

Sock Monkey Museum Earns World Record for Its Cute Collection: 'We're Spreading Happiness'

The tiny treasure in Long Grove, Ill., has nearly 2,100 of the snuggly stuffies

By [Kate Hogan](#) | Published on September 2, 2023 12:00PM EDT



The Sock Monkey Museum in Long Grove, Ill. PHOTO: KATE HOGAN

About 35 miles northwest of Chicago, there's some serious monkey business happening.

Open since 2022, the Sock Monkey Museum houses nearly 2,100 of the plush pals, and recently earned a Guinness World Record for having the "largest collection of handmade sock monkeys in the world."

Founder Arlene Okun created the whimsical spot from her own collection, which began in 2006 when her husband bought her a sock monkey at a Cracker Barrel as they traveled the country in an RV.

"I started collecting, and it grew and grew, and before you knew it, I had a museum!" she says.

Okun calls the museum — located in a house in the historic town of Long Grove, Ill. — "ageless. We get 60-year-olds, 80-year-olds having their birthday parties here. It's not just for kids."



The Sock Monkey Museum in Long Grove, Ill. PHOTO: KATE HOGAN

The inside is covered in the creatures: they ride a Ferris wheel, hang from the ceilings and walls and help illustrate their own history.

"I started to research them and found they have ties to Illinois — the red heel socks originated in Rockford — and they're a piece of Americana," Okun shares. "World War II is when people started to make them because they didn't have money for toys."

Okun has had a few people reach out to her to donate their own sock monkeys; one woman who was moving out of the country gave her 80 vintage ones.

"Sometimes somebody will walk in with one and ask to donate, and I say, 'Of course!' It's a fun experience."

Okun believes the museum (which donates a portion of admission profits to Chimp Sanctuary Northwest) is "always going to be evolving" as the collection grows. But to her, that's the fun of it.

As she says, "We're spreading happiness one sock monkey at a time."