

# There'll Be Lots of Fun at World's Fair Children's Center, Too

By Alice Myers Winther

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Seattle  
**MANY SEATTLE** parents and teachers would be willing to promise that small-fry visitors to the Children's Center at the New York World's Fair will enjoy a fascinating two hours. That's because they know the center's director, Margaret S. Woods, and what she can do with children, either herself or through teachers she has trained.

I have yet to meet anyone who has worked or studied with Mrs. Woods who has not been inspired by her enthusiasm and her ability to help children learn by using their imaginations.

"Imagination," she says, "is the child's built-in aid for channeling strong feelings, for acquiring an understanding of self, for arriving at worthy conclusions. Make-believe is invaluable in

helping children handle their own behavior and adjust to new situations."

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**LOCATED IN** the Better Living Center building, the Children's Center will have separate three-room areas for four, five, six, and seven-to-eight-year-olds. A child may register for one two-hour session per day. In each area each of the three rooms is equipped to provide a different type of experience and the children will spend a portion of the session in each room.

Mrs. Woods emphasized, when I caught her by phone the other night, that this is to be a learning center. "Our overall aim," she said, "is to help build a passion for knowledge and a compassion for people. In all our planning we have kept in thought Walter de la Mare's criterion

### Winds From the Northwest

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that 'only the rarest kind of best can be good enough for the young.'

The staff will consist of 20 teachers, some men, some women, whom Mrs. Woods has selected from various parts of the country because she feels they will be capable of making 120 minutes count. They are all certified teachers being given leaves of absence from their respective schools for the duration of the fair.

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**FOR SEVERAL MONTHS** now Mrs. Woods has been commuting to New York every two weeks. She's not sure, but suspects she was recommended for the director's position because a cer-

tain well-known New York lawyer was so intrigued by what he saw going on at the Children's Center which she directed at the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. The man in question, after watching the youngsters for a long time, asked if he, too, might hold an egg in his hand while the baby chick pecked its way out of the shell.

When I first met Mrs. Woods eight or so years ago, she was having great success with a creative dramatics program for pre-school children designed to develop their interest in good books. The classes were—and still are—held in the city's public libraries.

For the past six years she has been teaching courses on creativity at Seattle Pacific College and holding teacher-training workshops throughout the country. She started at SPC with one course and now has five. Since last September she has conducted workshops in 24 states.

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**LAST SUMMER** she also held the first such workshop at Camp Casey, the college's summer campus on Whidbey Island. In June this year she will conduct a three-day workshop there for members of the National Education Association's department of elementary-kindergarten-nursery education just prior to its annual convention in Seattle. Mrs. Woods is president of that department. In August she

will be a delegate to the World Council of Teacher Preparation in Paris.

When I called she said she was just reviewing some French. Actually she began her career teaching French and Spanish. "I had all the football players in the high school," she said, "and they couldn't have cared less about their required language courses. I had to devise some imaginative ways to win their interest and in the process I stumbled on some teaching methods that were effective and interesting." She has been expanding and developing them ever since.

Her married son and daughter and their respective spouses, in addition to her husband, all have tremendous imaginations, according to Mrs. Woods. "We have to, in order to keep up with her," says her husband.