

CITY/REGION

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Aqua Babies hooking customers

Tiny self-contained aquariums require little maintenance

They're new and they're hotter than an hour in Thursday's sunshine.

Aqua Babies, miniature self-contained aquariums, are making their first appearance in the Whoop-Up Days trade fair this year and southern Alberta distributor Jeff Mezei says the little ecosystems are making for big business.

"Yesterday was our first day but the booth was drawing a lot of activity," Mezei said Thursday. "Some of the other booths were watching us."

Mezei said sales got off to a strong start Wednesday and continued to do well Thursday.

"We already had one repeat customer," he said. "She came back first thing this morning so that's promising."

The small square aquariums are completely self-contained aquatic ecosystems which house frogs or fish.

The key to the system, said Mezei, is nitrifying bacteria in the gravel. The bacteria breaks down waste and uneaten food, releasing carbon dioxide into the tank. A live plant inside the tank turns the carbon dioxide into oxygen for the fish or frog.

The only maintenance required is to feed the creatures a small amount every day or every other day and to change 25 per cent of the water about every six weeks. Bottled water is recommended.

"They're great in an office on a desk or for a kid to get started with a little pet."

The fish or frogs have a life span of about two years, but Mezei said they can be replaced with new animals from any local pet store.

The aquariums were developed about two years ago by a marine biologist in California. They're currently assembled in Calgary, while a southern Alberta distribution branch based in Medicine Hat was just opened.

Their appearance at the fair marks the first time the aquariums have been seen in Lethbridge. However, Nakagama's Japanese Food and Giftware has agreed to sell the aquariums.

The kits are selling for \$25, which includes a year's supply of food and care instructions. For \$8 more, you can pick up an oak or pine base.

Aqua Babies will be located in the Exhibition Pavilion until Sunday.



HANDY: Herald reporter Lisa Sicluna demonstrates the size of an Aqua Babies aquarium.

Kids just love a mascot — sweaty or not

Storybooks tell us there was a time when dragons got respect.

It must have been a long time ago, because on Wednesday at the Lethbridge and District Exhibition Grounds, I didn't get any.

Kim Laing, area manager for St. John Ambulance, managed to talk this humble reporter into donning the society's mascot costume for a tour of the grounds.



Jason
LOTHIAN

Herald Staff

Careful Curtis, a big green dragon, is a lot more popular than anyone can imagine. Children don't fear him — in fact, they love him. Parents don't pull their little ones away from his snapping jaws and oversized feet. Instead they encourage their progeny to walk boldly up to Careful Curtis for a hug.

Of course, the clothes make the man. And once swaddled in 10 or 15 pounds of green fabric topped with an enormous, grinning head, I was feeling pretty friendly anyhow.

And then hot. And then wet.

The scientists are right — climate change killed the dinosaurs.

Laing told me it would be hot in the costume. But she didn't tell me I'd soak a shirt clean through.

She did, however, point out the broken electric fan in the beast's noggin. If I grabbed Curtis' nose and pulled down, while rolling my eyes up as far as they can go, I could see the idle fan — and curse it for the poorly engineered piece of machinery it clearly is. Then sweat would roll across my forehead, into my eyes and blind me. Luckily, Laing was at my side every step of the way.

Mascots, even ferocious dragons, need guardians, she said.

It was Laing who pointed out the little children who weren't fortunate enough to wander directly in front of the costume where I could see them. It was Laing who made sure I didn't knock any of them over with my tail or step on any with my immense feet. Heck, it was Laing who put in a marathon four hours in the suit during the morning parade.

And it was Laing who answered all the questions. Curtis doesn't talk. For the record, no I am not Barney's cousin — there's that respect thing again.

Speaking of respect, I'd like to pass along some advice to a certain carnny who thought it'd be cute to let Curtis throw a dart at a balloon.

When dragons — admittedly against the odds — actually pop a balloon, it's just bad manners to not check the tag and see if the dragon has won a prize.

Dragons don't sibil for anyone. Luckily Curtis is a polite creature, not given to public displays of the flaying-and-eating-alive variety. Besides, carnies are high in cholesterol.

But for a moment, only a smidge of a second, Careful Curtis wished he could breath fire. I mean I wished Curtis could breath fire.

Then it was over, back to the blessedly cool, air-conditioned exhibition offices where the head came off and I reverted to my human state.

From there it was back to the office to write up this story — but I must confess: It felt lonely walking through the fair as a mere human being.

Who said and did what at Whoop-Up Days

Senator Joyce Fairbairn dropping over to give Reg Crow Shoe some moral support in setting up his tepees at Pioneer Park. The senator and Miss Rodeo Canada, Korina Tees of Olive, Alta., were just two of about 200 enjoying the President's Reception in Pioneer Park, hosted by Lethbridge and District Exhibition President Ev Nowlin.

