

HEY, DUDES, SKATEBOARDING COMES TO CITY MUSEUM

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For the past five years, City Museum visitors have held their breath as circus performers teetered on tightropes, artists poured hot iron into new shapes and children shot down a two-story slide.

Now guests can watch some everyday daredevils.

Today, the City Museum will introduce its newest attraction, an indoor skateboarding park on its third floor. Its debut coincides with the City Museum's fifth birthday party, which runs today through Sunday.

"There is going to be a lot of energy in this room," said Chris Lynch, a veteran skate park designer who is helping with construction. "There are nicely built obstacles, and the ramps are fast. I've never skated in a place like this."

City Museum founder Bob Cassilly says the 7,500-square-foot park will appeal to older children who may have outgrown some of the museum's more familiar attractions. He hopes visitors will consider the skate park as another unique exhibit, like the Shoelace Factory or Art City.

Lynch said the park will host spectator lounges and invite professional skaters to perform.

"Most people aren't exposed to skateboarding unless they're dropping their kids off at a skate park. This will expose a lot of people," Lynch said.

Though sections of the park are ready for the public, Lynch calls it a work in progress. Hours have yet to be determined. Admission is free this weekend but will cost \$10 in the future. That price includes admission into the City Museum. Ultimately, the park will feature a pro shop and will offer lessons and special sessions for younger skateboarders. Because of the park's low ceilings, bikes will not be permitted. Skaters must wear helmets and are urged to wear pads.

The skate park is one of many activities the museum has planned for its birthday celebration. Children are invited to make and break enormous turtle-shaped pinatas and launch water balloons off of a newly constructed castle.

Admission will be free to MonstroCity, the museum's elaborate new outdoor jungle gym. Admission also is free for 5-year-olds and those who celebrate a birthday today, Saturday or Sunday. For the rest of the public, museum admission is \$7.50.

This anniversary marks the City Museum's first year with its flamboyant founder in charge of operations. Cassilly took control of the museum last spring after clashing with the nonprofit board that oversaw its business side. The split was messy and observers wondered whether Cassilly could keep the museum afloat.

Cassilly admits that he has shoveled a lot of his own money into the museum this year but that the books are balanced -- largely because the museum reduced its staff and payroll costs dropped. Cassilly also has created new revenue-generating attractions, such as MonstroCity, the skate park, and a new wine bar and ice cream parlor. Employees confirm the museum welcomes the same number of school groups as it has in the past and that attendance is strong.

"We're keeping it together," said Wanda White, who, like many City Museum employees, is charged with multiple duties. "This year, we have a lot to celebrate."

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City Museum Fifth Birthday Party

When: 9 to 5 today, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Where: 701 North 15th Street

How much: \$7.50

Info: 314-231-2489 or www.citymuseum.org

- Caption: PHOTOCOLOR Photo by LAURIE SKRIVAN / POST-DISPATCH - Taking a break from building, craftsman Chris Lynch tests one of the ramps at the new skate park at the City Museum.
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