News Release

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A big world of BIG toys: Play your way down Memory Lane

Tacoma, WA – What was your favorite childhood toy? A jump rope, a board game, or Space Invaders? An Easy Bake Oven, Star Wars collectibles, or a Slinky? You’re sure to find your favorites from the past and today in the nationally touring, blockbuster exhibition TOYTOPIA, opening February 16 at the Washington State History Museum and running through June 10, 2018.

This exhibition is huge, and presents toys from miniature to giant-sized. Visitors can sit in a human-scale Monopoly car, walk through a doll house (complete with miniature dollhouses), and see the world’s largest Etch A Sketch, among other highlights.

“Our goal was to capture the essence of childhood wonder; that dream of being in a world of toys,” explained Troy Carlson, owner of Stage Nine Entertainment Group who created TOYTOPIA. Stage Nine exhibitions have travelled internationally and been exhibited at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, Orlando Science Center, and the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, Canada.

“Visiting Toytopia will truly be a memorable, active experience for our community and visitors. Kids will love it, and so will adults. Seeing toys from the past rekindles the wonder and delight of childhood, no matter what your age,” said Mary Mikel Stump, the Historical Society’s director of audience engagement.

“We have also connected Washington’s history, featuring toys and objects from our collection in two complementary exhibitions, PlayDates and Collections Selections,” Stump added. In PlayDates, visitors will see items like the Slinky Dog, invented in Washington, and learn about how toys and modes of play have changed over time. Collections Selections is an utterly charming recreation of an early 1900s day-nursery, where visitors can see early manufactured toys within the context of the decorative arts of the time. This turn-of-the-century environment, complete with reproduced historic Kate Greenaway wallpaper, artwork, and photos of Washington children on the walls, illustrates how the Industrial Revolution, child labor laws, and manufacturing impacted play in our culture.
TOYTOPIA is an exciting exhibition for private events, too. “We are offering a special birthday party package for kids of all ages. Families can enjoy cake and party games in one of several kid-friendly spaces, and then have a blast in the exhibition,” said Mark Sylvester, who manages the History Museum’s facility rental services. “For businesses, Toytopia will add creative fun to a conference, seminar, brainstorming session, retreat or teambuilding day. It would also be fun for proms, weddings, class reunions, really any gathering.” The museum can accommodate groups of up to 250 for seated private events, and larger for standing or a mix of seated and standing activities.

And if you’re looking for a date night, consider Press PLAY on February 22, a History After Hours program for ages 21+. Admission to Press PLAY includes access to the exhibition, arcade games, board games, the chance to test your skill at (what else?) Oregon Trail on the big theater screen, plus craft beverages from Three Magnets Brewing Co. The Children’s Museum of Tacoma offers special child care on the same night, just a short walk from the History Museum.

TOYTOPIA highlights:

- Retro Arcade area with working games to play (game play is included in admission price)
- World’s largest Etch A Sketch, close to 8’ tall
- A life-size Doll House filled with smaller dollhouses
- A human-scale Monopoly car and game board; sit inside for a unique photo opportunity!
- Memorable toys from the movie Big: the giant piano keyboard that star Tom Hanks played on, and Zoltar Speaks, the carnival arcade fortune teller machine
- LEGO® train layout
- A signature Jack in the Box exploring the science of toys, from Furby® to radiometers
- Historic Schylling Tin Toys – see how toys are created out of simple sheets of tin
- Interactive play areas with Keva Planks, Lincoln Logs, LEGO® wall and Brain Teasers

Find out about TOYTOPIA, other History Museum exhibitions, hours and admission at http://www.washingtonhistory.org.

For information about birthday party packages and other private events, contact mark.sylvester@wshs.wa.gov.

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PRESS TOUR: Press are invited to join Washington State Historical Society’s exhibition curator and director of audience engagement for a tour of TOYTOPIA, PlayDates and Collections Selections on Wednesday, February 14, at 11:00 AM, Washington State History Museum, 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma. To attend, RSVP to julianna.verboort@wshs.wa.gov.
A child plays music on the oversized floor keyboard (as in the movie Big with Tom Hanks). Photo courtesy Stage Nine Entertainment Group.

TOYTOPIA has interactive areas with toys and brain teasers so visitors can play together. Photo courtesy Stage Nine Entertainment Group.

These giant gears are among the many toys brought up to human-scale in the exhibition TOYTOPIA. Photo courtesy Stage Nine Entertainment Group.

Compare your size to the world’s largest Etch A Sketch in TOYTOPIA at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma, February 16-June 10. Photo courtesy Stage Nine Entertainment Group.

Did you know the Slinky Dog was invented in Washington? See toys from the Washington State Historical Society’s collection and learn about how toys and play have both changed over time. PlayDates is on view through July 15. Photo courtesy Washington State Historical Society.

Peer into a turn-of-the-century day nursery and see early manufactured toys within the context of the decorative arts of the time. Complete with reproduced historic Kate Greenway wallpaper, artwork, and photos of Washington children on the walls, this recreation illustrates how the Industrial Revolution, child labor laws, and manufacturing impacted play in our culture. Photo courtesy Washington State Historical Society.

About The Washington State Historical Society
The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all.
Address: 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402
Hours: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM Tuesday through Sunday. On the Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM.
Admission: Free for members; Adults $14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) $11; free for children 5 and under; family rate $40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a Washington Quest card can attend for $1 per person or $2 per family. Admission is free 3:00 – 8:00 PM on the Third Thursday of each month.

About Stage Nine Entertainment Group