Jewish Children’s Expo opens doors to public for first time

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The centre, in North Leeds, has been made possible by a £275,000 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant and will focus on the fascinating heritage of the Jewish community in the UK for all audiences.

Created as an extension of the Lubavitch Centre, the Jewish Heritage Centre for Children is a unique project which aims to teach children from all backgrounds about how Jewish traditions, heritage and culture have survived through the ages into the modern day.

Key attractions and education resources in the new building include a recreated 19th-century Eastern European farm village where Jewish festivals are brought to life in a fun, 'hands on' way, as well as a children’s kosher supermarket and kids’ kosher kitchen. Other displays include a series of mini films depicting Jewish traditions, food and festivals in which children from the local Brodetsky Primary School took part.

Ruth Bell, Project Co-ordinator, explains: “We’ve consulted with schools, faith groups, after school clubs and women’s groups and the response has been very enthusiastic. We already have quite a few bookings, and are looking forward to many more. The centre is educational on many levels and although it’s primarily for children, there is something of interest for everyone.”

The centre, run by Bnos Chabad - the Jewish voluntary organisation behind the project and based at the Lubavitch Centre in Leeds - will utilise arts & crafts, cookery, music and drama to bring Judaism and its heritage to life for the general public. Open to the public on Sundays from 12noon until 4pm it will also be available for group bookings from Mondays to Thursdays.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “This is a remarkable project delivered by a voluntary group exploring and offering educational resources on the heritage that is important to them. What is really special about it however, and the reason HLF has supported the venture, is the fantastic permanent resource that now exists in the UK for children and people of all ages and backgrounds who want to learn more about the heritage of Judaism.”

Ruth Bell, continued: "We are very excited about the opening of the centre and we are sure it’s going to be a great asset not only to Leeds but to the whole country."

Among some of the volunteers who have helped with the project to date, Susy, who helped with the art-work, said: “I am incredibly impressed with the centre - it is an amazing teaching facility and an incredible insight into our past.” And Yanina, mother of 4 year old Josh, said,”You feel when walking into the village that you are stepping right back into the past. It looks so real and authentic and Josh doesn’t want to leave. The modern kitchen looks amazing; the children will love it.”

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK, including £351million in Yorkshire and the Humber alone.

Further information

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