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Banyan in back corner: Golisano Children's Museum adds leafy icon — indoors — to its growing foundation

By ELIZABETH KELLAR

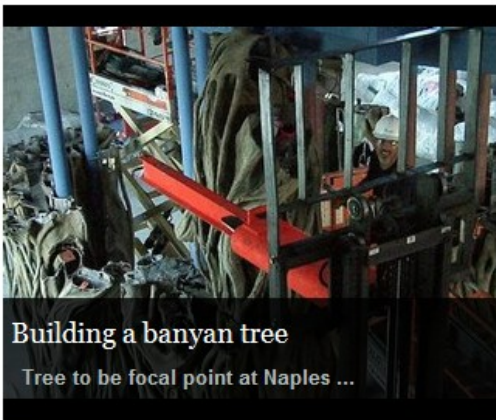
Posted September 17, 2010 at 5:47 p.m.

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PHOTO BY LEXEY SWALL // BUY THIS PHOTO

Nature Maker Production Manager Rick Hunt, secures one of the 56 pieces that will make up the bottom portion of the Banyan tree exhibit at the Golisano Children's Museum of Naples on Livingston Road in North Naples. The tree, which was crafted at Nature Maker in Carlsbad, Calif., will stand 30-feet tall and 45-feet wide, will have a 100,000 leaves. The exhibit cost about \$4.5 million. Lexey Swall/Staff



Building a banyan tree Tree to be focal point at Naples ...

NAPLES — If you believe you know banyans — those twisting trees with hanging roots that grace so many Southwest Florida' streets and yards — a new installation at the Golisano Children's Museum of Naples could convince you otherwise.

After all, what banyan tree of your acquaintance contains a veterinary clinic?

Also, what banyan you've ever encountered cost \$500,000 and arrived in Naples in 56, bubble-wrapped pieces?

Banyan tree exhibit at Golisano Children's Museum

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But that's the case for the museum's new banyan. Crafted



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very tip-top will be a tree house that's home to the aforementioned veterinary clinic.

Children will be able to scale the tree through a climbing structure located in the center of the banyan trunk, said Joe Cox, the museum's executive director.

"When they are looking out, they are practically at ceiling height," Cox said.

He described the banyan project — like the museum as a whole — as being an interactive experience for young patrons. For example, the tree's vet clinic is intended to teach youngsters about the roles in, and responsibilities of, owning a pet. The tree house will also have an image of a pond projected onto the floor, filled with swimming fish. When children step onto the pond, the projection will ripple, just as if it were actual water.

And, of course, the fish will flit away, Cox noted.

In addition to helping youngsters understand more about animals and the environment, the exhibit's tree house is also intended to help children cultivate an enthusiasm for exploration and foster their sense of ownership, Cox explained.

Coming next year

You can't visit the Golisano Children's Museum of Naples yet, because it's still under construction. Director Joe Cox couldn't give a firm date but it is expected to open in 2011. In the meantime, you can drive by and see the progress:

What: Golisano Children's Museum of Naples

Where: Livingston Road, north side of the drive to the Collier County Sun-N-Fun Lagoon water park

Information: (239) 514-0084 or www.cmon.org

Elsewhere, other planned museum exhibits include a beach exhibit and an Everglades exhibit. There will be an almost life-sized, indoor version of the beloved Naples Trolley, too.

The museum's largest exhibit will be space-themed, Cox said, and will boast a mission control area, a spaceship and a rover to explore the exhibit's mysterious "alien planet." The rover will be built from a hodgepodge of unusual treasures, such as a disco ball, skateboards, surfboards and other kid-friendly objects.

Cox described the exhibit as "space exploration as imagined by kids."

"Our whole goal at the museum is to inspire kids to dream, to inspire kids to believe in themselves," he said.

The decision to include the banyan was prompted by a wish from museum planners and community members to have something that was symbolic of Southwest Florida, Cox said.

"It's pretty much the most iconic exhibit," he said of the banyan.

When the tree was being created, Cox traveled to California to view the progress and be assured that the tree was appropriately "banyanesque," he said. The resulting trunk is a steel structure with a fiberglass overlay that meets Cox's expectations. The whiskey-colored trunk is a maze of lifelike roots, knots and textures, all of which were rendered by artisans using tools such as knives and paintbrushes.

