



Daily staff photo by Alan Lehman

The Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, on the Loudoun Street Mall in Winchester, will be getting a \$1 million federal grant.

Discovery Museum gets \$1 million grant

By Charlotte J. Eller

Three Winchester women, committed to their dream of a hands-on museum that would bring science to life for schoolchildren, learned Friday that the institution they started has been awarded a \$1 million federal grant to help buy a larger home.

The funds, earmarked for the capital expansion of the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, represent more than two years of effort by Rep. Frank Wolf, R-10th, who actively has supported the facility, said Peggy McKee, one of the museum's co-founders and its executive director.

The money was included in an omnibus spending bill that Congress approved Thursday night, according to a news release from Wolf's office.

The news release says the museum



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has outgrown its present site. More than 120,000 school-age children have visited the facility since the museum opened in 1996.

The idea for the museum was born more than nine years ago, on Oct. 21, 1993, McKee said, when the first official meeting was held on the project by herself, Mary Bruce Glaize, now the development director, and exhibit director Martha Wolfe, McKee said.

Guided by Wolf, legislative aide Benjamin B. Dutton Jr., press secretary Dan Scandling and others, the museum's board has worked steadily on the grant application process.

"But they actually put the numbers

together," McKee said of Wolf's staff. The grant is being funded jointly from Housing and Urban Development funds and the Small Business Administration budget, she said.

Wolf has twice visited the Discovery Museum, which opened on April 20, 1996, she said. Last spring, museum organizers went in turn to Washington to visit Wolf.

Currently, the museum is housed in an 8,000-square-foot retail building on the Loudoun Street Mall, McKee said. It was made available at a modest rent for its first year by W. Lawrence Duncan, who previously had his firm, B-K Office Supply, in the building, she said.

Besides the federal government, funds for its operation have been sought and obtained from state and local governments, private corpora-

tions, and individuals, she said.

While local governments have kept the museum in their operating budgets, they have been unable to offer any capital funds, though their turn-down was voiced with regret by members of the City-County Joint Finance Committee.

Nevertheless, the search is proceeding and a decision will not be made lightly, she said.

Currently, several buildings — many of which are on the Loudoun Street Mall, where the museum would prefer to stay — are being considered.

A one point, the museum board considered buying the Winchester Moose Lodge but was unable to work out the details in time for the Moose to go forward with its project.

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