

EVENT LISTINGS FOR SIDEWALK HOUSTON CITY GUIDE

Connie L. Schmidt & Ron Kaye

The Children's Museum of Houston

1500 Binz

Houston, Texas 77004-7112

(713) 522-1138

FAX: (713) 522-5747

Museum hours are 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Tuesday-Saturday, 12 noon to 5 P.M. Sunday, closed Monday "Free Family Nights" 5-8 P.M. Thursdays

Unless noted, all activities are free with admission

General admission: \$5 per person, \$4 for seniors 65 and older, children under two and Museum members admitted free of charge

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Spring Fling Free Family Night

5-8 P.M. Thursday, April 9

Cost: Free

Butterflies are free (as are bunny ears and Easter eggs) on Family Night at the Children's Museum

Does it seem that the Spring festivities at the Children's Museum are lasting longer than Spring itself lasts in these parts? They've been carrying on at least since March, with no sign of letting up. Even this three-hour event seems a rather long time where Houston's transitory seasons are concerned. Well, what the heck, it's free, and it's sure to be fun. Little kids can continue to celebrate the season by making bunny ears — not the kind that sit atop the electronic babysitter at home, but the type commonly seen on that hallowed Pagan symbol of this fecund season. Young artists can also make Easter eggs, and they can create butterflies, presumably without having to start from caterpillars. Infinitely less messy, if you get our drift.

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Spotlight Performance — Medumo of Africa: Life in the Mines

7 P.M. Thursday, April 9

Cost: Free

Major performers cover miner details at the Children's Museum

What would it be like to work in a South African mine? Dark, probably. And hot and grueling to boot, not to mention thankless and low-paying, with no benefits and almost certainly no employee nap lounge. One imagines it would be somewhat like working in a fast-food restaurant, only more so. The up side: no "empowerment" programs or management seminars. Even so, we wouldn't want to work in a mine;

we're wiped after mowing the front lawn on a blistering August day. But thousands have it much tougher than we do. The remarkable performance group Medumo of Africa gives new meaning to the term "hostile work environment" by depicting, through dance, the harrowing drama of life in the diamond mines of South Africa. Not content with conventional instruments, these enterprising performers play their bodies like drums, stomp their boots, knock their heels together, slap the sides of the boots, and clap hands on their chests and thighs. This is sure to be a riveting display, but please note: These are professionals. Do not try this at home on a younger sibling.

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Breakfast with the Easter Bunny

9-10 A.M. Saturday, April 11

Cost: Free with admission

Power breakfast with the guy who delivers those over-stuffed goody baskets

We, personally, would not normally be inclined to breakfast with a rabbit. For one thing, rabbits — at least those that are not confined in wire-bottom cages — eat their own...how can we say this delicately? Let's just say that recycling is more to them than a trendy diversion borne of social consciousness, and leave it at that. This habit of rabbits has something to do with their peculiar digestive systems, which apparently don't digest everything properly the first time around. But never mind. Then there's that other activity commonly associated with bunnies, which would not seem to make them the most wholesome of breakfast companions, even if it **is** good for a giggle or two. Apropos of the latter, however, we're told that Mrs. Easter Bunny will not be attending this breakfast, so there won't be any worries about Mr. Bunny giving in to the demands of his libido. Furthermore, we've been assured that he will be on his best behavior and will consume only the breakfast comestibles offered by the kind people at the Museum (which, we're betting, will have been prepared by the chefs of Chick-Fil-A, the sponsor of this event).

Of course, since the rabbit will be minding his manners, that means **you** have to be on your best behavior too, which means no making fun of Mr. Bunny's teeth or big ears, and no remarks about how you've heard rabbit tastes a lot like chicken. After breakfast, you can join in some springtime crafts and activities in the Children's Museum Courtyard, but don't be surprised if the guest of honor has to excuse himself early, mumbling some excuse about Mrs. Bunny needing him to help out with some "chores" at home.

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Spotlight Performance — “Who’s in Rabbit’s House?” by storyteller Ramona King

Noon on Saturday, April 11
Inspirations Gallery
Cost: Free with admission

Another bunny tale, but with an African flavor

Remember the time your folks were having a little trouble hanging that new wallpaper in the dining room, and you were just dying to help them out? So you did, and by the time you were through there was wallpaper paste all over the new cherrywood dining table, a cat-shaped lump was writhing beneath the paper on the west wall, and your mother was in tears. But your parents just couldn’t yell at you, because, after all, you were only trying to help. In this East African folk tale, Rabbit finds himself in a similar situation. He arrives home one day to find that a terrible monster has moved into his house. His friends try to help out, but their attempts nearly destroy Rabbit's house instead. Will Rabbit be able to save his house, get rid of the monster, and preserve his friendships with his would-be benefactors? Come and find out when gifted storyteller Ramona King reads from Verna Aardema’s charming book, which, by the way, has nothing to do with wallpaper.

