

Business

Record playground built in Langley

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Sports

Winning Saturday

The Trinity Western women's volleyball team got off to a good start in the pre-season with a pair of four-set wins over UBC Okanagan and Saskatchewan



Saturday at UBCO's Gymnasium. The Spartans beat Saskatchewan in four sets

(scores were 25-16, 25-21, 22-25, and 25-22) in a match that started at 10 a.m. and then proceeded to beat UBC, also in four sets (25-21, 25-18, 24-26, 25-20) in a 2 p.m. contest.

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Community

Walk in works

A community social potluck picnic was held at noon at the Aldergrove Athletic Park picnic shelter on Sunday, Sept. 15 on behalf of the Langley-Aldergrove-Abbotsford Walk for Memories group.

The focus was to connect supporters, caregivers and people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias to discuss ideas for the next Walk For Memories to be held Sunday, Jan. 26, 2014.

Any person wishing to take part in the Jan. 26 walk, or for more information, can call Rose Puszka at 604-533-5277.

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Matthew Claxton/Langley Advance

Scott Forbes of International Play Company stands next to some tubes destined to become part of a new play area.

A Langley company makes things fun — literally, by building playground equipment for the world.

by **Matthew Claxton**
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When the staff at the International Play Company learned this year they had helped achieve a world record, they were pretty excited.

"It was a real thrill for us," said Scott Forbes, the company's president. "To have the world's largest is pretty special."

International Play has been quietly building a reputation in the niche world of custom playground equipment.

They supplied a vast amount of tubes, slides, ladders, and plastic mascots for Billy Beez, a vast indoor children's play area in the Mall of Dharhan in Saudi Arabia. That area was recently

named the largest soft play area in the world by Guinness.

It's just one of the approximately 60 countries the Langley firm has sold to in the last 15 years, said Forbes.

Forbes originally worked for a company owned by his family, making restaurant furnishings. They expanded into making playground equipment too, and when the elder generation sold the company in the late 1990s, Forbes and some of his co-workers started their own firm.

They operated from Surrey for their first year, but have been in Langley since 1999. Currently, an office and workshop in the Gloucester industrial park houses

everyone from designers and creative folks to the technicians who will carve out the custom components.

"Ninety-nine per cent of what we do is custom," said Forbes.

The designers will take a theme or a company's characters and build a play area around that.

"You can have a castle, a jungle, a cartoon look," said Forbes.

This week, staff were assembling a two-storey play area around a scaffolding of metal pipes, carving out a five-foot long cartoon fish out of plastic and foam, and working on sketches and designs for several projects.

The company is one of a handful involved in a specialized field, according to Forbes.

The growth in indoor play areas, or soft play areas, in the past decade has seen them built into restaurants, fitness clubs, auto dealerships, and anywhere else where young kids might need a break from doing errands with their parents.

There are also destination kids play areas, like Billy Beez.

In the early days of outdoor playgrounds, most used metal and wood. Plastic slides and softer foams, especially for the

indoor areas, are now the order of the day. But the playgrounds can be designed to be massive in scale compared to the old monkey bars and teeter totters.

"Basically, it's an environment that can be multi-level," said Forbes. "We've built them 40 feet in some cases."

Kids go in and out at ground level, and the three-dimensional maze is otherwise boxed or netted in so they can't fall out.

Partly to test out some of their ideas, the company opened the Great Escape on the Langley Bypass.

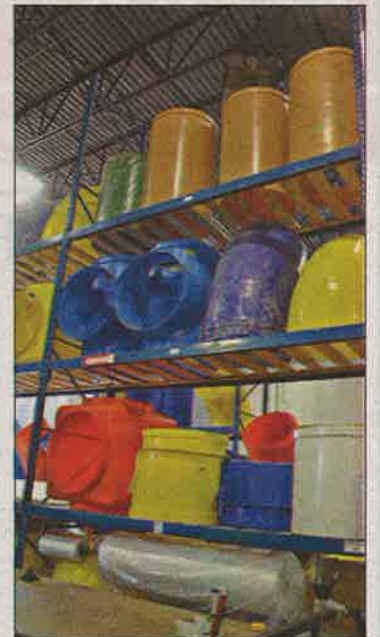
The play areas are now evolving from children's areas into giving teens and adults something to do.

"It's becoming all ages to some extent," said Forbes.

Air walks, which involve harnesses and climbing, are for older participants.

The company has even built some items for facilities that use them for corporate retreats.

The biggest project the company is doing now is for the Las Vegas Children's Museum. Dubbed a "Wow Tower," it's the largest structure in height the company has ever done. The entire thing will be about 52 feet tall and will be built around a series of interactive learning exhibits.



Matthew Claxton/Langley Advance

Playground parts await shipment on racks at the International Play Company's factory in Langley.

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