



Star Photo by Rick Foster

Geb Bennett is the new paleontologist at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum.

Bennett Is Playing in Dirt For Area's Discovery Museum

By DAN REANY
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Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum has a new paleontologist.

Geb Bennett came to the discovery museum from the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, where he was assistant curator of the paleontology department.

"A lot of the things I was doing there are things I'll be doing here," Bennett said.

Duties will include everything from preparing fossils to prospecting for new collection sites in the area and around the country.

Bennett will also lecture to area students in their classrooms and give talks and tours at the museum on the Loudoun Street Mall.

Plans are underway for Bennett, Shenandoah University professor John Happ, and a small team to go to Hell Creek Formation of the Montana badlands June 17-30 to look at SU and Discovery Museum dig sites and pos-

sibly prospect for new sites.

From there, Bennett said the team will go to Wyoming to work with paleontologist Nicholas Frasier of the Virginia Museum of Natural History. "We hope to build a really strong partnership with the Virginia Museum of Natural History."

A native of Yorktown, Bennett came full circle to living and working in Virginia.

Since he graduated with a master of science degree in geology from Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg in 1982, Bennett has worked for the Dallas Museum of Natural History, the Museum of the Rockies, and other museums.

He also did some graduate work at Montana State University and the University of Montana.

Bennett takes over the Discovery Museum position from Chris Morrow, who left the position to start Paleo-World Inc. and be the curator of paleontology for the Garfield Coun-

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ty Museum in Montana. tracks. Who knows? We might

even find the first dinosaur (remains) in Virginia."

No permanent residence has been established yet for Bennett and his family, which includes his wife, Meg, and their 18-month-old son, Nicolas. Bennett has been on the job for roughly two weeks and the family is still looking for a place to call home.

Bennett, 30, first got interested in fossils when he was a young child. "My first fossil hunting experience was in Lyme Regis in England. We were living in Germany at the time — I was an Air Force brat — and we went out to Lyme Regis, where some of the first marine reptiles were discovered. I found a number of ammonites, and one ichthyosaur vertebrae."

Paleontology field work will also take place in the local area, Bennett said. "I'd really like to do some prospecting in the Culpeper Basin, which runs from Culpeper County up into Pennsylvania. It's not as productive as in the west, but we might find some good dinosaur

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