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**Tommy Bartlett Exploratory Moves to Newly Renovated Space;
Iconic Robot World Building to be Retired**

WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis. (May 5, 2018) – Tommy Bartlett Exploratory has opened a new display area for 70 exhibits that were moved over from the original 1982 iconic Robot World building which is being retired. The new space underwent a \$500,000 renovation project and was opened to visitors May 5. In all, the Exploratory property, at 560 Wisconsin Dells Parkway, along the main thoroughfare in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., has 175 exhibits in three buildings. The original three-story Robot World building opened in 1982, an ambitious undertaking with a \$2.2 million price tag, designed to grab the attention of visitors and give the Tommy Bartlett organization an entry into the year-round tourism market.

“The original Robot World building was developed as an eye-grabber for us,” said Tom Diehl, owner of Tommy Bartlett, Inc., which is comprised of Tommy Bartlett Exploratory and the Tommy Bartlett Show. “But after 36 years, the unique structure has run through its life expectancy.”

The original on-site restaurant building was remodeled to become the new home for exhibits from the Robot World structure. The 6,000-square-foot space at the front of the property was the original Robot Connection Gift Shop for the attraction.

In October 2017, work began to fully renovate the building. The interior was gutted and completely opened up to expose the high ceilings in the pyramid-shaped structure. All-new interior finishing work was completed, along with new restrooms. The remodeled area is large enough to accommodate up to 100 interactive exhibits, so there is room for future exhibits to be added.

“This new area gives the Exploratory a much-needed upgrade and will improve our visitors’ experience,” said Diehl.

Some of the old-style animatronic robots that were originally the centerpiece of the attraction will be incorporated as decorative displays in the new area. The new area also includes a tribute to Tommy Bartlett, and his life’s work, that was part of the original building.

The Tommy Bartlett Exploratory remained open during most of the construction, only closing briefly for exhibits to be relocated.

The two other buildings that make up the entire Interactive Science Center attraction are not affected by the work. The second building, which opened in 1983, has two floors of hands-on exhibits exploring science and technology, allowing families to sneak a little bit of learning into their vacations. The third building, a space-science complex, opened in 1997 when the business acquired an original Russian Space Station MIR Core Module, paying tribute to the first efforts at prolonged space travel and living in a gravity-free environment.

The original Robot World structure will remain standing for the busy summer season, a last chance for iconic photo-ops. Plans are to dismantle the building in the fall. A portion of the novel structure – the steel support ring – may be preserved as a decorative façade with a nod to the past.

The Robot World building was designed for Tommy Bartlett by James R. Dresser, a long-time Wisconsin Dells area resident who studied with renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin. Dresser, who died in 2011, spent his career designing numerous elegant and unique homes and buildings coast-to-coast. He designed several well-known tourist businesses in Wisconsin Dells, including the Del-Bar Supper Club and Fields at the Wilderness.

“It will be hard to see Robot World come down, because it is such a unique structure, but we are just not able to maintain it,” said Diehl, who directed the Robot World project in the early 1980s as the attraction’s then newly named president. “We hope to preserve at least some part of the façade as a remembrance.”

Tommy Bartlett Exploratory is open daily, year-round, and, in addition to the displays on space exploration, offers more than 175 hands-on activities that delve into science, virtual reality, technology and good old-fashioned, brainteaser fun. The Exploratory is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. during summer and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. during fall, winter and spring. For more information, please call (608) 254-2525, or visit www.tommybartlett.com.

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