

the daily break

Tuesday

fashion

Mother-daughter designers are back with Grayse. **PAGE 3**

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AMANDA LYNN DAVID | FOR THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

The exhibit, open through May 12 at the Children's Museum in Portsmouth, has nine activity stations where kids – and their parents – can play with the classic wooden Tinkertoys.

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inker!

A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM exhibit builds more of a following with the young at heart than the young

By Amanda Lynn David
Correspondent

PORTSMOUTH

Step into the sun-filled lobby of the Children's Museum of Virginia, and you're greeted by the energetic sounds of train horns, the blaring of whistles and the laughter of children.

Step into the temporary exhibit, "Tinkertoy: Build Your Imagination," and you're met with a more inquisitive picture.

This exhibit is strangely quiet.

No one here is eagerly extinguishing pretend fires, playing dress-up on stage or dancing in front of a colorful projection screen. Instead, children sit and build with Tinkertoys or plan out their designs using pencils and paper or computers.

For adults raised on Lincoln Logs and Etch-a-Sketches, nostalgia is thick in the room. Parents are reminded of their own childhoods, of hours spent piecing together the wooden sticks and wooden spools into three-dimensional objects.

Children, however, tend to gravitate toward the exhibit's computer screens instead of actually playing with the colorful pieces of wood. Fun has evolved.

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if you go

What "Tinkertoy: Build Your Imagination" exhibit at the Children's Museum of Virginia

Where 221 High St., Portsmouth

When Through May 12

Cost \$11 for ages 18 and older; \$10 for ages 2-17, military and senior citizens; free for children under 2

More info www.childrensmuseumva.com

THEATER REVIEW | 'THE ODD COUPLE'

Familiar comic chestnut still can elicit laughter

By Mal Vincent
The Virginian-Pilot

The most universal comedies are grounded in conflict.

No conflict is more universal than the neat-vs.-sloppy battle. As I sit at a paper-cluttered desk that some say is a fire hazard but I maintain is merely the product of rushed-but-organized work, I can't help but cheer the latest visit of my hero, Oscar Madison.

A man after my own heart, Oscar is one-half of the titular team in "The Odd Couple," the classic guy-comedy about two divorced men – one neat, one messy – who disastrously attempt to occupy the same apartment. It has returned as the closing selection of the Virginia Stage Company's

34th season. The classic play is still funny. It's still universal, even if it is overly familiar to anyone who hasn't been on the moon for the past few decades.

A hit Broadway play in 1965, "The Odd Couple" made author Neil Simon the king of comedy. A 1968 movie starring Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau followed. So did a five-year TV series starring Jack Klugman and Tony Randall. And a movie sequel. And a female version rewritten by Simon. Locally, it was a mainstay of the dinner-theater era. Everyone from Virginia Beach Little Theater to all the other big little theaters has produced it again and again. But

See THEATER, BACK PAGE



if you go

What "The Odd Couple," directed by Patrick Mullins for the Virginia Stage Company

Where The Wells Theatre, 108 E. Tazewell St., Norfolk

When 7 p.m. Tuesdays, 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays, with matinees at 4 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through April 21

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TOYS BRING BACK MEMORIES

Continued from Page 1

Local resident Nicole Carroll recently brought her family to the museum to celebrate son Marley's fifth birthday.

Marley was captivated, not by the intricate engineering involved in building a Tinkertoy skyscraper, but from a burping cartoon in one of the museum's permanent exhibits.

In the exhibit, a painting shows a cartooned woman holding a bottle of soda. Guests are prompted to push a small white button.

When the button is pushed, a cut-out in the cartoon's chest representing the esophagus lights up, and a loud belch bellows from the speaker. It's the ageless kind of humor that kids love.

"He's obsessed with this exhibit," Carroll said of Marley. "He's been pushing that button over and over

again just to hear the burp!"

Carroll remembers playing with Tinkertoys as a child, but her offspring found intrigue elsewhere. Even their mother, at times, couldn't resist the lure of high tech.

"I haven't seen anything like this at Chuck E. Cheese's," Carroll said as she drew her name on a computer screen with her index finger.

"I think I'm having more fun than the kids!"

The Tinkertoy exhibit – on loan from the Betty Brinn Children's Museum in Milwaukee – continues through May 12.

The exhibit has nine activity stations for children and families to explore together. Each station helps guests plan out their Tinkertoy invention through touch-screen technology and hands-on experimentation, as well as learn about advanced topics such as renewable energy and clean-water technologies.

"There is more reading involved in the Tinkertoy exhibit than some of our other exhibits," said Fannesse Britton, museum services supervisor. "It requires a little more parent-and-child interaction."

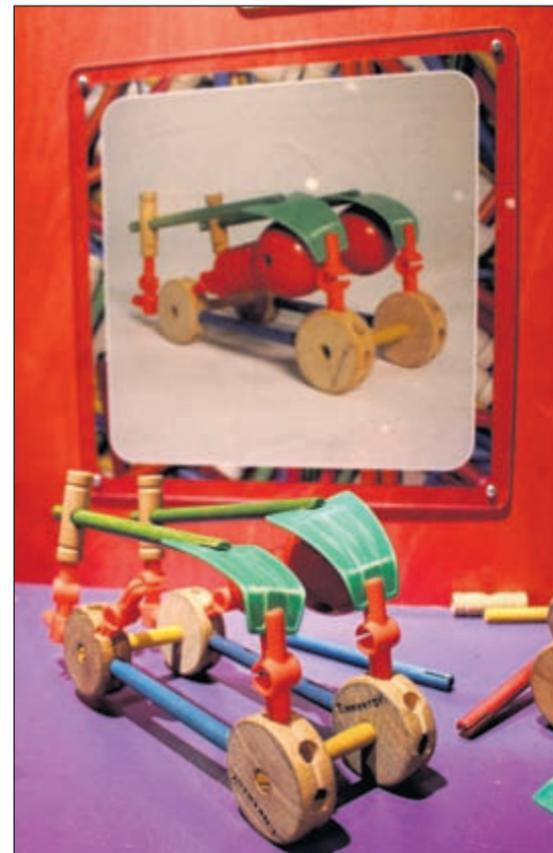
Some stations include pictures of made-to-scale creations such as race cars, windmills and buildings that challenge visitors to pick up the pieces and start construction.

The museum issued a challenge of its own to visitors, both young and old, asking them to submit pictures of their Tinkertoy contraptions.

Even though the contest's deadline was extended once, it eventually was discontinued because of a lack of interest.

Meanwhile, the Tinkertoy exhibit draws fans of all ages, which often happens at the Children's Museum.

"This museum is not only for the young," Britton said, "but also for the young at heart."



At some activity stations, guests can use Tinkertoys to re-create toys such as race cars, windmills and buildings.