

Meuh to you, too

Showing kids how milk travels from farm to carton

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Co-operator staff

Sara Hancheruk carefully places a drop of fresh cow's milk in a tube. With a whoosh, the milk goes sailing past various control points in the dairy industry, ending up on a grocery store shelf.

The milk in this case is actually a soft cotton ball. The dairy system is a network of hollow plastic tubing. Rapidly moving air propels the ball through the tubes until it flies out the other end.

It's basically a game. But it's also a serious attempt through entertainment to demonstrate how milk gets from the cow to the carton, says Hancheruk, education and exhibits director for the Manitoba Children's Museum, where the display is housed.

Called the Milk Machine, it is one of 12 new galleries recently opened at the museum located near The Forks Market in Winnipeg.

The interactive display, funded by Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, combines fun with education in showing children how the industry works, Hancheruk said during a recent media tour of the new galleries.

"The idea that I see kids take away from this is that milk comes from a cow rather than off the shelf at Safeway and there's a process to go through to get to that part at the end."

The idea is to make the display as factual as possible while still retaining a few fantastical touches to tweak the imagination, said Hancheruk.

The first thing you see as you approach the display, built by a Quebec-based designer, is a blown-up photo of Janice, a real-life cow that actually lives on a dairy farm near Petersfield. Surrounding her is a swarm of dairy graffiti (e.g., "I'm in the mood for milk") in both official languages ("meuh" is moo to you).

You walk around Janice into the display area, taking care not to step into a cow pie painted on the floor. Hancheruk says the kids think the cow flap is really cool, especially the name: Moo-Oops.

Turn left and you're immediately faced with a Rube Goldberg-like contraption of clear plastic tubes twisting from floor to ceiling. These are the "routes" milk takes on its journey from farm to fridge.

Spaced within the tubing network are five stations representing the steps (farm, processor, retailer, etc.) along the way. Each station contains a moveable gate. Flip the gate and the cotton ball milk goes in a different direction.

There are also interactive displays showing how cows live and what they do. Push on a joy stick and the display switches to another illustration.

Sandwiched in between all these activities are information displays with quick facts about milk. Did you know, for example, you can get one Canada Food Guide serving of 250 ml of milk from 50 grams of cheese, or 175 ml of either yogurt or kefir?

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba's total sponsorship for the Milk Machine



RON FRIESEN PHOTOS

MOO TO YOU: Janice the cow on display at the entrance to the new Milk Machine gallery at the Children's Museum in Winnipeg.



UP IT GOES: Children's Museum education director Sara Hancheruk demonstrates a display detailing the journey milk takes from cow to carton.



MILK FACTS: An information display at the Milk Machine gallery in the Children's Museum.

gallery is \$500,000 over 10 years for the gallery naming rights and in support of the Manitoba Children's Museum.

It's a lot of money, but DFM chairman David Wiens feels the investment is worthwhile.

"What it does is it gives children and their caregivers the opportunity to learn about dairy farming in a fun and interactive way," said Wiens.

"We believe that this will help to build a stronger connection, understanding and appreciation for modern and responsible dairy farming practices. That's the story that we have to tell."

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MILK JOURNEY: Children's Museum education director Sara Hancheruk with a giant Milk Machine display funded by Dairy Farmers of Manitoba.