

Cascade Meadow opens its doors

By Jeffrey Pieters

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A decade in the planning, Cascade Meadow Wetlands and Environmental Science Center in northwest Rochester is open for business.

An opening-day event Saturday gave people who hadn't had a sneak peek earlier their first look inside the two-story center, and a first chance to stroll some of the paths that eventually will stretch across a 100-acre wetlands site.

Is the center all that its owner — local businessman and philanthropist Jack Remick — had hoped?

“Oh, way beyond,” he said.

Initial plans for the property at 2900 19th St. N.W., near the Rochester Athletic Club, called for a wetlands restoration and small center with a classroom and restrooms.

Adding partners, including Rochester Public Utilities, the city's Public Works Department, members of Rochester Area Builders and the Zumbro Watershed Partnership, “it just grew,” Remick said.

Cascade Meadow will serve as an education center, with exhibits on ecology, environmental sustainability and conservation.

Two wind turbines and three solar panels supply electricity



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Marcus Uthke of Eyota works with an interactive display providing energy to a city at Cascade Meadow. His mother, Nancy, called the center “very cool. (The exhibits) really do show what you can do to conserve energy on a daily basis.”

and hot water, and a touch-screen panel gives visitors the ability to check how each one is working, and the financial value of what each of them supplies.

“We want to demonstrate what's possible,” said the center's director, Lisa Eadens.

The 16,000-square-foot building was constructed with an eye toward receiving platinum certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

program. If it qualifies, it will be one of only a handful of buildings in the state to attain the platinum certification, Eadens said.

Outside, the landscape is being sculpted and planted to include a pond and seven of the eight kinds of wetlands found in Minnesota. (The eighth kind, peat bog, is simply too difficult to establish as manmade, said Jeff Feece, a center volunteer.)

Volunteers will play a large role in the life of the center,

Science center

What happened:

Cascade Meadow Wetlands and Environmental Science Center has opened.

What it means: School groups, adult seminars and any individual can visit on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Admission is free.

What's next: Wetlands and trail development continues on the center's 100-acre property. If you want to volunteer, call (507) 252-8133 or visit www.cascademeadow.org.

which will have four employees, plus a fifth, employed by RPU, who will staff an exhibit on energy conservation.

Already, 50 people have signed on as volunteers, and three local Boy Scouts have projects on the grounds that will help them earn Eagle badges, she said.

The center will be open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and other times for special events, such as meetings, seminars and class tours. Regular admission is free.

For a slide show, go to PostBulletin.com

