



San Bernardino National Forest

USDA Forest Service

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Millionth Visitor to Big Bear Discovery Center

One million visitors and counting! Saturday, March 5, marked a milestone for the Big Bear Discovery Center. Marilyn and Tony Vecchio and family from Big Bear City arrived at the Big Bear Discovery Center to a waiting crowd of excited volunteers and staff. One of the Vecchio kids was the millionth visitor to the Discovery Center, located on the North side of Big Bear Lake.

Shortly after the fanfare and cake, Tony Vecchio said, "we've always felt welcomed here; but being the millionth visitor was a bit of a pleasant shock." Marilyn pointed out that they regularly bring guests to the Big Bear Discovery Center. When asked why they visit the Discovery Center often, Tony said, "There are lots of fascinating topics and great programs. Plus, we learn about neat things to explore that we wouldn't know about without the Discovery Center. It helps us discover the forest and have fun with our family."

The Big Bear Discovery Center opened its doors in May of 1998 and had more than 130,000 visitors during its first year. The Discovery Center is jointly operated by the San Bernardino National Forest and the non-profit - San Bernardino National Forest Association. Staff and volunteers from both the USDA Forest Service and the San Bernardino National Forest Association have now contributed to a positive visitor experience for over a million people.

This state of the art visitor center continues to grow every year. Future expansion will include a large exhibit hall focusing on the native flora, fauna and people of the San Bernardino Mountains. A family discovery room will focus on teaching kids about the Forest with a variety of fun hands-on exhibits.

Big Bear Discovery Center Director Denis Thomas closed the event with the following words, "Congratulations to the Vecchio family -the Big Bear Discovery Center's millionth visitor- and to all of you that have stopped by the Discovery Center during the last 6 years. I speak for all of us when I say that serving you is our pleasure. We can't wait to welcome the next million visitors and hope that you and your family will be among them."

Please e-mail Tricia Abbas with a request for photos at trabbas@fs.fed.us if you would like publication photos of the millionth visitor event.