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Creationists make stand vs. evolution in science museum

THE DENVER POST

Denver - God made dinosaurs on the sixth day of creation, the same day he made people, in Rusty Carter's interpretation of the Bible.

"The word dinosaur was not invented back then, but in Job 38, there's two large creatures, behemoth and leviathan," said Carter, director of Biblically Correct Tours in Littleton, Colo., as he prepared to give his first tour of this school year.

Either or both creatures were probably dinosaurs, he said.

Nineteen 10- and 11-year-olds trailed behind Carter Saturday morning at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, most of them nodding knowingly as their tour guide pointed out flaws in exhibits.

"What do you guys think? Is the world really 4.5 billion years old?" Carter asked.

"Nonsense!" one girl called out, and the adults in the group smiled.

Demand for tours continual

Carter said demand for his religious tours of secular sites has been continual since the company's founding in 1988, but the media's attention has exploded recently as school boards across the country debate how to teach evolution.

"There's a lot of people asking questions about science," Carter said.

Tour leaders say they're trying to point out flaws in the "so-called science" of evolution, which contradicts their understanding of creation.

Many scientists say they have deep concerns about the "inaccurate" way creationists are portraying science.

"Science ... helps us to frame our thoughts into a logical structure," said Richard Stucky, vice president for research and collections at the Denver museum.

For example, evolutionary science is the only way to study how bacteria come to evade antibiotics, a critical problem in medicine today, he said.

Evolution's proof? "The millions of fossils that occur in layered sequences in rocks that show changes and adaptations over time," Stucky said. Stucky, a paleontologist who studies vertebrate evolution, has seen BC lead groups through the museum many times, he said. He appreciates their work, not only as a matter of free speech.

"I think it's great that a lot of these students are exposed to evidence from the fossil record," Stucky said.

Stucky, who himself grew up in a fundamentalist Christian home in Kansas, said: "Spiritual beliefs are something only the individual can decide. Science, on the other hand, is a collective enterprise."

Dating of rocks challenged

Most of the children on Saturday's tour attend Foothills Bible Church in Littleton. About half go to public school, the rest to Christian or home schools.

Many of them already knew the creationist critiques of evolution. That scientists' methods of dating rocks are inaccurate, for example.

For Tanner Cameron, a fifth-grader at a Littleton public school, life's history finally began to make sense Saturday.

"Ohhhh," he said as Carter's colleague Tyson Thorne explained how fossils form. Thorne's story included water, mud, sudden catastrophe....

Neither Carter nor his colleagues make a living off the tours, which cost \$5 per person. Carter, for example, runs a flooring business.

The Museum of Nature and Science accommodates the biblical groups graciously, Carter said, although museum volunteers have occasionally confronted tour leaders.

"I can understand," Carter said. "It's offensive to them. We're kind of attacking what they believe."

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