Letters to the Editor: May 23, 2011

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Published 5/17/2011 at 9:17 p.m. 8 comments

Weather




Currently 36-Hour Your Photos


Currently
87°
 Fair
 Wind: SE 6mph

Today
89°
 73°

Thu 01:00 AM	Thu 01:00 PM	Fri 01:00 AM
		
Mostly Clear Temp: 76°	Mostly Cloudy Thunderstorms Temp: 89°	Partly Cloudy Showers Temp: 77°

Feels Like: 76° Humidity: 74% Precip: 10%	Feels Like: 91° Humidity: 47% Precip: 25%	Feels Like: 77° Humidity: 77% Precip: 25%
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 Brush fire 5/3 5/4/11 10:44 a.m.	 Fighting a brush fire 5/4/11 10:36 a.m.	 Storm Approaching Marco Island 4/5/11 1:02 p.m.
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"The detail is amazing," he said. "The whole thing was handcrafted."

An additional, reinforced cement foundation was poured specifically to support the weight of the massive exhibit, Cox added.

Museum officials have not yet announced a date for the opening of the new museum. The banyan, however, arrived at the museum on Monday and the trunk installation is expected to be complete by this weekend.

It will look much the way most transplanted trees do: leafless. The leaves will be added early next year, Cox said, in an effort to preserve the fabric from collecting construction dust.

"We want to make sure the leaves stay as clean as possible," he said.

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September 17, 2010
9:23 p.m.

savethewhalz writes:

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Why waste \$500K to construct a plastic Banyan to educate children when you can walk the kids down to the corner of Gordon Drive and 12th Avenue South? There you will see a live Banyan, perhaps the most beautiful in Collier, if not the world. Walk a few steps west to see exotic Lychee and Longan trees to your right. Now you're one minute walking to the pier where Brown Pelicans are hanging around along with a view of the Gulf of Mexico. Sunset is optional, also free. Why would anyone want to take their kid to a building to look a plastic tree?

September 18, 2010
8:04 a.m.

Treelover writes:

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Savethewhalz, before you dismiss it as a "plastic tree", why don't you wait till the Museum opens and look at it for yourself? Why would a painter want to paint a stary night when anyone can walk outside and see one for himself? Why would a photographer photograph Yosemite when it's only a plane ticket away? The purpose of the museum is to engage the children's natural curiosity, imagination, and sensitivities. Maybe, as a result of being there, one of the children will grow up appreciating what we have and want to save our vanishing wildlife? Maybe some of the children will discover their own artistic talents? Maybe even a few more will want to get away from their computer games and rejoin the life force and the world around them? Surely, as the world is trending today, without a real understanding by our young people, that banyan tree you describe won't be around in 10, 25, 50, or 100 years. If the Museum changes one person's heart, it will have succeeded in its function. Visit Golisano when it opens and tell your friends. Then go enjoy the sunset.

September 19, 2010
10:36 a.m.

BigCountry writes:

Thats an expensive fake tree



Storm Approaching Marco Island
4/5/11
1:02 p.m.



Storm Approaching Marco Island
4/5/11
1:02 p.m.



Early Morning Fog in Naples
2/5/11
11:17 a.m.

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Calendar

MAY	MAY	MAY	BROWSE
25	26	27	
WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	MORE

- Pet Spay Neuter Express - Immokalee Transport** 8 a.m.
Immokalee Community Park
- Traveling Exhibit: Sharkabet** 9 a.m.
Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
- Exploring Ethnobotany** 9:30 a.m.
Matanzas Pass Preserve
- Naples Daily News Photojournalist Exhibit: Capturing Our World** 10 a.m.
The von Liebig Art Center
- Museum Lecture Series: Man in the Everglades** 2 p.m.
Collier County Museum

[More Events »](#)

May Business Before Business & Mini Trade Show 8 a.m.
Naples Daily News

Traveling Exhibit: Sharkabet 9 a.m.
Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center

Treasures of the Shoreline Talk 10 a.m.
Lovers Key State Park

Naples Daily News Photojournalist Exhibit: Capturing Our World 10 a.m.
The von Liebig Art Center

Seminar: Five Things to Buy on Sale 11 a.m.
Marilyn's - Fifth Avenue South

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Traveling Exhibit: Sharkabet 9 a.m.
Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center

Guided Walk through Calusa Nature Center 9:30 a.m.
The Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium

The Art of the Calusa Talk 10 a.m.
Lovers Key State Park

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September 19, 2010
12:25 p.m.

Woodsnwater writes:

What a waste of money.

[Suggest removal](#)

[Reply to this post](#)

September 19, 2010
2:11 p.m.

goingup (Inactive) writes:

Take them to the real deal. We have enough reality fake in the world. Dumb and wasteful.

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Naples Daily News 10 a.m.

Photojournalist Exhibit: Capturing Our World

The von Liebig Art Center

Memorial Day Salute Concert 11 a.m.

Moorigs Park

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