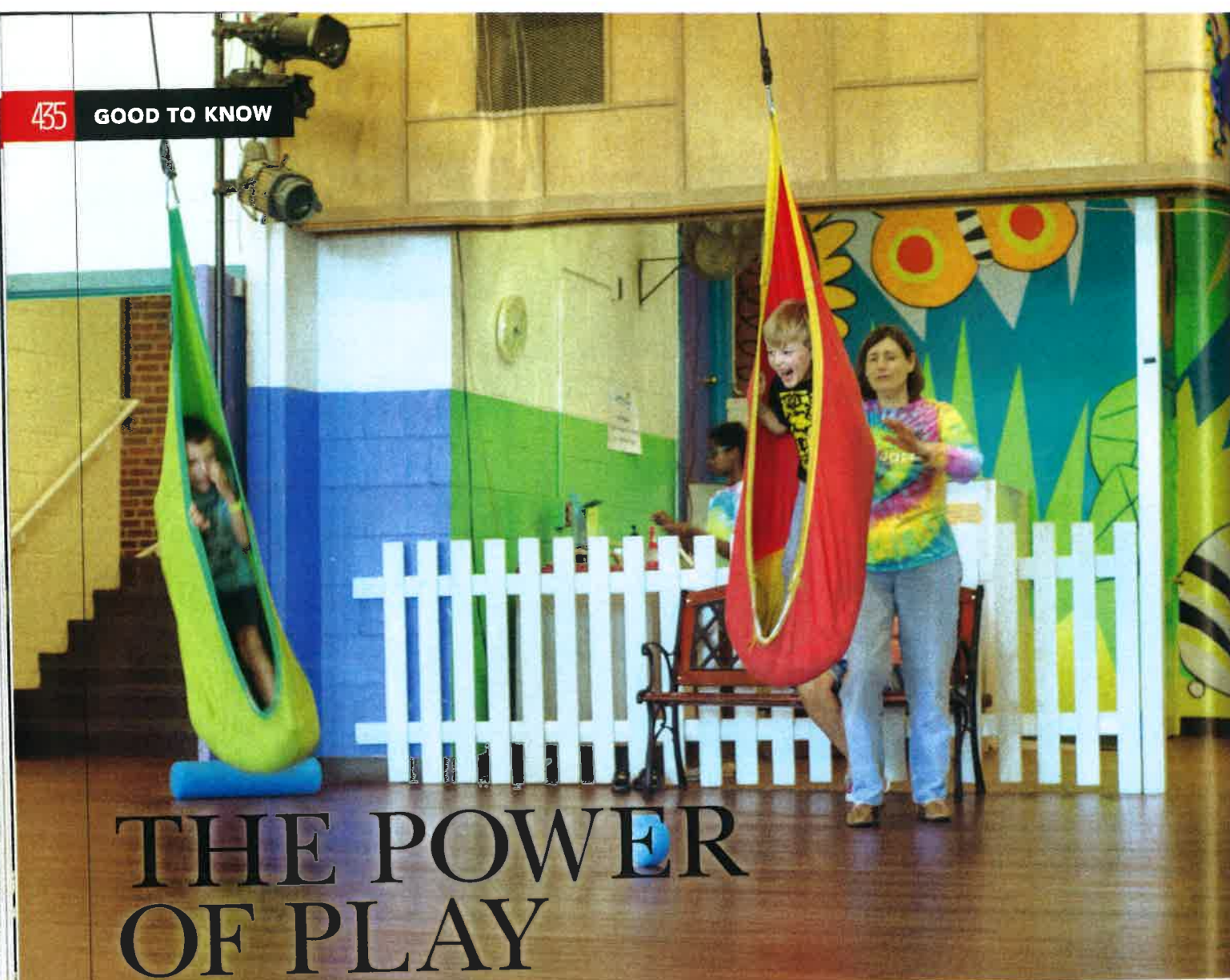


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Wonderscope Children's Museum.
Photo by Ashley Deck.



THE POWER OF PLAY

THE WONDERSCOPE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM IS ON THE MOVE WHERE BIGGER WILL DEFINITELY BE BETTER.

words **Susie Whitfield** photos **Ashley Deck**

"It's the coolest place ever!" Ask any of the young visitors at Wonderscope Children's Museum of Kansas City what they think of the museum and their enthusiastic responses will warm your heart.

For almost 30 years, Wonderscope has focused on providing area children the chance to experience interactive exhibits and programs that provide hands-on exploration of science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

The museum's mission is to "spark a lifelong love of learning through the power of play." Roxane Hill, Wonder-

scope's executive director, says the variety of activities available at the museum helps develop the social, emotional and intellectual abilities of children, which prepares them for school. Exhibit Rooms such as "TinkerSpace," "H2Oh!," and "Wonder Why Garden" are all geared for young minds.

Although "play is the work of childhood" may be something of a cliché, brain research reveals that language development, problem-solving and self-control happen in creative, exciting environments. Play is learning — that doesn't seem like hard work.

Hill says children's museums are needed now more than ever due to technology encroaching on childhood and the fact that kids' lives today are much more structured.

"Exploration is so important for young minds, and one of the missing elements for many children is unstructured play. There's a science behind play. Kids can learn so much more when they have the chance to be the leaders of their play. At Wonderscope, exhibits are geared to encourage this."

The museum is planning a big move from their Shawnee, Kansas, location to a new home across the state line at

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the Red Bridge shopping center (Red Bridge and Holmes), where a new 30,000-square foot museum is being built.

Hill says the new Wonderscope will be a Kansas City immersive experience.

"We're going to have a history of Kansas City transportation exhibit, jazz experience and even a barbecue exhibit. There will also be a half-acre of outdoor play space that will have a city area, a farm and the plains reflecting Kansas City's topography."

The museum's director says the hope is that the new Wonderscope will become a premier educational destination attracting not only local families but also visitors from other parts of the Midwest.

"Our neighbor cities such as Omaha and St. Louis have extraordinary children's museums with state-of-the-art exhibits. In this new location, we will not only rival those museums but also have greater visibility and easier access for families in both Kansas and Missouri." ■

*The new Wonderscope location is slated to open in 2019.
To visit wonderscope, go to wonderscope.org*