



Interactive Children's Museum

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**For Immediate Release:**

**Contact: Virginia Strawser, Museum Director**

[Imagineumuseum@sbcglobal.com](mailto:Imagineumuseum@sbcglobal.com)

559.733.5975

## **5.6 Million Dollar World Class Museum will be built in Visalia**

**Visalia, CA-** ImagineU Interactive Children's Museum received the exciting news today that the State of California Proposition 84, Nature Education Facilities program grant will be awarded to them. Teri Crawford, Project Officer from the state contacted Virginia Strawser, Museum Director, this morning with the news. The entire grant in the amount of 5.6 million dollars will be used to build the 13,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility on property the city donated located in Downtown Visalia at Tipton and Douglas.

"Everyone at ImagineU is excited and we feel so fortunate to have this opportunity. We believe the future of any community starts with the children, who are the youngest and most impressionable and hold the future in their hands. When we lift them up, and encourage them to explore and create, the possibilities become endless. ImagineU Children's Museum will be experienced for generations to come, and is sure to have a profound effect on our community." says Cheryl Christman, Museum President.

ImagineU was established in 2002 by Angela Reyna and her dream has come full circle with the future plans for growth. The new museum will continue the programs and work that the current museum now located at 700 W. Main St. is doing. Last year ImagineU had over 10,000 children visit and enjoy the museum.

Museum Director, Virginia Strawser is excited to continue and expand the programs at the new facility that will benefit valley families and visitors from up and down the state. "The new facility will become a landmark and bring families together. Our hard work, hopes and dreams are coming together due to a collaboration of many people in our community. We have been waiting on pins and needles since the grant application was sent in June of 2010. There are so many dedicated volunteers, board members and donors who have played an important part in getting the Museum to this point. We want to thank each and every one of them! When I got the call that we received the grant, I had to go in my office and shut the door so I could scream! However, the field trip of

children and chaperones at the Museum could still hear me! I shared the exciting news about how we will be building a new and bigger Museum for them to enjoy! They were in wonder and asked if it would be as much fun as the current ImagineU Museum. I assured them that it would be even better and showed them the architectural drawings of the new Museum. They're first graders now, so I told them they'll be in third grade when the Museum should be ready for them to come back and see and explore the new state-of-the-art exhibits and walk the nature trail behind the complex. Now the work really begins. We now have the funding for a building and exhibits. Let the fundraising begin!! We will need money for program supplies, staffing, utilities, and so much more. This is just the beginning!" says Virginia.

"The future home of ImagineU will include a LEED certified and solar powered 13,000 square feet building for indoor exhibits, classrooms and community room spaces, and an exciting outdoor space that includes an amphitheater, several major outdoor exhibits, an organic orchard and an expansive nature walk surrounding the adjacent ponding basin. The theme will be conservation of our natural resources and this message will be imparted while the Valley's kids are having the interactive experience of their lives in an easily accessible downtown Visalia location. A building like no other in our area", explains Sharon Sheltzer, Board member and grant author.

The museum officers will attend a conference in May with the State regarding the grant. ImagineU anticipates they will be ready to break ground in approximately 6 to 8 months. For more information or to be a part of the continued growth of ImagineU, visit our website at [www.imagineumuseum.org](http://www.imagineumuseum.org) and to become a volunteer or donate to Imagine U interactive Children's Museum, contact them at 559.733.5975. For information on field trips, birthday party opportunities or just to come learn and have fun, visit at 700 E. Main St. in Visalia.

