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Press Contact: Kelly Edwards
Lawton Marketing Group
580.275.2063

New Exhibits Are Arriving This Month at Museum of the Great Plains

The families in and around Lawton/Ft. Sill have had one less attraction than usual this year, but it's for a good reason. The Museum of the Great Plains is currently closed while it undergoes a \$4.3 million renovation, before it reopens in October as one of the first hands-on history museums in the area.

Located at Elmer Thomas Park in Lawton, OK, the Museum of the Great Plains first opened its doors in 1961, when the Comanche County Historical Society received a grant from the McMahon Foundation. Since that time, the museum has continued to grow and evolve, while remaining true to its mission—to explore the human and natural history of the Great Plains.

In 1997, through a \$2.5 million grant from the McMahon Foundation, the Museum of the Great Plains added 25,000 square feet of gallery space, a new foyer, and a new store. A few years later, the museum became a partner in the Oklahoma Museum Network—five institutions that work together to provide hands-on learning opportunities across the state. Now, through a generous \$4.3 million grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, and with major support from the McMahon Foundation and other private donors, the Museum of the Great Plains is reopening in October with all-new indoor exhibits.

“I’m really excited about sharing the history of the Great Plains, using the discovery-based exhibits built by the incredible team at the Science Museum of Minnesota,” said John Hernandez, Executive Director. “Our visitors will physically interact with history, and that exploration can be really powerful, and very different than watching something on a screen, or reading about an event on a label. Just imagine experiencing a tornado—safely—in our Tornado Theater, or looking for evidence of ancient hunters and animals by digging for bones and stone tools in our Domebo Dig Site. All our exhibits are truly unique, and whether you’re 5 or 95, there’s something for everyone.”

After years of planning and design, the new installations have begun arriving from Minnesota just this week. Crews will spend the next several months assembling them, in preparation for the grand re-opening on October 10. Meanwhile, the outdoor portion of the museum is open Thursday through Saturday, from 10:00-4:00. For more information about the Museum of the Great Plains, visit discovermgrp.org.

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