

# Discovery Museum finds 'place' for it

## New exhibits under construction for proposed facility in city park

By Val Van Meter  
*The Winchester Star*

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**WINCHESTER** — The Greek mathematician Archimedes had a "word" for it.

"Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world."

Now, the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum has a "place" for it.

Thanks to the Adams Companies, the museum staff now has a shop in which to build many of the amenities and the displays that will appeal to visitors when the new location opens in the Jim Barnett Park in Winchester.

"Probably more than half (the future exhibits) will be built and designed here," said Martha Wolfe, director of exhibits for the museum. "Here" is a free 1,200-square-foot space in the Fort Collier Industrial Park.

Richard and Sarah Adams Bell offered the space, which also houses shop space for the Adams Companies, a real estate development and management business.

The Bells are card-carrying members of the Discovery Museum, presently on the Loudoun Street Mall in Winchester, Richard Bell explained.

"They know it quite well," he said of his three children. "We're just big kids."

Richard Bell also supplied a range of shop tools for the space.

"The tools were an added bonus," Wolfe said.

Nigel Briggs, exhibit designer for the Smithsonian Institution and a consultant for the Discovery Museum, already has a list of projects to start on, including a tilted house, which will teach about perspective and perception.



Temple Wilson (from left) exhibit builder, Niki Wilson, director of marketing at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, and Sarah Bell, museum volunteer, collaborate on an exhibit for the new museum, planned at Jim Barnett Park in Winchester. The Adams Companies has provided space to build exhibits at Fort Collier Industrial Park.  
*(Ginger Perry)*

Briggs has been working on the interior design of the new building since it was first conceived. Planning has been taking place for the past four years, according to Peggy McKee, executive director of the museum.

A ceremonial groundbreaking took place in April of this year, according to Niki Wilson, director of marketing for the museum. "We hope to start construction next spring and open within the next two years."

Sixty percent of the \$10 million cost of the new facility has been raised so far, Wilson said — the building will cost \$8 million, exhibits \$1 million, and operating expenses another million.

"The building was actually designed around the exhibits," Wolfe explained.

There are many exhibits that are very popular with the children who visit the hands-on, interactive museum.

"We knew we needed an 'apple shed' and an 'emergency room,'" Wolfe said, which are popular exhibits at the present museum in downtown Winchester.

Briggs credits a grandfather who loved woodworking with sparking his interest in industrial design. He specialized in furniture and especially in designing furniture for museums.

"We'll start out with the things that hold the exhibits," Wolfe said, including modular walls and tables.



Nigel Briggs (center), Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum exhibit designer, discusses plans with Martha Wolfe (left), director of exhibits and Richard Bell (right), who, along with his wife Sarah, donated use of shop equipment and space to design and build exhibits for the new museum.  
(Ginger Perry)

Taking on that task is Temple Wilson, who will create the things Briggs designs. Wilson has been working for the museum off and on for several years. He served his apprenticeship with his father who was a cabinet maker.

Eventually, there will be a permanent shop in the new building, Wolfe said. "We will be able to repair, design and build temporary exhibits and traveling exhibits."

The \$8-million structure, with 21,000-square feet of space, will replace the 7,500-square-foot space at 54 S. Loudoun Street.

But until the building rises from the ground, anything going into it will have to be built in the temporary shop space the Bells have

provided.

And, Wolfe said, the space also offers storage for materials and a room open for design activity.

"It's all about children," Sarah Bell explained.

The exhibits that will be constructed over the next few months, will engage and enchant a lot of children in the years to come.

She was also "immensely proud" of the "green" design of the new museum.

"We're trying for an LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) award from the Green Building Council. We're going for platinum," the highest award, Wolfe said.

The museum building, as designed by Winchester architects Reader and Swartz, will be "eco-friendly," Wilson added.

The new building on 3.5 acres in Jim Barnett Park will feature low energy usage, a reduced carbon footprint, Wolfe said.

Features include a closed loop geo-thermal heating and cooling system, a sod roof, and a wind turbine.

"We have a check list. If the building uses this much energy, it must give back this much energy," Wolfe said.

Richard Bell said the structure should be unique enough that some people will visit Winchester just to see it.

The building itself, Wolfe said, "will be an exhibit for adults."

She hopes they will take away ideas for what they can do to help sustain the earth.

According to Sarah Bell, the new Discovery Museum will be one more reason "to be proud of our town."

For more information about the museum, call 722-2020 or visit [www.discoverymuseum.net](http://www.discoverymuseum.net).