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A Space for Kids

5,000 flock to opening of Children's Museum

By Kristi Hsu ([Contact](#))

Sunday, June 10, 2007



Photo by Thomas Metthe

Kids watch as a vortex forms in the “Texas Twister” exhibit at The Grace Museum’s children’s museum during KidzFest on Saturday.



Photo by Thomas Metthe

Six-year-old Grace Flanders, left, and her cousin Joseph Diaz, 9, check out the exhibits on the second floor of The Grace Museum during KidzFest on Saturday.

Denise Upfold was supposed to be at a baby shower at 1 p.m. Saturday, but she was unable to tear herself and her 2-year-old son, Dominick, away from the grand opening of the Children's Museum and Education Center of The Grace Museum.

Upfold and Dominick were in a crowd of more than 5,000 people who thronged to the opening Saturday. A petting zoo, face painting, and a dunking booth were some of the additional attractions at The Grace. Other downtown buildings like the Center for Contemporary Arts and the Texas Star Trading Co. also participated.

"This festival far exceeded our expectations," said Dan Carpenter, the marketing and public relations director for The Grace. "This far and away was better than we could dream." Carpenter said the museum had anticipated 2,000 visitors, a figure that was considered a "great" turnout for downtown events, he said.

"When you have more than 5,000 people come, I don't know what you would call it," he said. "Astronomical? Phenomenal? It was beyond our wildest dreams." The event drew travelers from around the state, he said.

Carpenter said that he had talked to one couple from Houston, several from Midland-Odessa and multiple families from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

He said he even met a woman who changed her return flight to Colorado so she could stay in town for the festival.

The two biggest draws were musician Dan Zanes and the star of "Signing Time!" Rachel Coleman, he said.

"When you have a Grammy-award winning musician, things are bound to go well," he said. "And Rachel Coleman helped us draw an even wider audience since she appeals to very young kids, the 2- and 3-year-olds."

Lori Swim, of Oxford, Iowa, said everyone in her 24-person party managed to snag a ticket for the free Dan Zanes show. Swim, her five siblings, their spouses and children all traveled in an RV from Iowa to Texas to visit her grandmother. While the kids have had a great time on the ranch, she said that she was excited to hear about the event.

"My sister went to get the tickets this morning around 8:30 or 9," she said.

Although Upfold didn't go to the Zanes concert, she called her friends to let them know she would be "much, much later."

"I just don't want to take him away," she said. "I'm glad they had this."

Headline and copy editor: Beverly Butman; Editor: Patti Steele

Comments

Posted by **bjcengh** on June 10, 2007 at 11:32 p.m. (**Suggest removal**)

My family and I are from out of town and we had a wonderful time. Our daughter was very excited to see Rachel from Signing Time. And having Dan Zanes there was equally fun. Thanks for putting on a great event.



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