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Bringing News of Local Business to the Neighborhoods of Greater Chapel Hill

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The Wild Rumpus Comes to Franklin Street

BY LAURA ZAVELSON

The next time they roar their terrible roar and gnash their terrible teeth—grab your kids and head for Kidzu—Chapel Hill's newly opened

children's museum. There they can romp through the forest dressed up like Maurice Sendak's Wild Things - the cast of supporting characters from the 1963 Caldecott winner "Where the Wild Things Are." Let the wild rumpus begin!

The museum's main exhibit, "Where the Wild Things Are: Maurice Sendak in His Own Words and

Pictures," allows children to literally dive in to some of the author's most famous children's stories. Inspired by "Chicken Soup With Rice," kids slide into a giant bowl of soup complete with foam noodles, stuffed carrots and rubber chickens. They watch themselves on closed circuit TV as they read, sing and dance on the front stoop from "The Sign on Rosie's Door." They sail Max's boat to the place where the Wild Things live. And they can whip up any concoction of the imagination in the diminutive play space fashioned from "In the Night Kitchen."

From the adult perspective, the exhibit explores Sendak's work in relation to the context of his childhood.

In addition to providing excerpts from the books and original illustrations, it also includes comments by Sendak that reveal the origin of his stories.

Sendak's Jewish heritage and his childhood in Brooklyn, New York are resonating themes throughout his books. He mentions hating chicken soup, as it was his mother's cure for everything from "scarlet fever to hoof and mouth."

And he reflects that the kitchen from "In the Night Kitchen," is a composite memory of his family's kitchen in Brooklyn.

The traveling exhibit, which runs through April at Kidzu, was originally organized by the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta. Cathy Maris, Kidzu executive director, explains that the timing of the museum's opening was fortuitous. "The exhibit was supposed to go to another museum before heading overseas to Australia, and it fell through," she explains, "so we were able to jump in and be the final U.S. destination for 2006."

In addition to the Sendak exhibit, Kidzu also features a literacy exhibit sponsored by the Orange County Partnership for Young Children called Alphabet All Around. Its centerpiece is a colorful spinner to all

giant that points the different letters. The back of the museum is devoted to the Tot Spot, a padded enclosed play area just for babies and toddlers.

In addition to exhibits, the museum also features

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A WALK THROUGH HILLSBOROUGH'S HISTORY

BY JEAN BOLDUC
PHOTOS BY NEIL GRAY



If you've ever taken the public tour of the White House, you know that your enjoyment of it depends largely on your awareness and appreciation of its history. Walking through the main level of the house, you'll walk through the state dining room, which is much smaller than you'd expect, and down the hall to the East Room. Within minutes (you have to keep moving) you're

out the front door. Unless you've done your homework and know that this was a dining room where Lincoln entertained you may just shuffle along with the crowd and be stunned as you exit that you didn't get to see more.

History is about homework

If you're ready to embark on a walking tour of historic Hillsborough, North Carolina, you must brace yourself with the power of preparation. It's spring so take the opportunity to enjoy North Carolina's

first capital on your feet. Guided tours are available (see sidebar), but to take the town at your own pace, though, you should consider a self-guided walking tour.

To start, pick up a copy of the Historical Society's Walking Tour Brochure for \$3 at the Visitors' Center. That's where we'll begin with our recommended "must-see" sites, but you can find many of your own choices from materials in the Visitors'

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puppets, books and other props to facilitate education and creative play.

Jonathan Mills, now president of Kidzu's board of directors, was a driving force behind the two-year process of making the museum a reality. A busy father of 4-year-old triplets and a 3-year-old, he saw a great need for a children's museum in Chapel Hill. "I got tired of driving to Greensboro," he says. Apparently, many Chapel Hill residents share Mills' enthusiasm for a local children's museum. Mills reports that the grand opening was a huge success that exceeded expectations with more than 700 people coming through the space. He considered the second day—a paid admission day—an even greater success as the children kept coming. Mills explains that the next goal for the museum is to raise awareness and funding for a permanent location that would give the museum five times the floor space. The museum is currently located on Franklin Street between Starbucks and Miami Subs. The 3000 square foot space, which formerly housed The Laughing Turtle, was donated to the museum rent-free for two years by Dana McMann.

One of the first events toward meeting that goal will be Kidzu's Imagination Celebration on April 22. Held at the Carolina Club from 9 p.m.-1 a.m., the event will feature dancing, drinks and dessert. Tickets for this event are just \$25 and can



be purchased at Kidzu.

The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10a.m.-4p.m. The charge for non-members is \$4 for everyone over 2 years old. A wide range of memberships are available from \$75-\$5,000. The museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

ABOUT MAURICE SENDAK

Born in 1928 to Polish immigrants, Sendak's early life was colored by the tragedy of the holocaust. He also endured

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a sickly childhood, which required him to spend a lot of time alone. He drew pictures to entertain himself. His career as an illustrator was born in 1950 when his work creating window displays for FAO Schwartz in Manhattan caught the eye of legendary children's book editor Ursula Nordstrom.

While childless, Sendak seems to have the rare ability to see the world from a child's raw and unchecked emotional perspective. One biography quoted Sendak as seeing his work empower children to face "the awful fact of childhood—the fact of their vulnerability to fear, anger, hate, frustration—all the emotions that are an ordinary part of their lives and that they can perceive only as ungovernable and dangerous forces." In "The Art of Maurice Sendak," by Selma Lanes, Sendak says, "My great curiosity [is] about childhood as a state of being, and how all children manage to get through childhood from one day to the next - how they defeat boredom, fear, pain and anxiety and find joy. It is a constant miracle to me that children manage to grow up."

In addition to authoring and illustrating more than 20 books, Sendak has designed sets and costumes for opera and illustrated an additional 60 books with other authors. He has won every important prize in children's literature including the Caldecott Medal (1964), the international Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Illustration



(1970), the American Library Association's Laura Ingalls Wilder Award (1983), and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (2003). Additionally, in 1996, he was presented by President Clinton with a National Medal of the Arts in recognition of his contribution to the arts in the United States.

Sendak is reclusive and rarely makes public appearances. He lives in Ridgefield, Connecticut with his three dogs. His studio is at one end of his house and although he writes in total silence, he always illustrates while listening to music. ■



Dragon Swing

MAY FAIRE

at the Emerson Waldorf School
 Saturday, May 6th, 10am-4pm
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 Visit www.emersonwaldorf.org
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