

'ON WITH THE SHOW' - HELPERS FINISH UP NEW CITY MUSEUM

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) (Published as St. Louis Post-Dispatch) - October 25, 1997

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- Edition: FIVE STAR LIFT
- Section: NEWS
- Page: 14
- Readability: 5-7 grade level (Lexile: 950)

* The new attraction, complete with its dinosaur, sculptures and caves, opens today. But several exhibits, such as a giant aquarium and a model train showcase, aren't ready yet.

SAWS BUZZED, HAMMERS pounded and phones rang Friday as employees and volunteers prepared for today's opening of the City Museum. Enormous replica caves had to be cleaned, signs describing the exhibits had to be hung and the floor had to be sprayed with a protective coating.

When asked if everything would be ready in time, the museum's creative director and visionary, Bob Cassilly, couldn't decide.

"No," he said at first.

"It'll be 100 percent," he said after some consideration.

"I don't put anything in writing," he warned.

"On with the show," he finally decided.

Indeed. Assistant director Jean McLane said she expected 5,000 or more people today at the museum, billed as a zany collection of attractions and artifacts for children and adults. McLane has had more than 75 calls from school groups wanting to schedule visits, some from as far away as Ohio, and that's just before her voice mail system filled up.

Admission will be \$6 for anyone one year or older.

Meanwhile, workers installed protective glass around the skeleton of a 20-foot-tall, duck-billed dinosaur. The dinosaur, a 70 million-year-old *Saurolophus Angustirostis*, stands on the second floor of the museum but overlooks the third floor.

Employees and volunteers were frenzied but excited. "It's amazing that with everything going on that nobody's angry or frustrated, but nobody is. It's like everybody's baby coming out," said McLane. She said that most employees have put in 90 hours of overtime in the past two weeks. She noted that her mother, Elaine Bowers, and her niece, Michelle Larson, 17, had flown in from Seattle for the museum's opening. The minute they walked in, they were put to work cleaning bathrooms.

"It's a labor of love," said McLane.

Some projects won't be ready for today. The 35,000-gallon aquarium needs to be cleaned before it receives its fish from the St. Louis Zoo. The third-floor, electric-powered train will be giving rides to children and adults, but a model train exhibit won't be ready.

Also still under construction is Mini City, a playing and learning room for preschool children. It is a family project for the Cassillys. In one corner is the bean-bag-toss clown designed by Bob Cassilly Sr. Across the room is Daisy's Reading Corner, named for the 8-year-old daughter of Bob Jr. and Gail Cassilly, the museum's executive director. Books and more games are on the way.

The Cassillys expect that the museum will take about six more months to complete. And that's just for endeavors already begun. They call it a "continuous project" that will begin to fill the bottom three floors of the former International and Rand Shoe Cos., now known as the International Arts Complex.

There is already a lot to see. Crossroads School just finished painting columns on the first floor. In the cave area, the architectural supports sport coral reefs, fish and turtles in greens, reds and blues.

The museum's opening will actually give many workers and volunteers a chance to relax.

Mike Miano, 44, the chief welder, hasn't had a weekend off in months. A sculptor from Texas, he came to St. Louis in mid-August to visit his parents. He stayed a little longer than planned. This week, he has worked 60 hours in five days.

"I enjoy working here," he said. "Look at it - it's awesome."

- **Caption: PHOTO, MAP, GRAPHIC**(1) Photo By J.B. Forbes/Post-Dispatch - Mark Pannebecker, a lighting designer/electrician, checks a whale exhibit Friday at the new City Museum in preparation for today's opening. A museum official said 5,000 or more people are expected to attend. She has had more than 75 calls from school groups wanting to schedule visits, some from as far away as Ohio.(2) Photo By J.B. Forbes/Post-Dispatch - Mike Miano, 44, of Texas, the museum's chief welder, works on some finishing touches Friday. He hasn't enjoyed a weekend off in months. "I enjoy working here," Miano says. "Look at it - it's awesome."(3) Map/Graphic Chart By The Post-Dispatch - New Attractions - Map of part of St. Louis showing the locations of the new City Museum and the restaurant Planet Hollywood.Chart - City MuseumAddress: 701 North 15th Street (at Lucas Place)Admission: \$6; free for children under 1.Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; 10 am.to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Closed Mondays andTuesdays.Information: 241-2489
- **Memo: COVER STORY**

- *Index terms: GRAND OPENING; FEATURE; PROFILE; LOCATION; PREPARATION CONSTRUCTION RUSH EMPLOYEE; WORKER; ST. LOUIS; PROFILE; CITY MUSEUM*
- *Record: 9710250591*
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