

New museum gets students' help via recycling project

By Angela Jones
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WINCHESTER — Students in the area's three school divisions have the opportunity to contribute to the building of the new Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum.

On Thursday, the museum kicked off a pilot recycling program at four schools in the area — D.G. Cooley Elementary School in Clarke County, Senseny Road and Apple Pie Ridge elementary schools in Frederick County, and Daniel Morgan Middle School in Winchester.

Each school received recycling bins in which the students will collect used plastic grocery bags.

Those bags will go to Trex Company Inc., where they will be combined with waste wood and made into a special kind of lumber called composite wood. The wood will be used to construct the walkways around the museum including those going to an outdoor classroom, perimeter path, and its railings.

To be located on three acres leased by the City of Winchester, the new museum will be an expansion from the museum's 5,000 square feet of gallery and public space to about 25,000 square feet, with additional environmental science and arts exhibits planned for the outdoors. The project will cost \$10 million with \$8 million for the building, \$1 million for resources, and an additional \$1 million for reserves.

On Tuesday, when the first bags were put into the recycling bins at Cooley, Niki Wilson, museum director of marketing, said one of the goals in building the new museum in Winchester's Jim Barnett Park is obtaining platinum certification as a green building.

According to the Web site of the U.S. Green Building Council, platinum certification is awarded to buildings based on site sustainability, water efficiency, energy efficiency, use of materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and design innovation.



Senseny Road Elementary School third-grader Madelyn Watkins, 8, was among the first students at the school to start recycling plastic grocery bags to be turned over to the Trex Company Inc., which makes the "plastic wood" that will be used in the new Discovery Museum in Jim Barnett Park in Winchester. The museum's executive director, Peggy McKee, is at the left.
(Jeff Taylor)

Wilson said receiving the certification would make the museum the only building in Virginia to have the certification.

Clarke County Superintendent Eleanor F. Smalley said the model of the new museum is "spectacular ... you can see where all the energy management is taking place." Participating in a project like this, "helps the kids feel connected" to the museum.

On Thursday — which was also America Recycles Day — the students at Senseny Road were informed of their selection in the pilot program.

Brandy Derry, Trex recycling promotions coordinator, explained to the students that the composite wood they will help make is better than regular wood because of its durability.

"I really need your help," she said. "We need lots and lots of grocery bags."

Museum Executive Director Peggy McKee said the pilot program will run through the end of the year at which time the museum will gauge how it's going and determine how to proceed.

On the Internet...

www.discoverymuseum.net