



Exploration Station®

...a children's museum

History of the Exploration Station The museum opened its doors on July 28, 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 the children to the Bourbonnais Township Park District. The Park District adopted the concept and soon began work on developing a children's museum under the leadership of Mrs. O'Flaherty. Through the combined efforts of a newly created board of trustees and other area volunteers, a small traveling gallery was created. The traveling gallery brought hands-on, interactive museum experiences to schools and libraries where such opportunities were not available. The popularity of the traveling gallery was overwhelming upon its introduction to the community. It was time to find an affordable home for the children's museum. A small, older building that needed a lot of work, was found to be promising. With community volunteer help, a lot of donated materials, and months of hard labor, the 2,300 square foot building was made suitable and the doors opened to the public in late July 1990. Featured was one exhibit-a twostory, six room model of a medieval castle. Then, throughout the facility, visitors found hands-on items such as tools, musical instruments, clothing, jewelry from cultures around the world, and natural science offerings, such as rocks, fossils, skulls, bones and pelts. More than 1,400 people visited the children's museum that weekend, even without a working air conditioning unit in the building. The heat and small facility space didn't detour people from returning to the facility because 22,000 people crossed the threshold that first year. In October 1997, a 10,000 square foot facility to serve as a permanent home for Exploration Station was opened on the Perry Farm Park. Since the opening of the children's museum in 1990, over 37,000 annually visit the Exploration Station. So far, visitors from more than 45 states and 25 foreign countries have registered in the guest book.