

A KIDS' VIEW OF “FORESTS FOR OUR FUTURE”

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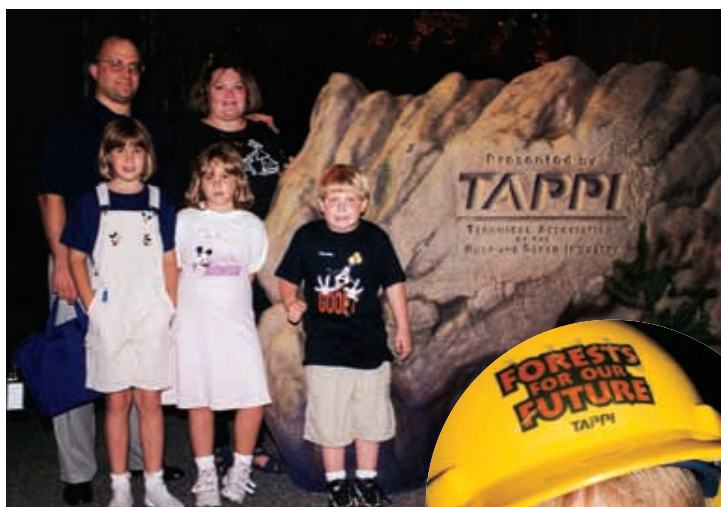
A FAMILY TOURS TAPPI'S EXHIBIT AT EPCOT®

IT'S HARD TO TOP GETTING AN AUTOGRAPH FROM Snow White or Donald Duck, but TAPPI's "Forests For Our Future" interactive exhibit at Epcot has succeeded in charming and educating children and adults during the first few months it's been open.

To sample how kids react to the exhibit, we enlisted volunteers from a family attending the 1999 TAPPI Pulping Conference in Orlando, FL, to tour the display and talk about it afterward. Our volunteers included 6-year-old Luke, 7-1/2-year old Alyse, and 9-year-old Emma Ragauskas. Their parents—Arthur (a professor at the Institute of Paper Science and Technology in Atlanta, GA) and Catherine Ragauskas, ages unspecified—also came along.

From the entrance at Epcot®, it's fairly easy to find the exhibit. Just walk under "Spaceship Earth"—the giant silver geodesic sphere—enter the next main building to your left (Innoventions East), and it's the first big display inside.

The TAPPI display educates and entertains, without overwhelming visitors. Every half hour or so there is a mock game show, with one of the Disney cast members selecting two volunteers from the audience to participate. During this visit, Emma was selected to compete. In the preliminary round, her competitor had to correctly answer a question from one of three topic areas: "Tree's Company;" "Bond, Plain Bond;" or "Thoroughly Modern Mill." Emma's choices all dealt with recycling: "Recycle Built For Two;" "Use It Again, Sam;" and "Haven't I Seen You Someplace Before?" Woody, a booming voice from the biggest tree in the TAPPI forest, gave hints for some of the questions and briefly elaborated on the answers while displaying images of forestry and paper-making activities. Emma had the better score and continued to the next round.

