**TORONTO, ON., MAY 23, 2015.**

**CHILDREN’S DISCOVERY CENTRE NOW OPEN**

**Greater Toronto Area’s Only Children's Museum for Kids 6 and Under**

Today, **Children’s Discovery Centre** (www.childrensdiscoverycentre.com) - the GTA’s only Children’s Museum designed specifically for kids 6 and under - opened its doors at 45 Strachan Avenue with an official ribbon-cutting celebration. Joining CEO and Founder, Jeanhy Shim were Adam Vaughan - Member of Parliament, Spadina-Fort York; Mike Layton - City Councillor, Ward 19; Jennifer Keesmaat - Chief Planner, City of Toronto; Geraldine Mabin – educator and Advisory Board Member, and representing Toronto’s young citizens – Maya Jordan, Levi Aaron and James Tito.

In her remarks Shim commented, “This passion project started only 18 months ago as a grassroots initiative and today with the support of other parents, friends, family and sponsors, we’ve brought this pilot project to life.” The Children’s Discovery Centre encompasses 20,000 sq.ft. of indoor space that will be open daily until September 30th in its temporary location, donated by Diamondcorp and BUILD Toronto in the Garrison Point neighbourhood. Shim thanked her “incredible team of technical advisors, curators and Advisory Board of experienced early childhood educators,” for their vital role in making the centre a reality.

Shim describes the Discovery Centre "like the ultimate mash-up of the ROM, Ontario Science Centre and AGO for children 6 and under to play, explore, learn, create, get messy, dress-up and use their imaginations.” There are 10 themed Discovery Zones, each thoughtfully designed by a team of early childhood development professionals and curators to stir the imagination and inspire our youngest children to learn through creative play.

A residential construction boom is contributing to the growth and transformation of Toronto, and record numbers of young people are raising children in condos located in the core. Shim knows first-hand the challenges of child rearing in an urban environment having a young daughter of her own. “This is not only a place for our youngest children to explore and play, but it will facilitate connections between parents, grandparents, nannies, day care workers, teachers and visitors to our City,” said Shim.

According to Stats Canada figures, the number of children ages 4 and under, living in Toronto’s Downtown West area increased 55% between 2006 and 2011. In the next 5 to 10 years, a further 6,000 babies could potentially be born to condo residents living in this same area - 49 percent of whom were 25 to 39 years in 2011. “We project that this will effectively triple the number of families with young children residing in the downtown core, resulting in heightened demand for family-focused products, services, amenities and lifestyle experiences,” Shim explained.

The 10 themed Discovery Zones are:

* **Mini City** by Skygrid Construction - set against a backdrop of the Toronto skyline with bikes, trikes, and wagons to move around the city on kid-size streets, a construction zone with large gravel pit filled with toy building machines, and a separate movement area for infants and toddlers under 18 months.
* **Imagination Station** - set on the moon and illuminated by the glow of the earth and solar system this zone features *Imagination Playground*, an award-winning interactive building system for children to create their world, and *Feltro*, an innovative magnetic felt tile building system,
* **The Campground** - featuring fort building, tents, canoe, creature discovery and habitats, with a large wall mural of a Canadian forest.
* **Art Hive** - a dynamic art 'playground' with wall-size easels and buckets of paint, Plexiglas painting and squeegee wall, communal art projects, crayons, glue, construction paper plus a separate art area for children under 18 months.
* **Make Believe** - a magical place with a full-scale theatre for kids to dress-up and perform, a groove-and-move area for dancing, puppet making and puppet theatre, and storytelling.
* **Boom Room** - a wall of household and found objects for fun 'music making', as well as instruments from around the world to ignite curiosity and delight.
* **Pet Vet** - presented by The Aaron Family, features a child-size replica veterinary clinic where stuffed dogs, cats or any other animal can be 'treated' and made well by kid ‘vets’.
* **Eat Street** - a fully functioning demo kitchen, plus child-size mini kitchen, mini grocery store, foodie games and learning.
* **Maya’s Storyland** - a magical place of reading forts, cozy womb chairs, alphabet explorations, first words, chunky board books and story time.
* **First Discoveries** - a welcoming & tactile environment designed especially for our littlest ones for safe exploration.

