

Museum looks ahead to future “Discovery”

By Mark R. Dorolek
The Winchester Star

Winchester — Under sunny skies Saturday, the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum broke ground for a facility.

About 100 people turned out for the event, which also celebrated the museum’s 11th anniversary.

Peggy McKee, the museum’s executive director, said planning for the 30,000-square-foot facility, which will be located on 3.5 acres in Jim Barnett Park, took about 4 years.



Will Vogel, 3, son of Alex and Jill Vogel of Upperville, lends a hand during the groundbreaking for the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum at Jim Barnett Park Saturday. The museum was made

She thanked Rep. Frank Wolf, R-10th, for getting the museum a \$1.2 million grant for the project.

possible through state and federal aid.
(Photo by Scott Mason)

“I burst into tears and practically fell over,” McKee said.

Wolf said it was imperative to get young children involved in learning at an early age and the museum would help do this.

“We are facing a point in our country where we are losing our edge in math and science,” he said.

The new facility will have a wind turbine, a sod roof with landscaping, a closed-loop geothermal heating and cooling system — which uses the earth’s natural warmth to heat and cool the building — and many other technologies that will make it as environmentally friendly as possible.

The museum is hoping to receive a platinum rating — a nationally accepted designation that denotes high-performing green buildings — from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

“We are working toward that [designation] with every breath we take,” McKee said.

For a new location for the museum, about 40 buildings were evaluated before Winchester gave the land for the facility, she said.

Winchester Mayor Elizabeth A. Minor said she was glad the building would be used as a teaching tool.

“What an asset this new Discovery Museum will be for Winchester,” she said.

McKee thanked Dels. Clifford L. “Clay” Athey Jr., R-Front Royal, and Beverly J. Sherwood, R-Frederick County, and Sen. H. Russell Potts Jr., R-Winchester, for helping the museum get funding from the state.

“They have been stalwarts in carrying our water year after year,” she said.

Athey joked that the museum could not be built fast enough, so that his children would have a place to play.

John Crandell, a member of Winchester’s Parks and Recreation Board, said the museum would be a way to build a sense of community.

“We start with what we share in common, family,” he said.

Chuck Swartz of Reader and Swartz Architects PC of Winchester, the firm designing the site, said he hoped the building would inspire all the children that visit it.

“We feel tremendously privileged to work on this project,” he said.

Joe DeZarn, president of the museum’s Board of Directors, said he hoped the museum would be a catalyst for the area and for educating children.

Dee Dee Barbour, the museum’s capital campaign director, said \$4.5 million has been raised for the building.

Although the new museum will cost \$8 million to build, the fundraising goal is \$10 million, she said.

The extra money will be used for start-up costs and exhibits at the museum.