

Yelm Cinemas to Provide Lineup of Sensory-Friendly Movie Showings for Kids on Autism Spectrum

BY DANIEL WARN
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Yelm Cinemas at Prairie Park has a list of children's movies throughout the year that will feature sensory-friendly showtimes for people on the autism spectrum.

"A sensory show is pretty easy," said Noah Aden, general manager of the theater. "We just turn the lights up in the theater and turn the sound down and that allows kids and people of all ages who have disabilities to get up and walk around the auditorium if they want to and kind of shout and be happy and laugh and not be afraid to be loud and disturb other guests."

The first of these showings will be "Toy Story 4" at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 29, at 201 Prairie Park St. SE in Yelm. These tickets are only available by purchase at the theater's physical box office.

Other films that will include a sensory-friendly showtime this year include "The Lion King," "Angry Birds 2," "Abominable" and "Frozen 2." Online purchasing for these films will be available, Aden said.

The theater has been known to utilize sensory-friendly showings for private groups in the past, but it is now moving toward offering them to everybody without the need of a special arrangement, Aden said.

The idea specifically came about when a potential customer

Next Sensory-Friendly Movie Showing:

"Toy Story 4"

10 a.m. Saturday, June 29
Yelm Cinemas at Prairie Park
201 Prairie Park St. S.E.
in Yelm.

reached out to the theater via Facebook and inquired about a showing for a young one in their life. The potential customer explained that they had just moved to the area and their old movie theater did this type of showing all the time.

Aden said that the people at Yelm Cinemas realized that making sensory-friendly showings more available to the public was a no-brainer.

The sensory friendly showings are important because they give the parents and the kids a place to experience the immersive setting of a movie theater without feeling excluded by anyone.

"A lot of the calls and Facebook messages that we get is: 'This is the first time I'm bringing my kid to a movie theater because we don't want to disturb other guests with kids making happy sounds and having a good time,'" Aden said, "The sensory-friendly showings give an opportunity for parents and kids to enjoy a movie together, when maybe normally they wouldn't be able to have that



Daniel Warn/Nisqually Valley News

Noah Aden, general manager of Yelm Cinemas, explains all that the movie theater has to offer, including sensory-friendly showings of many kid-friendly films throughout the year to benefit those on the autism spectrum.

luxury that a lot of us take for granted."

While the showings are mostly for kids on the autism spectrum, they're open to anybody who wants to come.

"I'm sure there will be plenty of seats," Aden said. "Our capacity is 440 seats, so we'll add more theaters if it does get really busy."

He said that Yelm Cinemas has a duty to provide movies for all people because it is the only

theater in the immediate area.

"We have a lot of folks on the autism spectrum in the community," he said. "Because we are the theater here, they don't have to drive out and seek out these events elsewhere."

Even though the process of putting on a sensory-friendly showing is relatively simple, sometimes it's the simplest acts that make all the difference, Aden said.

In addition, he said he's been touched by the response he's been seeing in the community about these showings.

"It's just very cool to see parents get excited about it..." Aden said. "It's important for everybody to enjoy the movie theater. It's not just one group of people. It's for everybody and that will hopefully give the opportunity for everybody to come and see it who normally can't."



The inside of a Great Northern Railway caboose from the 1920s is seen full of wood debris after the cupola was removed for transportation Monday afternoon in Tenino.

City of Tenino: Come Check Out Our Caboose

City Purchases Caboose for Eventual Placement at the Tenino Depot Museum

BY WILL RUBIN
For Nisqually Valley News

When the City of Tenino turned its train depot into what is now the Tenino Depot Museum, it reconstructed some old train tracks in front of the building, hoping to someday display a railcar of some sort.

That day will come as soon as next year, now that the city is the proud owner of a 1923 X549 Great Northern Railway wooden caboose. Tenino purchased the bright red railcar for \$6,200 at a recent auction. It most recently sat within the Country Village Shopping Center in Bothell, which closed earlier this year to make room for multi-family housing.

"Bidding was pretty fierce," Tenino Mayor Wayne Fournier said. "There were about 15 people bidding on it and we wound up paying about as high as we were willing to go. It's something that's been talked about for a long time. We had always been on the lookout for something to put on those tracks and now we'll hopefully have something out there by next summer."

The caboose is already awaiting restoration inside a warehouse in Tenino. It has the seal

of the Great Northern Railway — which ran from Minneapolis to Seattle from 1889 to 1970 — on one side with the words "Be Wise, Beware, Be Safe" painted nearby.

Fournier said the city is not going to rush the restoration process in order to present the caboose to the public on an accelerated timetable. Members of the Tenino Lions Club and some local train aficionados have stepped forward to help out the city public works staff. The city also plans to pursue grant funding over the next year to help pay for some of the restoration work as well as ongoing maintenance and upkeep needs.

"It's got to be a place where, if people are attracted to it and go up to it, it's not going to get beaten up and fall apart," Fournier said. "The doors and windows have to be secured, too. We don't want it to become a nuisance instead of a display piece."

What else the city plans to do with the X549 caboose besides display it at the Depot Museum remains to be seen. Some options that have been discussed include renovating the inside, which is currently set up as office space, as a room to hold small gatherings or birthday parties, or as a location for tourists to rent for a unique overnight stay.

The Depot Museum may also be able to make use of the interior for a rotating exhibit of train equipment and memorabilia unique to Tenino. Those deci-



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A Great Northern Railway caboose from the 1920s is seen on display Monday afternoon in Tenino.



Tenino Mayor Wayne Fournier opens the door to a Great Northern Railway caboose from the 1920s Monday afternoon in Tenino.

sions will be made as the restoration work continues, Fournier said, because he doesn't expect the caboose to be ready for use until next summer.

"You go through a lot of these towns in Lewis County and you'll see like a train engine in the park," Fournier said.

"An old steam engine is extremely hard now to come by. We want it to be something that families at the museum can experience and make it more obvious that it used to be a train depot. We don't know what it'll become beyond a show piece, but I think we'd be pretty happy with that alone."

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