

Competing brick by brick

Challengers, families gather at Hermiston Public Library for Lego competition

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

This past weekend, Julie Lara was able to take a breath, finally. For weeks, she promoted an event at the Hermiston Public Library. Even the day before the event, as she was setting up tables, she said she was not fully confident people would attend.

"I just don't know," she said on Friday.

Even though registrations were in, and people were telling her they would be there, she said she was not fully certain the crowds would come. On Saturday, however, her feelings changed.

"I'm pretty, pretty excited," she said, on Saturday, after she saw the large attendance.

On Saturday, Feb. 26, The 2022 Lego Build Challenge took place. There were two categories for the competition — home builds, in which competitors created unique Lego designs at home, and the 100-brick challenge, in which they put together creations in a set time limit. Both contests took place with around 30 competitors each, which pleased Lara.

Lara, the owner of a Lego store, JB Brick Company, 295 E. Main No. 1E, Hermiston, saw the large gathering on Saturday and proclaimed the event a success. Creations filled the tables, and people



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Competitors begin a 100-brick build challenge Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022. The 2022 Lego Build Challenge was the first event of its type in Hermiston, according to event organizers.



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Xavian Peak, 8, shows off his award and his Lego creation on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022, at The 2022 Lego Build Challenge.

packed a downstairs room in the library. Competitors and their families were present.

"A lot of these people have been frequent customers of mine," Lara said. "I've

been seeing them buy sets. Now, I get to see the other side of things, with them building and working their creative juices."

Her husband, Bobby Lara,

was present at the challenge, too. While Lara buzzed around the room, meeting people's needs, Bobby Lara sat at a table and welcomed competitors.

"This is great," he said. "Julie did a great job, and it turned out well. We've wanted to do this since before COVID happened, and we had to put it off. This has been our goal for a while. To see it take off, it really makes me happy."

Competitors express their joy

Part of what made her happy, she said, was to see so many smiling faces. Xavian Peak, 8, and his mom, Gina Peak, were among the biggest smilers.

"This is fun," he said. "I like that you can connect (the Legos) together and make huge things out of them."



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Daniel Wattenburger talks with his niece Millie Wattenburger, 6, about her Lego creation. The 2022 Lego Build Challenge on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022, brought builders from across the region for a pair of contests at the Hermiston Public Library.

He added that he has made many other large designs, including ones of his favorite video games.

Xavian had made a 100-brick build that included a yeti and a tower. In addition, he created an at-home build of Adam and Eve, which garnered him a third-place victory in its category.

Byron Spicerkuhn, 9, was another prize-winning competitor at the contest. He said he, too, enjoyed Legos.

"I like being able to build things my own way," he said.

His creation was his interpretation of a scene from a Dog Man story. It took him two hours to create, he said.

"This was a lot of fun," he said. "I'll be back."

There were two vendors at the event. Lara, herself, was one of the sellers, as she set up a table to sell Lego sets. A seller from Yakima, who said he wants

to start his own store, was present to also sell Legos as well.

"This is my first attempt," Rob Gifford said, as he had never sold Legos before. He added that he was grateful to Lara for telling him about the event. He said he was selling a lot of Legos at the Lego Build Challenge, and he would open his own store if he could continue to do well with booths like the one he set up on Saturday.

"I'm impressed by how this turned out," he said. A frequent customer to the Hermiston Lego store, he said he was happy to see many happy people and their Lego creations.

Lara said she intends to repeat this event at the Hermiston library next year. Also, she is planning at least one other event in the area soon.

"The Irrigon library has already asked me to do one in the fall," she said.

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