

Message is the medium at new exhibit at Family Museum

Story

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By David Burke | Friday, May 18, 2007 11:32 PM CDT | (0) comments

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Jeff Cook/QUAD-CITY TIMES Seven-year-old Quinn Rozek, left, and Lauren DeShane, spin blocks to change the expression of faces at the Family Museum in Bettendorf.

Sitting in the cab of a makeshift crane, Parker Reiss maneuvered the load in front of him.

Guided to move right, left, up or down by his comrades on the ground, he steered the five-tiered load to its destination.

Not bad for a first-grader.

"There's this load on it, and I loaded it into the truck," said Parker, a student at River Dale Elementary. "Kind of tough."

It's not like a crane was foreign to him — Parker's dad runs a construction company.

Those non-verbal cues from his friends outside the cab is part of the different forms of communication in "Get the

Message," a new exhibit at the Family Museum in Bettendorf.

"It's all about non-verbal communication, non-verbal signals, but it's still a way to communicate to people," said Jeff Reiter, development director at the museum. "It's not always about our voice presentation in that way."

"Get the Message," which continues through Sept. 2, includes many forms of communication, from cave drawings through text messaging, with sign language, newspapers, television and other forms in between.

The exhibit is a collaboration between the Family Museum and the Discovery Center in Rockford, Ill. They are among six mid-sized museums that again received a grant from the National Science Foundation to develop traveling exhibits for their size of display space.

Communication was also key in getting the exhibit together, Reiter said. Family Museum and Discovery Center personnel worked together for 2 1/2 years to develop "Get the Message," with quarterly meetings halfway in Dixon, Ill., and monthly conference calls to track progress.

"We had to prototype and see what was working well and what wasn't," he said.

The subject of communication and the numerous different ways that we do it had not really been done by other museums in other exhibits, Reiter said.

"It's obviously a necessity in our everyday lives, why not tackle that?" he said.

It had to be approved by the National Science Foundation, which needed to approve its educational content, "not just that the stuff there was cool and fun to do," Reiter said.

The hits of the exhibit are the crane, a makeshift TV news studio and the cave drawings, where children can electronically make their own imprints on a computer screen.

"It's basically electronic fingerpainting. The kids love it," Reiter said. "We love it, because there's no mess."

David Burke can be contacted at (563) 383-2400 or dburke@qctimes.com. Comment on this review at www.qctimes.com.

IF YOU GO

What: "Get the Message"

When: Through Sept. 2; museum hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays

Where: Family Museum, 2900 Learning Campus Drive, Bettendorf

How much: \$5 ages 2-59, \$2 senior citizens (60 years and older)

Information: (563) 344-4106