

# Smithsonian exhibit begins today

BY BRIAN GRAVES  
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WESTMINSTER — There was a time when many in Westminster believed the city's landmark Depot might have left its best days behind.

Beginning today, and for the next seven weeks, the Westminster Depot will take center stage in Oconee County as it plays host to an exhibit of the world-renowned Smithsonian Institution.

"Water/Ways" is a walk-through path of panels, pictures, text and interactive videos that teach about the importance of water to humanity.

The exhibit struck Mildred Spearman as "perfect" for the Upstate and a way to show the community efforts to preserve the Depot are paying off in a major way.

Spearman and her husband, Jim, were two of the

original members of the group that raised funds for the building's preservation.

"It is a big deal, but somebody had to get it done," Spearman said of the exhibit.

"We get information from a lot of places because of events we have done in the past, and this just showed up announcing they were going to do this in South Carolina," she said. "We saw it and read it, and realized because of our water systems, we are almost an island. The thought then came that this would be perfect and it would be great if we got it."

Spearman made a call to one of the representatives of South Carolina Humanities, which was sponsoring the exhibit's tour.

"She was pregnant and working from home, but her office said she would take my call," Spearman said.

Current city event committee member Jessica Gymph was assigned the task of writing the grant request, and the Depot is now greeting visitors for a major area event.

"I can remember when we had food auctions to raise money for the Depot," Spearman said. "Now, I'm working on getting the volunteers that will work the exhibit. And just like the Depot, we're going to get it done. This is a great community with great people."

The exhibit will be open weekdays from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and will be open through April 17. Weekend hours will be announced as they are determined.

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## at Westminster Depot



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Longtime Westminster civic leader Mildred Spearman looks at one of the first pieces of the current Smithsonian Institute exhibit "Water/Ways" during its construction Friday at the Westminster Depot. Spearman was one of the local leaders who led the effort to get the Depot restored and bring the exhibit to Oconee County.