

The Power of Children: Making a Difference

The Power of Children: Making a Difference, a permanent exhibit at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, shows the impact children have had and will continue to have in shaping history. *The Power of Children* creates an environment where people can examine and discuss issues related to prejudice and discrimination and seek solutions to problems. The exhibit, featuring the stories of Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan

White, is an excellent opportunity for children, families, and teachers to learn to live respectfully together and to benefit from the wisdom and experiences of others.

Those searches also led the museum to acquire the Ryan White Collection from the White family in 2001. Including more than 500 artifacts from Ryan's life, the collection tells of his struggle with AIDS, his fight to attend school, and the ensuing media furor. Ryan's collection reflects the lack of health education and discrimination related to AIDS in the 1980s.

The story of Ruby Bridges, one of the first children to attend a desegregated school during the 1960s Civil Rights movement, came to mind as yet another child who had an incredible impact on 20th-century history and today. She faced extreme prejudice, but found a friend in her teacher, Mrs. Barbara Henry. With the support of her family, friends, and teacher, Ruby was able to overcome the challenges she faced during the school year. To help tell the stories of Anne Frank and Ruby Bridges, artifacts from World War II and the Holocaust, and items reflecting the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, are included to provide an engaging experience for children and families.

The Interactive, Hands-On Exhibit

Re-created, historically accurate environments reflect the special space where each child spent time. Reconstructed spaces include:



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Highlighted Children

When the museum presented temporary Holocaust-related exhibits in previous years, museum staff recognized the powerful impact the exhibits had on children and families. Because of this impact, the

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- The Secret Annex of rooms above Anne Frank's father's office in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- The classroom in the William Frantz Public School where Ruby Bridges spent the entire school year alone with her teacher, Mrs. Barbara Henry.
- Ryan White's room in his Cicero, Ind. home where he retreated when he was faced with intolerance and fear as the public learned of his battle with AIDS.

The use of live theater and real artifacts makes it possible for the public to become fully immersed in the lives of Anne, Ruby, and Ryan while sounds, dramatic lighting, words, and moving images draw visitors into the exhibit.

Tree of Promise

A Tree of Promise, a symbol of hope, welcomes visitors into the gallery. The tree was inspired by the chestnut tree that grew outside the Secret Annex where Anne Frank lived for two years. The Tree of Promise takes on several forms, including a spectacular 30-foot sculptural tree in the exhibit.

Families and children can become a part of the Tree of Promise by writing their own promises to make the world a better place, which then become part of a virtual tree on the museum Web site.

Beyond the Exhibit

Exhibit outreach includes the creation of interdisciplinary inquiry-based Units of Study for history, language arts, and character education curriculums. On-site and regional professional development opportunities for both in-service and pre-service teachers are offered. The museum's Web-based experiences present a virtual reflection of the exhibit and supplement the experience by providing a level of information not offered in the exhibit labeling or multimedia learning activities. Special sections with resources for teachers, schools, and parents are included.

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