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# Creation Museum growing

## Bigger lobby, extra space being added for exhibits

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**PETERSBURG** - Even though it's not scheduled to open for another 11 weeks, the Creation Museum in Boone County is already expanding.

Originally planned for a cost of \$25 million with 50,000 square feet devoted to the museum, officials say they are adding square footage, to more than 60,000, for a total price of \$27 million.

The additions will not change the expected opening of the privately funded museum, scheduled for May 28, said Mark Looy, chief communications officer and co-founder of Answers in Genesis, the Boone County-based organization which promotes the literal biblical telling of the world's creation.

Looy said studies project crowds even larger than earlier estimated, which resulted in the decision to expand the museum lobby, café and two exhibits.

The lobby was given an extra 7,000 square feet, the café was doubled, and two exhibits were redesigned over two stories, to take advantage of 40-foot-high ceilings. The nearly 100,000-square-foot complex will also house the offices and headquarters for Answers in Genesis.

But offices are not what people will come to see.

Other attractions include: life-sized dinosaur models, fossil and mineral collections, waterfalls, a planetarium and live exhibits such as poison-dart frogs, fish, turtles and insects.

Overall, the museum's "walk through history" theme depicts the literal reading of the first book of the Bible, which describes how God created the world in six days.

"We have already been getting attention from all over the world," Looy said. And, they expect, it will be the kind of place that brings visitors back for multiple trips.

Officials expect at least 250,000 visitors in the first year and opening on time all adds up to big dollars generated in the area.

"It will be significant to us," says Pat Frew, director of communications for the Northern Kentucky Convention & Visitors Bureau. "I don't think we can put a number on it yet, but it will mean a lot of people coming into the area."

Frew says the beginning of the summer is the best time to open museums or other attractions, and the bureau has an interest because it has long since adopted a marketing strategy to work with religious groups coming into the area.

"This is a great area for the family," Frew says. "This is a place where all groups, including religious ones, can come to enjoy

baseball, the aquarium, the zoo. And now they'll come for the museum."

Frew said that in January, representatives of 24 different national religious groups met in Northern Kentucky before traveling to a conference in Louisville.



THE ENQUIRER/MEGGAN BOOKER

Busts that will become part of a display on different races wait to be placed in the \$27 million Creation Museum under construction near Petersburg.

**By the numbers**

**11:** Weeks until the Creation Museum is scheduled to open (May 28).

**30,000:** Number of visits [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org) has received in a day

**100,000:** Square feet of the building (more than 60,000 used for the museum).

**250,000:** Number of visitors expected in first year.

**\$26 million:** Amount already raised.

**\$27 million:** Dollars to build (all donated).



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Workers apply plaster at the Answers in Genesis Museum. About 10,000 square feet of additional space is being added to the building to make room for the crowds expected to visit each year.

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"Many were very interested in what they were doing at the museum," Frew said.

Count Republican Congressman Geoff Davis as a supporter as well.

"Regardless of whether or not you agree with the museum's point of view, it is expected to bring over 250,000 visitors a year to Northern Kentucky. That could be very positive for the regional economy," said Davis.

For those involved with Answers in Genesis, the museum has been more than a decade-long project.

Ken Ham, founder of the organization, and others came to Northern Kentucky in 1994 after working for the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, which focuses on applied research in the creationism field.

The group wanted to help people and churches return to a belief in the authority and reliability of the Bible, Ham told The Enquirer in 2000. He chose Boone County because of its demographics, the proximity to the international airport and because of how many people live within a day's drive.

The jewel of the ministry - which includes publishing a magazine, books and videotapes - will be the museum and headquarters, first proposed in 1996. Now, the work is almost finished, on 50 acres off the Petersburg exit off Interstate 275.

"To see the light at the end of the tunnel is wonderful," Looy said. "The people God has given us to help with the project have turned this into a first-class facility, comparable to any natural history museum in the world."

But there's a catch to opening on time.

"We want this museum to open up debt-free," Looy said.

Because of almost 8,000 charter members, from Washington state and Alaska, to even some international donors from Canada and Australia who will gain no tax benefits from donating, most think the \$27 million goal will be met by May 28. For further proof of the organization's marketability, an active mailing list includes more than 120,000 people and the Answers in Genesis Web site receives up to 30,000 visits a day.

Looy said more than \$26 million has already been raised for the museum.

"Based on how the donations have come in, we should be there by (May 28)," Looy said. "Then again, if the donations should dry up, we may have to rethink it."

Looy said the group should know by the end of March whether the opening date would need to be pushed back.

"But right now, we don't anticipate that happening," he said.

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Chris McCormick (left) and Glenn Adkins, electricians with Sturm Electric, bend conduit at the Answers in Genesis Creation Museum Friday. Two exhibits are being reworked inside the building to take advantage of 40-foot-tall ceilings.

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