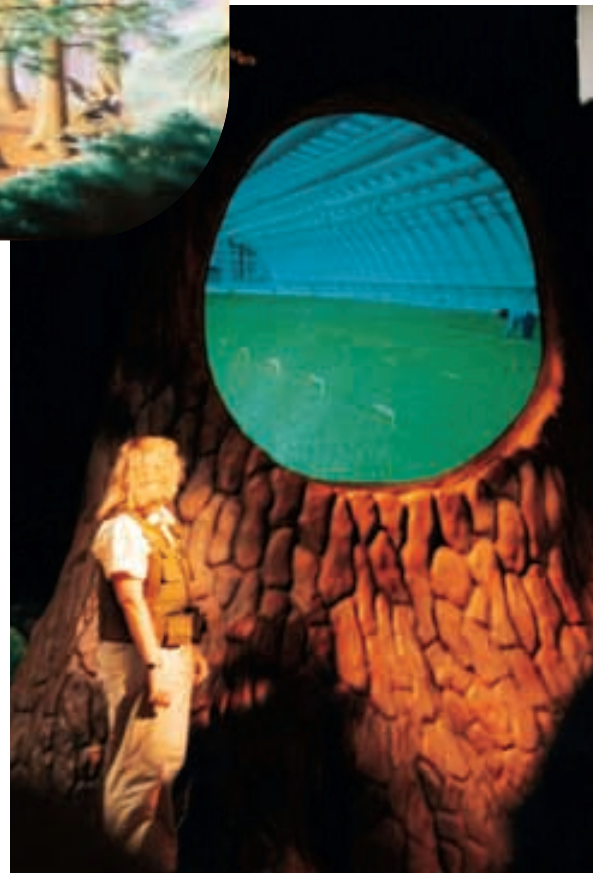


The Ragauskas family—Emma, Alyse and Luke in front, Art and Cati in back, at the "Forests For Our Future" exhibit



For the final "lightning" round, Emma was given a list of five items to draw in what amounted to audience-participation "Pictionary." She had one minute. The crowd shouted their guesses as Emma's sketches of seeds, a golf tee, a book, and a forest were displayed on a large oval screen and the remaining seconds glared red on a digital timer. With the time almost gone, someone correctly identified the fifth item—tree roots—and Emma was declared a winner.

In the intervals between shows, the kids had an opportunity to explore the other features of the exhibit. One is a video match game that asks visitors to select which of nine pictured items are made from pulp. The three kids positioned themselves in front of the three video monitors set in a simulated rock face. Little fingers began poking the pictures on the touch screens, selecting the obvious and then less obvious choices: stamps, cellophane tape, tea bags, disposable diapers, milk cartons, surgical



gowns, ice cream cones, tires, and other products. It turned out all the items include pulp or cellulose as an ingredient, which the kids figured out pretty quickly. And then they played the game again, and again.

Another activity uses touch screen monitors set in simulated tree trunks to demonstrate how different conditions affect tree growth. It works your brain a bit more than the other activities. By selecting different tree shapes and sizes and altering the growing conditions, you can see how the final yield from a parcel of land can vary.

The other main activity of the exhibit is a field tent that allows visitors to examine a wasps' nest, pine cones, seeds and sections of trees. A microscope on the camp table was a little high for Luke to see through, so the cast member moved it to the floor to allow him a better view and make it easier for him to use. She positioned a section so he could see the rings and then explained why some rings were wider than others.

Afterwards, we sampled some of the other displays in Innoventions, then had a snack and talked about the TAPPI exhibit.

Luke, who is in kindergarten, mainly enjoyed playing the touch-screen activities. He also liked the waterfall "picture point" included in the display.

Alyse, who is in second grade, thought the TAPPI exhibit "was really neat." She has been studying natural resources in school and was able to relate some of the things they had talked about in school to information presented in "Forests For Our Future." She thought the displays made it easy to learn and was particularly impressed to find out that "you can grow a whole acre of trees from a handful of seeds."

Alyse also liked Woody. She liked the play on words used in the script, such as "You're not going to get any more 'tree-mendously' helpful clues from me."

Emma, who is in 4th grade, enjoyed being on stage and was pleased that the audience correctly guessed the five things she drew during the lightning round. She "found out that ice cream had some things of paper in it" and was fascinated by the wasps' nest—"It looked like a honey comb."

Kids aren't the only ones entertained and educated by the exhibit. It also captivates parents and gets them in-



Emma, Alyse and Luke try the touch-screen match game



volved with their children as they try each activity.

Catherine thought the exhibit was great. "I liked the fact that it looked like a forest and I thought the interactive things were really good," she said. "The exhibit was quite effective. It's geared at different levels—the screens are at different heights, and they have different things to attract different age levels and different intelligence levels," she noted.

"I think as an educational thing it was really good," Arthur added. He thought the interactive teaching display about tree growth was particularly well done. And the exhibit provided "a good cross-section of all the industry: tree growing, a little bit on manufacturing, the whole issue of the life cycle of the forest, and then recycling."

"What I liked also was that it wasn't 'marketing,'" he said, noting that several of the corporate sponsored-exhibits left an impression that they were advertising the company's products.

The Disney staff who work in "Forests For Our Future" were another plus, the family agreed. They helped make the TAPPI exhibit "more interactive than at some of the other exhibits, and more informative, and more 'user friendly,' like when they put the microscope down on the floor," Catherine said.

"And the location is great," Arthur added. **TJ**

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