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## Lewisburg Children's Museum event raises autism awareness

By Joe Sylvester [jsylvester@dailyitem.com](mailto:jsylvester@dailyitem.com) Apr 8, 2019



Photo by Joe Sylvester/The Danville NewsKarina Melton, 10, her mom, Yami Melton, 40, and Karina's brother, Connor, 6, c Winfield, play grocery store in the pretend Weis Markets store at the Lewisburg Children's Museum on Sunday.



LEWISBURG — Ten-year-old Karina Melton was helping her mom, Yami Melton, pick out “peppers” and other plastic vegetables, but only after throwing some “sweets” into her mother’s tiny shopping cart.

Karina's brother Connor was manning the cash register as the kids' father, Michael, watched the shopping extravaganza in the Lewisburg Children's Museum's pretend Weis Markets store.

While the groceries and money were not real, the lessons were really fun for the kids who played at the museum as part of an Autism Awareness Month event on Sunday. Geisinger's Autism & Developmental Medicine Institute (ADMI) invited patients and their families to spend time for free at the museum between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. It was one of a month of activities, including lectures, museums and the expansion of its sensory-friendly film series to Berwick and Wilkes-Barre this month.

Connor, an ADMI patient, also helped his mom with some of the shopping, running over to drop a frozen pizza box onto her groceries. Then he scanned his mother's and sister's groceries so they could pay him with money he had given them earlier.

"This is the first time we've come to the museum and they are really enjoying it, so we'll be back," said Yami Melton, 40, of Winfield.

Karina enjoyed the shopping.

"The vegetables look very realistic," she declared.

Kate Dent, an ADAMI research assistant, said 25 to 30 families — close to 100 people, in all — showed up throughout the day for the event that was open to not just the families of patients with autism, but those of various developmental disabilities. The families also had the option to sign up to take part in the largest autistic genetic study in the United States, Dent said.

Sunday's event was the second annual ADAMI event at the museum.

"The families are really appreciative, and it's a way to give back to the community," Dent said.

"I think it's awesome," said Lydia Moore, of Allenwood, who brought her 5-year-old son, Noah, who wanted to put together a toy tanker truck.

It was their first time at the museum. Moore admitted she wasn't sure, at first, if she should take her son to the event because she had heard the museum draws big crowds.

But, as Dent confirmed, small groups came throughout the day.

"This place is great," Moore added. "I'll definitely come again. He's been non-stop since he walked in the door."

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