

INK

In the Bronx, This One's for the Children

By MANNY FERNANDEZ

THE BRONX has a zoo, a baseball stadium and acres and acres of parkland. It has a symphony orchestra, an opera company and the oldest public golf course in America. But as far as 4-year-old Tyzella King is concerned, the borough is missing something rather important: a children's museum.

The Bronx has the largest percentage of children under 14 than any other borough — 25.3 percent, according to the 2000 census — but no children's museum in its 42 square miles. That is about to change.

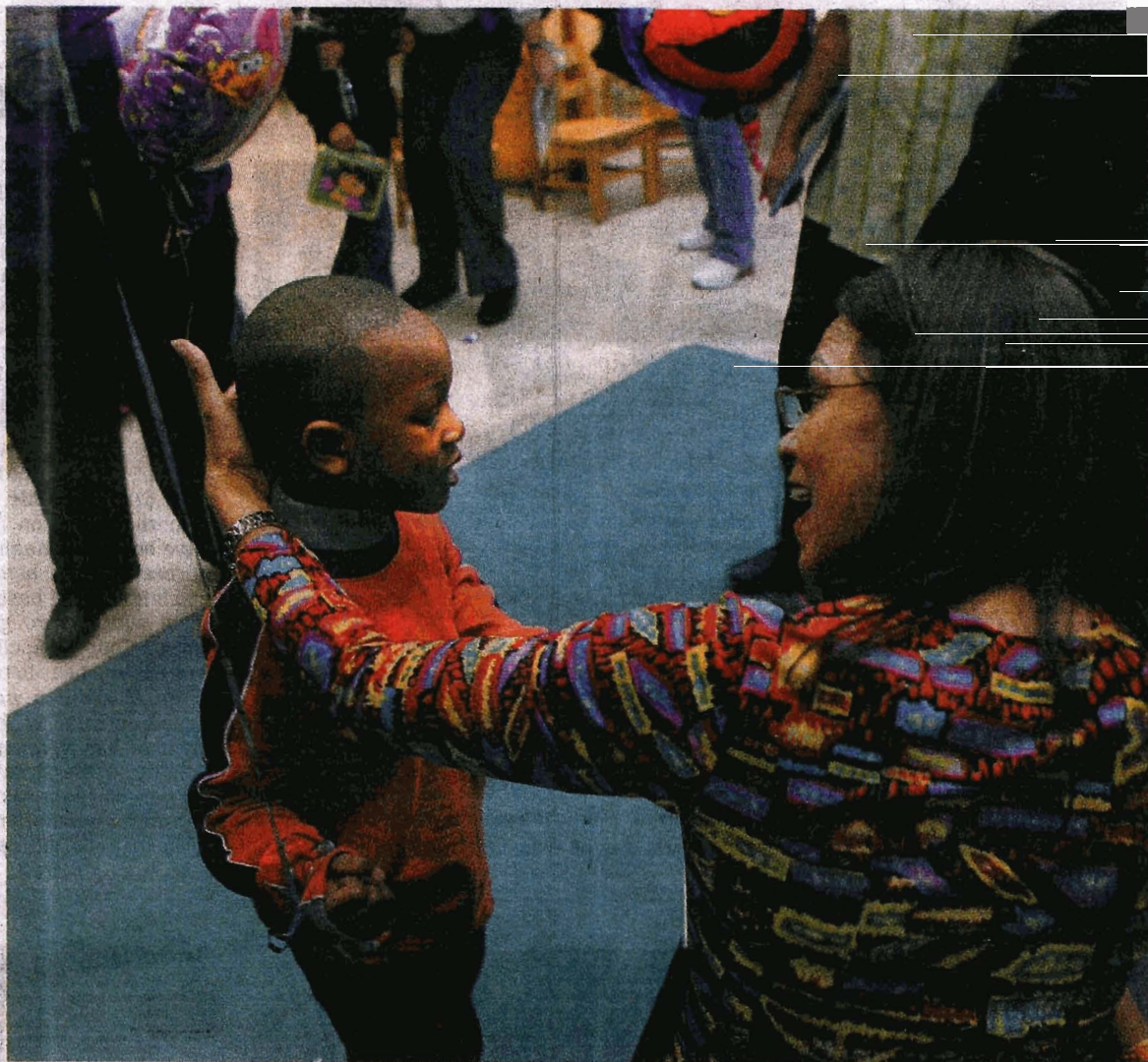
One evening last week, the borough president, Adolfo Carrión Jr., went to a South Bronx children's center and vowed, standing before Tyzella and nearly two dozen of his youngest constituents, to make the Bronx Children's Museum a reality.

Since the permanent museum is a long way from opening — a site has not yet been selected — Mr. Carrión helped improvise a temporary solution. Tyzella and her friends are part of what officials consider the first program of the future museum, an eight-week project led by the Children's Museum of Manhattan that teaches children about art, music and storytelling.

Mr. Carrión and other officials gathered at the children's center, run by the nonprofit East Side House Settlement, to celebrate the program and talk about their vision for the museum. The grownups wore dark suits and made speeches. The children jumped up and down, danced and imitated frogs. Then they sat on a green carpet and listened to Sonia Manzano, a Bronx native who plays Maria on "Sesame Street," read from her book, "No Dogs Allowed!"

In the South Bronx neighborhoods where many of the children live, it is easy to find a place to get a flat tire fixed or buy a pack of cigarettes, but hard to find a place to play.

"The Bronx doesn't have too much



Richard Perry/The New York T

Sonia Manzano, Maria from "Sesame Street," meeting with a boy at the East Side House Settlement.

to offer for the children," said Soraida Perez, 31, whose two children participate in the program. "It's good to see something like this in the Bronx."

The world's first museum for children opened in Brooklyn in December 1899. Today, that museum, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, is host

to 250,000 visitors annually. It is one of about 300 museums of its kind in the nation, according to the Association of Children's Museums.

Mr. Carrión said his office, which has committed \$500,000 to the museum so far, was securing public and private financing for a bus that will

serve as a museum on wheels while permanent site is found and developed.

The borough president was not only one eager to see the museum open. "I want to go there," said Tyzella, who was ready to head there a moment's notice, lunchbox in hand