



December 23, 2011

NEW WATER EXHIBIT FOR YOUTH

Last week, I chaired a planning meeting that began with a tour of the Lincoln Children's Museum in downtown Lincoln at 14th and P Street. One of the discussion points was a new 1.25 million dollar exhibit scheduled to be built in the spring of 2012 on the lower level. The exhibit will simulate part of our water cycle and will include clouds, rain, a mountain and a river stream.

A former Wilber-Clatonia graduate, Stacy Plouzek, conducted the tour of the Children's Museum where kids of various ages (mainly 1 to 10 years of age) build, dance, play, climb, create, sing, and laugh. They can pretend to be a doctor, nurse, banker, postman, television or radio announcer, veterinarian, policeman, fireman, 911 operator, pizza store manager, farmer, or play in the Husker corner to name just a few. Downstairs you can be on stage and perform, or crawl in tunnels like a prairie dog, drive a semi-truck or play in the water exhibit. There, a kid can be whatever and wherever their imagination takes them.

In the agricultural theme area there's a green tractor cab that kids climb in and pretend to drive. In the windshield there's a video screen that pops up pretending you are driving in a crop field. The poultry egg plinko exhibit was also a favorite along with the play apple tree exhibit.

The Lincoln Children's Museum offers three floors and 23,300 square feet of hands-on exhibits and imaginative programs that allow children and adults to discover the adventure of learning through playing together. It is a private non-profit, 501(c)(3), that receives no city, state or federal tax dollars. It's one of the top 20 children's museums in the United States. It's a great place for parents or grandparents to take kids to create, discover, and learn through the power of play.

Our meeting, after the museum tour, was about a new concept for a global agriculture, food and environment education center to be built at the ARDC near Mead, NE. It's in the dream stage right now. The idea is to have youth and adults to have a better understanding of global food needs, learn how food is produced, ignite passion for science in youth, train teachers in scientific inquiry and recruit students to science fields in the future that are going to be needed. As Extension educators, we have a passion for agricultural literacy and science education that is Land Grant University based.

The center would provide a unique opportunity for youth, adults and teachers to experience the science and latest research on food production and the environment. There would be four interactive sites, including the science and innovation center, "the barn or livestock experiential education facility," "the crops pavilion," and the Agro-environmental trail experience.

By the year 2050, the Lincoln-Omaha region will be the home of more than 2 million people. The need for students to know where their water, food, clothing and shelter come from, and have an appreciation and knowledge of basic science, will be greater. Understanding science as it relates to agriculture will help students make future career choices. It will also help consumers to make informed decisions and future leaders in making sound public policy decisions.



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