The **Sago Mini Pet Café,** sponsored by Sago Sago Toys Inc., is an area where families will be able to take a break and enjoy a picnic brought from home. There will be adult-size tables, as well as kid-size picnic tables. Known for beautiful, child-friendly design, Sago Mini apps are enjoyed by millions of kids globally, the Sago Mini Fairy Door brings that experience into the real world. Every opening of the Fairy Door reveals a new magical world where children are greeted by a charming cast of characters. The simple physical interactions allow the installation to be enjoyed by even the youngest of visitors.

“Creating opportunities for creative, open-ended play is at the core of our work as a digital toy studio.” said Jason Krogh, CEO, Sago Sago who participated in the Opening. "We are excited to be a part of the first museum in Toronto for kids under six, as it's a welcome addition to the community," he added.

There are also **Quiet Rooms** for nursing moms or kids who just need to take a quiet break, and clean bathrooms with change tables and ample hooks and shelves for purses and diaper bags. A **Party Room** is also available for booking private birthday parties for up to 20 kids. A further attraction for adults and children will be the free programming, services, performances and activities presented by local businesses and organizations. Examples include mom & baby yoga, mini-ballet classes, clay classes, science, puppet plays, drumming, reptile visits, lunchtime Mozart concerts and more.

Jeanhy Shim first had the idea for the Children’s Discovery Centre when visiting the Bay Area Discovery Museum ([www.baykidsmuseum.org](http://www.baykidsmuseum.org)) in San Francisco with her nieces almost 11 years ago. In the intervening years, she continued to hone her research and marketing skills in the GTA’s housing industry while also becoming a mother and raising her daughter in a downtown condo. Finding a dearth of quality experiences and fun things to do with her own child rekindled the idea for creating Toronto’s first children’s museum for children 6 and under. To help her achieve her goal, Shim has assembled an advisory board of highly respected early childhood development professionals.

“Our goal is to be the ultimate family-friendly destination in downtown Toronto, with an admission price well below other attractions catering to children,” says Shim. The pilot project will run until September 30, 2015, by which time Shim and her team hope to have located a permanent home in the City.

Ms. Shim will be utilizing her research and analysis skills to survey visitors to the Children’s Discovery Centre about their experience and to focus on Toronto’s downtown residents to better understand whether or not the City is presently meeting the needs of urban families. The results of the research will be used to inform and guide the team in establishing a permanent Discovery Centre for children up to the age of 12. Compiled data will be shared with City of Toronto Planners, and private developers/builders to assist with community creation.

Founding Partners of this initiative include: Housing Lab Toronto, Build Toronto, Diamondcorp, Skygrid Construction, Giannone Petricone Associates, Giovanni A. Tassone Architect, Garrison Point, Rouge Consulting and Friendship in Action.

Key Sponsors include: Sago Mini (Inventor level); and Hullmark, Milborne Real Estate Inc. and Streetcar Developments (Navigator level). Citizen Restaurant & Bar, Concord Adex, Dorel Sports, DREAM, Home Sweet Condo, Little Tikes and Pinnacle International (Explorer level).

Open daily 9:30am to 4:30pm, including holidays. Located at 45 Strachan Avenue, at Ordnance, just north of the CNE/Fort York. Easy public transit access via TTC bus and streetcar, direct from Union Station, King, Bathurst and Ossington subway stations. On-site parking for wheelchair accessibility. Infants under one are admitted free. Individual play-all-day pass costs $13 each plus tax. Visit [www.childrensdiscoverycentre.com](http://www.childrensdiscoverycentre.com) on Facebook and Twitter @ kidsdiscoveryTO

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