



Rules

1. Adult Supervision Required

Children must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult at all times. Adults must remain with their children during their visit.

2. Play Respectfully

Please be kind, take turns, and share materials with others. Encourage gentle hands and indoor voices.

3. No Running or Rough Play

For everyone's safety, running, pushing, or roughhousing is not allowed.

4. Food and Drink Policy

We do not allow outside food or drinks. Please help us keep exhibits clean.

5. Respect Exploration Station Property

Please treat exhibits gently and return materials to their proper place after use.

We are so pleased you have come to visit. Enjoy your time exploring with us!



Our Story

Exploration Station opened its doors in 1990 through the efforts of a core of dedicated and inspired volunteers. Late in 1987, Marilyn O'Flaherty, a retired Bradley art teacher, presented the concept of a hands-on exploration and discovery museum for children to the Bourbonnais Township Park District. The Park District adopted the concept and soon began work on developing a children's museum.

A Board of Trustees was created from civic, business, municipal and educational leadership that would consult and assist in the creation of a mini-museum. The traveling gallery brought hands-on, interactive museum experiences to schools and libraries where such opportunities were not affordable or available. The popularity of the traveling gallery was overwhelming upon its introduction to the community. Goals and objectives for a children's museum were determined and the Park District hired the first full-time museum employee, Mrs. O'Flaherty. A small, older building that needed a lot of work was found to be promising. With the community volunteer help, a lot of donated materials and months of hard labor, the 2300 square foot building was made suitable and the doors were opened to the public. Featured was one exhibit – a two-story, six-room model of a medieval castle. More than 1400 people visited the children's museum that weekend, even without a working air conditioning unit in the building. The first year attendance topped 22,000.

The current location of Exploration Station features a 10,000 square foot facility in Perry Farm Park, which opened in 1997. Exhibits include a flight simulator, puppet theatre, pet clinic, market, soda shop / diner, patio area, air tubes, S.T.E.A.M Learning lab, auto repair shop, gift shop, music area, critter creek, toddler area, sensory room, and multi-purpose room.

In 2024, a grant for a major renovation was awarded to Exploration Station to re-imagine one of the beloved spaces for future generations. The grand opening of the Storybook Forest exhibit featuring a large tree with two slides and two lookout towers, a bridge, and a toddler area was introduced in 2025. The inspiration of the exhibit was to bring the fairy tales to life while honoring the original vision of education and hands-on learning pioneered by Mrs. O'Flaherty. While the children's museum serves a 65-mile radius, over half a million visitors from more than 45 states and 25 foreign countries have registered in the guest book.