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Tahoma School District Gets New Elementary School Six Months Early, in LEGO

FORMA Construction's creative project helps teach students at Maple Valley's Lake Wilderness Elementary School how building projects are planned and completed; more than 15,000 LEGO bricks used

Seattle, WA (January 17, 2017) — FORMA Construction Company chose an unusual medium in building a scale model of the Lake Wilderness Elementary School currently under construction in Maple Valley, WA: LEGO bricks. Thousands and thousands of them.

With the idea of better engaging students, teachers, and the community in the project, the LEGO model has helped students feel more connected to the construction of their new school and illustrates in a tangible way how what they learn in school, including math and science, can be used in life. It has also helped demystify the busy construction site adjacent to their campus while emphasizing important safety precautions.

FORMA President Jim Phillips initially conceived the idea of using LEGO bricks—and he knew exactly whom to enlist for help: FORMA Project Engineer Jessie Robertson—a 3D modeling expert with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, and a life-long interest in LEGO.

The model was planned and built by Robertson and her girlfriend Bre Burns—another LEGO enthusiast—using Navisworks modeling software to convert the project plans into a LEGO digital design. The resulting 4' x 5.5' scale model (1/8" = 1') weighs about 50 pounds and took approximately 300 hours to plan and construct. Faithful to the school's actual design, the model includes a library, playground, and even a school bus parked in front of the building.

A gift from FORMA, the model is on display in the Lake Wilderness Elementary School library where students can easily interact with it.

Lake Wilderness, the largest elementary school in the state, currently houses about 1,500 students. Originally built in 1959, construction of its much-needed replacement began in May 2016, and is on schedule to be complete this fall, in time for the start of the 2017 school year. FORMA is working with the Tahoma School District and Tacoma-based TCF Architecture on this GC/CM project.

“At FORMA, we support our employees however we can—including in their outside interests and hobbies,” said Phillips. “In Jessie’s case, it was a perfect fit: her passion for LEGO merged with her 3D modeling and engineering skills to offer the students something tangible to relate to, learn from, and get excited about. Seeing the students enthusiastically engage with the model has made it all worthwhile.”

About the LEGO model

See the attached PDF for more details about the LEGO model of Lake Wilderness Elementary School and how it was constructed.

About FORMA Construction Company

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Providing construction services to public and private clients throughout the Northwest, FORMA pairs seasoned construction management teams with master craftspeople to deliver detailed analysis and job sites focused on both safety and efficiency. With an extensive portfolio that includes retail, healthcare, education, and infrastructure, FORMA has been successfully delivering quality construction projects for over thirty years.

FORMA's unique company culture encourages employees to share creative ideas and empowers those employees to implement complete solutions. An energetic workplace, FORMA seeks out challenging projects and matches them to teams of hard-working, innovative construction professionals.

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