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July 17, 2009

## Google event aids Discovery Center

*Hospitality vies with security*

By Rodger Nichols  
of *The Chronicle*

The Google facility in The Dalles was the site Wednesday for an unusual event for the security-conscious company — an “open house.”

Most open houses don't require guests to produce picture ID and sign nondisclosure agreements, but the company handled the complex intersection of hospitality and security by staging the pre-admission sign-in at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center. The site has a large parking lot, and it was an appropriate site since the center was this year's beneficiary of the annual event.

From there, guests were conducted in what travel agents like to call “luxury motor coaches” to the Google campus itself.

“We appreciate your flexibility with handling some of the logistical issues,” Site Manager Dave Karlson told an appreciative crowd gathered at Google's comfortable cafeteria area. “It's really a challenge having this many people on the site, especially for the first time.”

Guests were treated to a wide assortment of canapés including such delicacies as lobster wontons and huge platters of barbecued and skewered chicken and beef. But the focus of the event was on the Discovery Center. A particular attraction was the group of raptors, from a small kestrel to a great horned owl, from the Discovery Center's raptor program.

And there were gift bags for those who made a \$20 donation to the center as well as large gift baskets to be raffled off.

Karlson told visitors that the local employees had selected The Discovery Center as a beneficiary of the event.

A short program featured remarks from Mayor Nikki Lesich, State Rep. John Huffman and Wasco County Judge Dan Ericksen, who all stressed the importance of the Discovery Center.

Center Director Carolyn Purcell told the crowd, “The current economy has been a challenge to everyone, but we took a direct hit when Majestic America went out of business. They brought boatloads of 200 people to our doors, and we really counted on that. We lost a third of our admissions revenue when they went out of business.”

But, she added, the changing circumstances have given the center the opportunity to rethink itself and to take the chance to develop a new business model with the help of the Oregon Solutions process and to build new partnerships in the community.

“Google is one of our partners,” she said, “and we're very honored to be the recipient of this community celebration and the first open house here at Google.”

She reported Thursday that the center had raised “\$2,109 in donations and three new memberships” as a result of the event.

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