

New Okanagan Science Centre exhibit makes a splash



By Vernon Morning Star

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Okanagan Science Centre executive director Sandi Dixon is bubbling with enthusiasm as she shows off the new WaterWorks exhibit.

"Our mission is to make science accessible and water is such a big issue in the Okanagan that this is very relevant," she said.

Science Centre staff and volunteers had the idea for a major display on water in the back of their minds and were exploring their options with the available budget. Then they heard about the WaterWorks Soak Up the Science exhibit, created in Sudbury, Ont. by Science North. The exhibit had been touring the U.S. and was in storage in California. Because storage costs were so high, the exhibit, which normally rents for \$150,000 for three months, the Okanagan Science Centre, could get it for much less for housing it.

"We had just over a week to move the exhibit, adapt it for the Okanagan and get it in place. It took more than 200 volunteer hours to get it in place," said Dixon.

With the help of presenting sponsor Vernon Moving and Storage and Okanagan Door and Window, which had to remove the window over a big door to get the largest piece in, it was ready for opening Saturday.

"The planets and stars have lined up and we are able to have this exhibit that we wouldn't normally get. We are the only city in Canada this size to have a science centre," said Dixon.

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Board member Bob Clarke, an engineer, gave an overview of the interactive displays.

"These are issues we are dealing with in the Okanagan with water use and our water footprint," he said.

One of his favourite displays is the one that lets people take a quiz which asks about individual water use, then shows, with real water in tanks, how much a person is consuming in a day. The average person in the Okanagan uses 675 litres of water each day.

Another display shows the household water cycle, following water from the reservoir to the water treatment plant to the tap and toilet to waste water treatment and the aeration and settling pond and back to natural water supply.

"It hits home with kids how it works but we want to educate the whole community," said Clarke.

Other displays show how much water is wasted by a dripping tap, how snowflakes, clouds and rainbows are formed, what groundwater is, local water sources, and how hydraulics work.

The WaterWorks Soak Up the Science exhibit presented by the Okanagan Science Centre and the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

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