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Earth Day Free Family Night

5-8 P.M. Thursday, April 16
Cost: Free

Kids become eco-centric at the Children’s Museum

Earth Shoes and earth tones have, fortunately, come and gone — all that retro-seventies nonsense notwithstanding — but Earth Day is still with us. Born in the very early seventies, all but forgotten in the decadent, wasteful eighties (ah, those were the days), and reborn in the panic-stricken nineties, this increasingly ill-named nod to ecological correctness seems to get more drawn-out every year. Earth Day? Earth Quarter is more like it. Nevertheless, the underlying message of accountability to our planet is certainly a worthy one, and the Children’s Museum is doing its part to keep the message alive. On this Free Family Night, kids and parents will learn what they can do to help preserve the Earth and reduce waste. The lessons will be conveyed through a variety of games, activities, and crafts — some of which will no doubt involve the use of paper, but in a responsible manner, we assume. Kids will get to make their own leaf and flower hats to take home, and, if the evening is successful, they’ll also take home a sense of responsibility that will last long after the little hats have biodegraded. But be warned; they may become insufferable little eco-cops who chide you for not recycling cat food cans or for throwing away those junk-mail flyers you receive by the cubic ton every month. So come at your own risk.

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Spotlight Performance — Texas Mime Theatre: Aesop's Fables

7 P.M. Thursday, April 16

Cost: Free

Say you'll be mime at the Children's Museum...tales with morals but no words

Ah, mimes — so silent, so graceful, so annoying. You can't shoot them (it's illegal; we checked), so you might as well watch them. If you watch them in this performance at the Children's Museum, you will get to see, though not hear, a series of remarkable tales about industrious insects and crafty animals. With masks and movement, the members of the Texas Mime Theatre will perform their original versions of Aesop's most popular morality tales, including "The Ant and the Grasshopper," "The Fox and the Crow," "The Councilmembers and the FBI," and more.

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Houston Public Library Day

10 A.M.-2 P.M. Saturday, April 18

Cost: Free with admission

Check out what people did for entertainment before the video age...and become a card-carrying member of an elite minority

Books are those objects that are roughly shaped like videos, but are stiller and quieter and never need rewinding. Admittedly they're low-tech, maybe even a bit retro, but we think they're definitely worth checking out, and you can check out any book you want if you have a library card. In the *Tales of Enchantment* exhibit at the Children's Museum, you'll have a chance to sign up for your very own Houston Public Library card, which will place you in an elite and ever-shrinking minority. Get your card, use it often, and make Barbara Bush proud.

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Week of the Young Child Free Family Night

5-8 P.M. Thursday, April 23

Cost: Free

Make art, or just a big mess, to celebrate week for little kids

If you arrived at this site as a result of a search for "young child," you are in for a real disappointment. Please follow the link to the FBI to get what you need. If, however, you arrived with more wholesome intentions, the Wortham Foundation and Pennzoil Company invite your children and you to come out to the Children's Museum and make your own puzzle and ID card, the latter of which won't get you into any clubs where you're not legally allowed, but should be fun nevertheless. You can also stretch your creative wings on some primary artwork, using basic shapes and colors. You may end up making a big mess, but after all, that's what being a little kid is all about.

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Express Theatre: *El Cabellito of Seven Colors* opening

7 P.M. Friday, April 24

Cost: Tickets are \$4/ Members; \$5 non-members

Reservations: Express Theater, (713) 759-1314

Renowned theatre group acts out Caribbean hallucination... er... folk tale at the Children's Museum

Here's the story: A couple, childless, yet unaware of how fortunate they are, makes a deal with a wizard. If he lets them eat some of his magic melons, they will give him their firstborn. The kid is born, the transaction is completed, and naturally, the little guy is less than ecstatic about the arrangement. Since neither Jerry Springer nor Children's Protective Services exists yet, he takes matters into his own hands and splits on a flying horse. *Then* things start to get interesting. This play, based upon a Caribbean folk tale, is further proof that Lewis Carroll wasn't the only one who availed himself of mother nature's more outlandish herbal creations. Take the kids, and you'll all enjoy it, though perhaps on different levels.

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Week of the Young Child Celebration

10 A.M.-2 P.M. Saturday, April 25

Cost: Free with admission

We thought being a young child *was* a celebration...

What with so many grownups whining about their inner children these days, there has been, some would argue, entirely too little attention paid to actual children. The Children's Museum has gone all out to make certain that we are all aware of the little ones in our midst, and on this day, they're going even further. There will be entertainers for the little ones, but we'll wager that some of the not-so-little ones will get a kick out of them, too. (We can still remember a cat named Kitirik, who held our fathers as mesmerized as her cartoons held us. Maybe there's hope for us old codgers, after all.) Fantasies aside, there will be lots of crafts and activities for the kids, and a real fire truck that they can get close up and personal with. And yes, dad, you can get close, too — to the fire truck, but probably not to Kitirik, who has far better things to do these days than parade around in a cat suit. After Dad is finished drooling over the fire truck, parents can get their most burning child-rearing questions answered by the Museum's "Ask Our Experts" panel.

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Cinco de Mayo Free Family Night

5-8 P.M. Thursday, April 30

Cost: Free

Experience Mexico without Montezuma's Revenge and the hassles with Customs

Come travel with us to the birthplace of our neighbors to the south, where you can taste the flavor of life in ancient villages with names you can never quite pronounce, like Oaxacan. Before there were barrios and stereotypes, there was a refined culture, steeped in its traditions, yet looking forward with hope. If all this sounds a little too eclectic to you, come over anyway, and learn some new meanings for fun. You can explore Mexican history, make flags, study Aztec images, and travel to Yalálag in the museum's new Oaxacan village exhibit. Heck, they'll even teach you how to make your own tortas.

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