

# BIG WOW!

**Discover the World of Wonders Science Museum**

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**“IMAGINATION IS MORE  
IMPORTANT THAN  
KNOWLEDGE”**

These insightful words from famed scientist Albert Einstein are particularly spot-on when describing wide-eyed, wondering children, whose persistent continuum of questions—Why? How? Why? — is familiar to us all. >>



Locally, the World of Wonders (WOW) Science Museum in Lodi provides inquisitive kids with an entertaining yet educational venue that encourages them to stretch, expand, and engage their active imaginations to the absolute max. At the same time, the museum gives maxed-out Mom and Dad a break from having to crack the physics textbook after “nighty night” just to keep pace with their genius-in-training.

## AN EXPERIMENT IN GO FOR IT

After visiting San Francisco’s Exploratorium in 2004, Lodi’s Dan Ingram identified the absence of and need for a similar learning facility in the Central Valley. He boldly decided that a smaller scale version in Lodi of the interactive museum giant was not only a good idea, but with foresight, leadership, and an unwillingness to hear otherwise, it was also realistic. Ingram presented his brainchild to the Lodi Rotary Club, of which he is a member, and the long-shot initiative found enthusiastic backing from the service group.

Soon after, a steering committee was developed, from which a Board of Directors was formed, and, in March of 2009, with strong vision and over \$600,000 in community-raised funds, the WOW Science Museum opened its doors. Community response to the museum since its inception, according to Board President Sally Snyder, has been one of shock and awe—as in, ah, thanks. The quality of the facility and the exhibits, many which have appeared in and been acquired from the Exploratorium, are premium draws, exacting grateful surprise from unsuspecting visitors, namely parents who grew up in San Joaquin without a comparable museum to explore and enjoy.

## THE PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS

As a gateway to discovery for both the young and the young-at-heart, the WOW Science Museum displays up to 40 different hands-on, science-based exhibits at any given time, and offers a variety of programs, experiments, demonstrations, and activities, proving that fun and education are not mutually exclusive. This marriage of attributes is a key selling point for the “Not now, Mom, I’m texting” generation,

whose collective attention is not likely to be wrested by sea monkeys as in years past, not in the far more enthralling shadow cast by Guitar Hero and Wii. By making science entertaining (turns out, rooting around for worms in dirt is still a pretty big deal among kids), the museum is doing what many adults think impossible in today’s wired world: capturing kids’ attention with something that’s actually good for their education (look Ma, no screen!).

An interactive response to the sensory learning needs of children, who typically are engaged more by touch, smell, taste and sight than by textbooks and lectures, the museum uses uncomplicated physical representations to explain complex scientific concepts. Simplifying and presenting science in a fun, self-paced learning environment helps pique an immediate and long-term interest in the subject that benefits kids both in and out of the classroom. Parents, on the other hand, receive a much-needed refresher on why that whatchamacallit does that thingymajig.

In fact, Snyder says, the majority of parents are amazed by the independence their children exhibit at the museum, where they feel safe to freely and confidently ask questions, hypothesize, and draw their own creative conclusions.



# EXPERIMENT 1

## MAKE QUICKSAND

### What you need:

- One 16 oz. box of cornstarch
- Some water from your sink
- A large mixing bowl
- A mixing spoon (or just your hands)

### What to do:

Mix 4 oz. of cornstarch with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water and make smooth. Add more cornstarch and water to the bowl, slowly, in little bits, and keep mixing, using your hands if necessary. When cornstarch and approximately 2 cups of water has been added, the consistency of the mixture should be similar to honey. Mix in a couple of drops of food coloring to make colored quicksand!

Rest your hand in the bowl. Does it start to sink? Now, wiggle it quickly. Is it more like a liquid or a solid? When your hand is at the bottom of the bowl, try to pull it back out, slowly. What does it feel like now?



## EXPERIMENT 2

### MYSTICAL MILK

#### What you need:

- Milk (any type)
- Several colors of food dye
- Q-tips
- Dish soap
- A plate with a slight lip

#### What to do:

Pour some milk onto the plate (enough to cover the bottom of surface). Squeeze four dots of food dye onto the center of the plate, but not touching. The dots should be lined up in such a way so that they look like the corners of a square. Next, take a Q-tip and clean your ears. Then take a new Q-tip and touch it into the milk in the center of all the dots. Probably not too exciting, right? Now take another Q-tip (not the one you used to clean your ears) and put some dish soap on the cotton. Take that soapy end of the Q-tip and use it to poke the same spot you poked your last Q-tip and BAM! Have the time of your life making the colors jump all over the plate!



### SCIENCE FICTIONS

Given that science is rooted in facts, the museum is also working to debunk two widely held myths associated with the study of science: The first is that girls don't like science. "Parents are often surprised by how engaged their daughters are in science," Snyder says. "Most girls love it, and more often than not, it's the girls, not the boys, who are willing to get their hands dirty and dive right into experiments."

The second misperception is that the mere utterance of the word "science" will send kids into no-way lockdown mode. Recognizing that these reactions most likely stem from snooze-worthy



## EXPERIMENT 3

classes and lackluster presentation of the facts, the museum infuses the learning experience with fun—an interactive, get-your-hands-dirty, curiosity-sparking realm that kids eagerly embrace.

### WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE

The most persistent challenge facing the independently-run WOW Museum is, as it is with most non-profits, funding. Personal and corporate donations provide the majority of financing, but the facility's commitment to high quality requires that the museum consistently apply for grants. Two employees and a dedicated group of volunteers

who believe that the Exploratorium-inspired venue is priceless to the community currently staff the museum. Increased financing will allow the facility to fund and expand its programs, including those for all members of the community and area schools.

Learn more about the WOW Science Museum, how you can get involved, or ways to donate online at [www.WOWmuseum.org](http://www.WOWmuseum.org). Become a friend of the museum on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wowsm](http://www.facebook.com/wowsm) [SJ KIDS]

### SODA CAN CRUNCH

#### What you need:

An empty soda can  
Pan  
Bowl full of ice water  
Tongs  
Stove

#### What to do:

Remove all soda from the can. Add a hint of water so it covers the bottom of the can. Ask your laboratory assistant (a.k.a Mom or Dad) to turn on the stove, anywhere from medium to high. Put the pan on the stovetop and place the can in the pan so that the water inside the can gets nice and hot. Carefully use tongs to remove the can from the stovetop. Put it face first (the side with the mouth opening) into a bowl of ice-cold water. **CRUNCH!** Remove the crunched can from the bowl and watch the water pour out. Pretty cool, huh?