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## Leonardo's Basement is on the move

Kickstarter underway to help fund building rehab

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Credit: Leonardo's Basement will host more classes at its new home near I-35W and Highway 62. Submitted image



**Leonardo's Basement** is moving out of Sebastian Joe's commissary and into a roomier spot at Windom neighborhood.

Staff are relocating all kinds of odds and ends that students can use in their projects: Hundreds of cocktail swords, boxes of piano keys, tiny pizza tables to use in models, and old toys and VCRs to take apart.

"We have 5,000 square feet of materials to use, and no rules about what you can and can't use," said Executive Director Steve Jevning. "We encourage students to build whatever their ideas are."

The after-school venue often turns away a quarter of the kids who sign up to build projects in science, art, engineering or technology. The new 11,000-square-foot building at 150 W. 60th St. has more room for simultaneous classes and more space for welding, more space for teens to build bigger projects, and two Lego rooms (one for building castles and pirate ships, and one for building robotics and mechanics). The building will also have an outdoor area filled with sculpture that kids can climb.

The basement is filled with old projects that will travel to the new space: A giant shark, a TARDIS replica from Doctor Who, a handmade pipe organ, and bowling balls set up in Newton's cradle.

A "rocket" panel displays levers and buttons that activate different operations. The features with the biggest payoff — outdoor lights, or lots of noise — require kids to discover a sequence of two or three steps before activation.

"We like to reward curiosity," Jevning said.





A recent project asked the question of whether Viking or pirate ships were stro: brought them out to Martin Luther King Park for a battle with water balloons and catapults.

Jevning said he doesn't care much about the end product, but he wants kids to articulate the process of building their inventions.

"We've learned over 17 years that kids as young as six or seven can explain that process to you," he said.

A portion of the new shop will be ready for school release days in October.

Saturday and after-school classes will begin in November.

Staff are looking for furniture donations and volunteers to help with the move. A [Kickstarter](#) campaign seeks \$18,500 to pay for an ADA accessible ramp and new windows.

This holiday season, Jevning plans to expand annual gift-making sessions to create a Santa's workshop environment. In the past, participants have made things like jewelry, wind-up toys and growler carriers.

"An original idea I had 17 years ago is to create a new kind of museum that flips the proportion of looking and making," he said.

He envisions a spot that families can visit on weekends to try out the interactive sculptures, see the properties of physics at work, and make a toy or electronic device.

"It's a real beehive of activity," Jevning said.