bags and lots of fun and other activities for the whole family. Activities are free with paid museum admission. \$5.50 for everyone age 1 and over. Members are FREE. 35 N. Robson Rd, Mesa, AZ 85201 (2 Blocks East of Country Club and 1 Block North of Main in Downtown Mesa). Visit us online at [www.arizonamuseumforyouth.com](http://www.arizonamuseumforyouth.com) for more information.

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### **ABOUT AMY**

The Arizona Museum for Youth (AMY) is a fine arts museum for children and families and serves as a terrific place to introduce life-changing art. The museum hosts 6 world-class exhibitions, annually, and features ArtVille, a special art township for kids under 4 years of age. As part of the exhibitions, a dynamic array of art classes, fun workshops, and family programs are available to teach basic art principles and techniques. Located at 35 N. Robson in downtown Mesa, AMY is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. AMY is closed most government holidays. Please visit [www.arizonamuseumforyouth.com](http://www.arizonamuseumforyouth.com) or call 480.644.2467 for current information.

“Inspiring children of all ages to experience their world differently through art, creativity and imagination.”