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“Meet the AquaVenture Octopus”



A one-of-a-kind sea creature will be greeting swimmers at the Memorial AquaVenture Water Park this summer. A custom made 8 foot by 8 foot purple octopus is a focal point in the park as it sits atop a play feature in the recreational pool. The octopus is already a hit as its image is incorporated into the park's logo and will be on promotional material for the park.

Sheila Schukei, the human resources manager for the City of Norfolk who has been working extensively in choosing amenities for the park, said she had seen the original plain water feature with a large round ball equipped with squirting nozzles and a dumping bucket and knew it needed to be more appealing.

“For us, it is all about fun for the kids. We wanted it to be something that was more warm and inviting,” Schukei said.

Together she, Recreation Coordinator Pat VonGlan and Aquatic Manager Lisa Peters, worked with designers at Splashtacular, the company who made the slides and other play features at the park, to produce the purple octopus.

“We wanted something more playful than a blowfish and also more humanized with eyes so we decided on an octopus. We then added something that has to do with pop culture- the goggles although an octopus isn't supposed to need goggles,” said Kodi Theilgaard, the main Splashtacular designer who worked on the octopus.

Not wanting to make it a scary creature for the littler swimmers, this octopus isn't grey but a purplish pink color with bright yellow suction cups on its tentacles.

Theilgaard said the process into making the octopus was the same that large amusement parks use in making their park creatures.



The core of the larger-than-life octopus is a stainless steel frame filled with sculpted foam. The tentacles were made by using flexible long ductwork tubes. Like an oscillating straw, each tentacle was twisted in different directions to wrap itself around the play feature. Fabric socks were pulled over the tentacles to give them a “skin”.

A resin was painted on to give rigidity to the octopus before it was covered with fiberglass. After being sanded and airbrushed with acrylic paints it was clear coated. All the suction cups were hand painted.

The whole process from start to finish was six weeks of construction

that included engineers, a steel team, a fiberglass team and painters.

When it was finished, the ends of the tentacles were removed so that the octopus would be easier to transport to its permanent home in Norfolk.

“I’m sure there’s lots of pictures posted on Facebook of this big purple octopus going down the road on a flat bed trailer,” Theilgaard said.

It’s already mounted on the play feature that will include more than 20 different water toys this summer including a shower curtain, dumping buckets, little slides and water cannons. The octopus head itself holds 350 gallons of water.

The expected opening of the Memorial AquaVenture Water Park is mid-June.