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BRIAN HENDRICKSON for the Emerald
A middle school student works on his science project Wednesday afternoon at the Willamette Science and Technology Center.

WISTEC offers summer science fun

Dannie Helm
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

A "Summer Science Sampler," completely renovated and redesigned by Sheldon High School physics students, will be on display at the Willamette Science and Technology Center June 24 through Oct. 29.

The center, better known as WISTEC, is located at 2300 Leo Harris Parkway, across the parking lot from Autzen Stadium.

Focusing on sight, sound and movement, the summer sampler features a collection of interactive exhibits in physics and math.

Students from Sheldon's advanced placement physics class spent 1 1/2 hours a day, three days a week throughout the spring term at WISTEC, working on the exhibit. They came up with some new displays, including the "Air Fountain" and another activity that allows visitors to make structures out of plastic pipes and joints.

Other exhibits at the center include the Bubble Wall, the Bubble Machine, the Gyro Chair, the Shadow Wall and the Lego Table. Sheldon students also fixed the broken motor on the Marble Machine, which was built by a local man several years ago.

Most of the exhibits had been in museum storage for several years. Although WISTEC was unable to secure underwriting for the exhibit, costs were kept low by the work of the Sheldon students.

The exhibits are designed to be simple enough to be readily grasped by young children while still enjoyable for adults. Each exhibit has instructions on how to operate it and what principles are being demonstrated.

In addition to the Science Sampler, WISTEC offers a rock and mineral exhibit, various reptiles and insects, a reading room, and classes in architecture, engineering, rocks and crystals, skullduggery and reptiles.

The reptiles and insects include both domestic and Australian walking sticks, an iguana named Beastmaster and an African leopard tortoise. Since the Oregon Herpetological Society meets at the museum, WISTEC also has a rotating collection of snakes.

The classes are taught by a staff of trained teachers and high school volunteers.

Also at the museum are the 20 winning photographs from the 1994 Nikon International Small World Competition. This touring exhibit will be on display until July 9. The contest, in its 20th year, is held annually by Nikon Inc. to recognize excellence in photomicrography — photography through a microscope. The photos are judged on originality, informational content, technical proficiency and visual impact.

Replacing the photo exhibit will be the diagrams and site plans for a proposed expansion of WISTEC, created by students from the University Landscape Architecture Department.

Expanding the center was the topic of their spring design studio, and some of the students lent their final projects.

The museum has several outreach programs including summer camps, Friday night and afterschool classes, birthday parties and an afternoon science program on the local Fox station, KLSR-TV.

According to Meg Trendler, executive director of WISTEC, 10,000 students came through WISTEC on field trips last year. They were primarily from the Eugene-Springfield area, but representatives were present from all over southwestern Oregon. WISTEC also has a hands-on activity booth and gives out brochures at the Saturday Market, and will have a booth in the Lane County Fair's children's area for the first time this year.

Additionally, WISTEC solicits funds from businesses for scholarships to cover the cost of field trips and admission for underprivileged children. Center organizers are currently in the process of matching a \$10,000 challenge grant from Molecular Probe of Eugene and are writing a grant to continue to work with economically and socially disadvantaged fourth and fifth grade girls.

WISTEC is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from 12-6. Admission is \$2 for children, \$3 for adults or \$8 per family. WISTEC members are admitted free. Call 687-3619 for more information.

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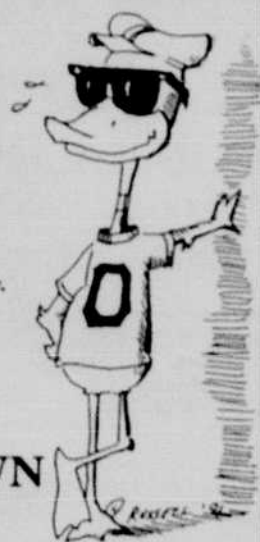
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