

Habitot Children's Museum

1) How has the current economy affected the need of services that you give to the community?

While donations have dramatically declined in this tough economy, demand for the programs and services at Habitot Children's Museum has increased. Because many local families have lost jobs or can no longer afford childcare, many more parents of young children, 0-3, are utilizing Habitot's early childhood resources and opportunities for social interaction in place of preschools. Free parent support groups are in higher demand as families respond to economic stresses. Enriching experiences, language and literacy are critical for young children because the brain grows rapidly in these years, and these experiences are especially important for the low-income, teen parents, homeless families, and special needs families that Habitot serves through dedicated programs.

2) How has the current economy affected the donations of goods and services that your organization receives?

Foundation grants and corporate support on which Habitot relies for 25% of its operating budget dropped by 80% in 2009. We have lost support for important programs like free admission days and class scholarships, which ensure that vulnerable and at-risk families have access to the museum. Donations from individuals have also dramatically declined in this economic downturn. Several long-term individual donors have been unable to fulfill their pledges, funds we have been counting on to sustain basic operations.

3) How have the services that your organization provides to the community affected our local economy?

More than 850,000 people have visited Habitot over the past twelve years, bringing the family demographic to downtown Berkeley. Patrons shop and eat in nearby establishments, generating local revenues, and take advantage of other resources such as the Library and the YMCA. Furthermore, Habitot contributes sales tax from its gift store sales to the City coffers, employs 20 full and part-time employees, and trains a future work force through work study positions, internships, and volunteer opportunities through a variety of programs such as Project 22, INTRAX, and buildOn.