

# New Hanford Reach Interpretive Center set to open July 5

By Heather Villa for TCAJOB

The view of the Columbia River is magnificent from The Hanford Reach Interpretive Center in Richland.

The perspective captures the essence of what the Reach offers – the focus extends to farmlands; the site of the Manhattan Project; ancient tribal grounds; the Hanford Reach National Monument; and to the places we call home in the Mid-Columbia.

That's a big story to be told.

"We tell our story through the lens of the Columbia River," said Lisa Toomey, CEO of the Reach.

The narrative integrates the past, present and future of the Mid-Columbia – and beyond.

After more than a decade in the planning process and \$10 million, The Reach will celebrate its grand opening in July. When Toomey was hired in 2012 to oversee a decade-old concept, she attended meetings – city council meetings, civic club meetings and more. She attended at least 300 meetings, where she spoke and then listened, trying to get a good grasp of what the community wanted The Reach museum to become.

Toomey, with a background in project management, looked at operation costs, downsized the project and leveraged resources.

"We're small, but mighty," she said. "This is more than we could have hoped. Everyone has gone the extra mile."

The Hanford Reach Interpretive

Center, which is at the west end of Columbia Park, has a 14,000-sq.-ft. main level with two galleries, a multi-purpose room, offices and a store. The Center also features a 10,000-sq.-ft. basement.

The venture has depended on partnerships with local, state and federal governments and community partners, including organizations, businesses and individuals. Plus, communication with the economic development and tourism sectors throughout the region is part of the overall strategy.

Those involved offer expertise in science, technology, history, agriculture, mathematics, the arts and culture.

The multi-layered entity focuses on a sustainable operation to tell stories, provide education and promote the arts. The Reach includes traditional aspects one expects to find in a museum such as permanent and temporary displays, but also incorporates technology, and many hands-on activities, as well as opportunities beyond the walls.

"We're a hybrid," said Toomey. "One thing might bring you here, but other



The Hanford Reach Interpretive Center in Richland tells stories of past, present and future.

things will bring you back. The Reach isn't a one-time experience."

The financially-sound operation and community-based activities ensure longevity.

The LEED-certified building is a scaled-down, footprint-friendly example of stewardship.

"It's all paid for," said Toomey.

Local companies, DGR Grant Construction and Terence L. Thornhill Architect, the building and design team, fashioned the two-story, 24,000-sq.-ft. building that overlooks the Columbia River. It sits on 19-acre site and the building is designed to grow. Revenues raised through fundraising will allow for future expansion.

The entire building teaches. The outside walls follow geologic formations and an inside floor is patterned after Lake Lewis.

A massive aerial photograph pays tribute to Mid-Columbia's agricultural community. An electrical cable follows a timeline of local power. A stocked aquarium offers a close-up look at local fish.

The Manhattan Project display is complete with nostalgia and oral histories. The Hanford Reach National Monument exhibit is testament to the geology, ecology and people surrounding the region.

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There's even a digital globe known as the Magic Planet.

"The content is mind-blowing," said Toomey, referring to the globe's capacity to answer questions about tsunamis, ecosystems and more.

A rotating gallery will display local artwork and travelling history exhibits.

The museum store will feature local jewelry and specialty foods.

Step outside into additional learning spaces.

Metal life-sized animal silhouette sculptures, from small reptiles to large elk, roam the grassy hill.

Kamiakin High School welding students designed and cut the 21 sculptures — a project that was funded by

Washington River Protection Solutions.

The Native Plant Society and the Audubon Society along with students created the Heritage Garden. An irrigation pivot, donated by Valmont Industries, completes an agricultural scene.

"We just planted corn," Toomey said. "While we're telling the story of ag, we're doing ag."

Nothing seems to have been overlooked. Relocated old-growth grape

vines are reminders of the area's wine basin.

Plus, there are plenty of grassy areas to relax in the shade with a picnic. The lawn joins a 500-seat outdoor theater, ready to showcase live performances with the Columbia River as the backdrop.

Even the bricks etched with the names of former CREHST supporters found a new home at the Reach to honor

A variety of educational programs have already been offered, extending beyond the facility. Toomey said that even before the museum had walls, more than 7,000 students have been served.

"Young people need to be part of the story," she said.

Students have had the opportunity to participate in ecology, history and design projects. However, education extends to all ages, with connections to educational institutions and leadership development projects.

People become part of the experience.

"We create enhanced experiences," said Toomey.

**"We're a hybrid. One thing might bring you here, but other things will bring you back. The Reach isn't a one-time experience."**

- Lisa Toomey,  
the Reach

a legacy.

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# THRIFTY SUPPLY

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Thrifty Supply Company's new 30,000-sq.-ft. retail store and warehouse is nearly complete at 2724 W. Sylvester St. in Pasco.

The new building, at the corner of Road 28 and

Sylvester St., will replace the HVAC equipment supply company's current store, which is located across the street at 2705 W. Sylvester St.

The \$1.65 million construction project comprised of a concrete tilt-up building that includes a 26,000-sq.-ft. warehouse and a two-story 4,000-sq.-ft. office and retail space.

Thrifty will use a portion of the office and warehouse and lease out the remainder.

Apollo Inc. was the general contractor on the building's shell and the owner is performing as the general contractor for the finish work. Pete Firth was the project leader and Earl Stiteler was the site superintendent. Firth and Stiteler are both of Apollo Inc. of Kennewick.

The building was designed by Gene Morris of Lagerquist/Morris Architecture of Seattle.

Thrifty Supply is a privately-owned company based in Bellevue. It has nine branches across Washington, Idaho, Oregon and California.

For more information about Thrifty Supply Company, call 509-544-9394.



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The Reach tells a story and then offers more through excursions, like Ice Age Floods jet boat tours.

The stories at the Reach will soon be part of a mobile digital app, which is being developed.

"We'll never stop evolving," said Toomey.

The line-up of grand opening events includes educational activities, concerts, along with various receptions honoring supporters. The planned activities are examples of the types of community events the Reach will offer.

Bring your blankets and lawn chairs-

• 7 p.m. July 3 local indie band "Run from Cover" will perform in the Columbia Center Rotary Charity

Outdoor Theater. A food cart, featuring hot dogs and ice-cream, will be on available.

• 7 p.m. July 4 The Mid-Columbia Musical Theater will perform "The Sound of Music" also in the outdoor theater, followed by fireworks on the Columbia River. Food and beverages will be for sale. Additional performances take place July 6 and July 10-13.

• 5 p.m. July 5 The official dedication and grand opening ceremony, including a blessing by the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Tribe, followed by hors d'oeuvres and wine, and a 7:30 p.m. performance by Mid-Columbia Ballet, Mid-Columbia Theater, Master Singers and the Mid-Columbia Symphony. Grand opening tickets are

\$125 each. For more information about grand opening events, pricing and to purchase tickets visit [www.shopthereach.org](http://www.shopthereach.org).

Following the grand opening, general operating hours will be 9 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; noon to 5:00 p.m. Sunday; closed Mondays. Extended hours are by appointment. Admission is \$6 for students and seniors, \$8 for adults, and free for children ages 5 and under.

Consider becoming a member to receive a variety of discounts. Additionally, "Dog Days of Summer" evening concert series is scheduled throughout the summer.

For more details visit [www.visitthereach.org](http://www.visitthereach.org) or call 509-943-4100. The

Reach is located at 1943 Columbia Park Trail in Richland. The nonprofit corporation is a project of the Richland Public Facilities District.

## Subscriptions \$25 a year.



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