



Running up the soon-to-be-named Lucy's Way at the Children's Museum of the East End.

REMY MCFADDEN PHOTOS

A MUSEUM PLANNED AT HER KITCHEN TABLE

BY SHAYE WEAVER

A mother, a business owner, a friend and a trailblazer, Lucy Muhlfeld Kazickas will be honored by the Children's Museum of the East End at a cocktail party on Friday at the Bridgehampton museum, toasted for her commitment to the museum since its inception in 1997.

As one of the eight "founding mothers" of CMEE, Ms. Kazickas is retiring this year as a museum board member. Aiming to celebrate her legacy, CMEE has decided to name the 195-foot-long boardwalk leading up to the museum "Lucy's Way," a

See MUSEUM, Page A8



Lucy Muhlfeld Kazickas, one of the "founding moms" of CMEE.

Recent Sales R5 Sports C1 Tide Table C2

MUSEUM: One Of Founders To Be Honored

FROM PAGE A1

play on the name of Ms. Kazickas's cheese shop, Lucy's Whey, in East Hampton.

"We wanted to name something after Lucy and her store," said CMEE Executive Director Stephen Long. "The boardwalk just seemed like a natural thing. I love when I see 3-year-olds on the boardwalk sprint toward the door and then look back, annoyed, waiting on their families."

Underwritten by Bridgehampton National Bank and Rosehip Partners, the cocktail party and dedication will include the unveiling of a decorative archway, designed by local blacksmith John Battle, to honor Ms. Kazickas's leadership and contributions to CMEE. According to Mr. Long, in addition to museum board members, the seven other founding mothers will be in attendance to discuss the past and future of the museum.

The excitement that children have running up to CMEE that Mr. Long described wouldn't be possible if Ms. Kazickas and seven other women hadn't taken the initiative to start a very small children's museum more than a decade ago.

In the mid-1990s, Ms. Kazickas, who lives in Amagansett, took her children, Annalina, Sophie, Peter and Augie, to the Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut in Niantic, and fell in love with the idea of an interactive and educational museum for children for the East End. Soon thereafter, she started gathering with other mothers who thought her idea was a great one.



The fruit stand at CMEE.

REMY MCFADDEN

"Originally, I was just imagining a small storefront somewhere that would offer educational activities for kids," she said. "The eight of us would literally sit around the kitchen table, with our kids running around ... it was a true labor of love."

Shortly after they got their idea formulated, Guild Hall offered gallery space to the women for four months. According to Ms. Kazickas, several members of the community, from contractors and builders to teachers, pitched in to help construct the exhibit. The mini children's museum was based on the community "then and now," and featured stores and a farm stand fashioned after the turn of the 20th century.

In 2005, seven years after they first got together, the women opened the Children's Museum of the East End after raising money and securing land in Bridgehampton, at its current location on the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike.

"It took on a life of its own, and more and more people got involved," Ms. Kazickas said. "It

was a real collaboration, and it was exciting. It was like a rolling stone that keeps getting bigger and bigger and hard to stop. There was so much enthusiasm from the community."

Now, almost seven years later, Ms. Kazickas's dream has been fully realized. According to Mr. Long, the museum attracts 50,000 visitors a year, and on a rainy day in the summer it can bring in nearly 1,000 people. Kids from far and wide play in the museum's interactive exhibits, such as a farm stand stocked with play fruits and veggies, a fire truck complete with firefighter gear, and a large pirate ship for swashbuckling rogues.

Because CMEE also has classroom space, it has become useful for organizations like The Retreat, a non-profit domestic violence agency, and Long Island Head Start, a federally funded preschool program, and has been a host for English as a Second Language and resume writing classes.

Mr. Long said the museum is planning on doing a capital campaign study as part of its master plan to update and expand exhibits. Ms. Kazickas said she would also like to see CMEE come up with a program for older children that could prepare them for the future.

Ms. Kazickas said that CMEE's

future lies in becoming completely self-sustaining. Right now, the museum relies on donations as well as revenue from admissions. "I want the museum to continue to be a life force of the community," she said.

Ms. Kazickas, who has raised CMEE from its birth as a tiny museum in a gallery at Guild Hall, said she feels that the other mothers who helped bring it into existence should be recognized too. "A lot of us really sacrificed a lot of years to put this together," she said. "The families sacrificed time without their mothers, and they should be honored too. This was absolutely a group effort."

Ms. Kazickas said she'll be leaving her post as board member because time is hard to come by these days, and she feels that there needs to be "new blood and new passion" on the board.

Mr. Long said Ms. Kazickas will be missed. "Every parent would want their daughter to grow up and be like Lucy," he said. "She's the best of the best."

Although the cocktail party will be free to attend, opportunities to donate money for the museum's future will be available, including the option to buy a plaque to adorn the walkway. The cocktail party begins at 7 p.m. at the museum, located at 376 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike in Bridgehampton.