Member of Parliament Rick Casson riding in his official car in the Whoop-Up Days Parade and then watching the rest of the parade at 9 Avenue and 13 Street North until the Reform Party float came along, when he hopped on and finished the parade again.

Elsie and Ernie Halmrast of Milk River enjoying Heritage Hall and the art display with Milk River friends George and Joan Russell. George took time to explain to everyone how he'd done a loop in the pilot trainer pictured in the air display as part of the Heritage Hall's show.

Amanda Rocchach of Calgary called it "awesome and cool" and Danielle Scoop of Stand Off said it was "fun, but it kind of hurt my leg a little."

They were talking about the West Coast Amusement's new ride, The Inverter. It takes five tickets to ride this new upside down invention, which has only been featured at four West Coast shows this summer.

Eleanor Reykjalin of Fort Macleod, one of the hits of the arts and crafts show at Heritage Hall. Among her oil paintings, on saws, skillets and framed by stirrups, are unique little paintings on swather blades. You can find tepees, school buses, grain elevators, old fences, cattle, cowboys and horses all in fine detail for only \$10.

Keith Zyla of Odessa Recreation Adventures explaining how his 24-foot-high climbing wall in the community section of the

Exhibition Pavilion can handle four climbers at a time, at \$3 apiece. The cement/fiberglass wall has seen more than 20,000 climbers reach the top in the past two years at places like the Calgary Sportsmen Show and the Lethbridge Air Show.

Ed Henderson's horses and moose all wearing red ribbons at Hobby World in the wood carving section and Coalhurst's Ed Knox wearing a red ribbon for his hoop dancer. And talk about a family tree, Edith Stewart's award-winning photo collage of the Stewart family, from 1904-1999 is really a family forest.

Sno-cones attracting some of the longer lineups on the midway. You could get ice and lime, grape, orange, cherry, blue raspberry, rainbow or root beer flavouring for \$2.50 a shot.

CNIB wants public to know it's not behind campaign

By DELON SHURTZ
Lethbridge Herald

While most charitable groups are usually anxious to announce when they're soliciting donations, a Lethbridge organization wants people to know it's definitely not campaigning.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind isn't going door-to-door or conducting telephone fund-raising campaigns, despite what some people may think.

But someone is soliciting money, and the CNIB is getting blamed.

Maxine Wall, fund development representative for the CNIB in Lethbridge, says two other blindness organizations may be canvassing the city and some residents believe it's the CNIB.

"While they may be legitimate organizations, they're not us," Wall says.

Although she's not sure which organizations they are, Wall knows of several which have canvassed in Lethbridge in the past, including the National Federation for the Blind from Vancouver; Alberta Sports and Recreation for the Blind in Edmonton; The Christian Record Braille Foundation from the United States; and the Western Guide Dog School from Edmonton.

Wall says when people hear the word blind they automatically assume the canvassers represent the CNIB. She urges people to make sure they

know which organization is knocking on their doors or phoning them.

Wall suspects two groups are currently working the city because canvassers are selling chocolates at the door and phoning people for donations. The only way she can find out who they are is to get some of the material they are giving donors.

"I have been trying to locate the printed material so I know what organization it is."

Such campaigning makes life difficult for the CNIB, Wall says. She says because the CNIB is a member of the United Way, it can't solicit its own funds in the city. If UW members suspect the CNIB is canvassing, it looks like it's violated an agreement between the two organizations.

The confusion also causes donors some grief.

Wall says donors expect a tax receipt at the end of the year, but when they call the CNIB they're told they never contributed to the organization.

As of Wednesday Wall had received one complaint from a resident, but while operating a bingo she heard from several other people with similar concerns.

The national director of fund development is also concerned about the confusion. Gwen Chapman says donors should ask canvassers for identification and ask questions to clarify the purpose of the campaign and how the money will be used.

Who's the best?

Which were southern Alberta's greatest sports teams of the past century?

You can help us answer these questions as the Lethbridge Herald looks back on A Century of Sports in Southern Alberta.

Team up with us as we celebrate 100 years of sports in the South with a special millennium edition to be published later this year.

Send us your choices for southern Alberta's greatest team as well as greatest male and female athletes of the past century, and tell us what made them great.



Mail your submissions to:
A Century of Sports
The Lethbridge Herald
504 7 St. S.
Lethbridge, AB
T1J 3Z7

or fax them to 329-9355. Submissions can also be e-mailed to Dave Sulz at dsulz@relusplanet.net

For more information about the project, call Dave Sulz at 328-4411, Ext. 320, during office hours, or 328-4418 in the evening.

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