

Park Meadows unveils 'natural' eco-system

By Peter Jones

Staff Writer

Malls are not known for their eco-systems, unless, of course, one considers the life-sustaining properties of shopping.

Leave it to Park Meadows, Colorado's self-described "retail resort," to prove that the fish and the shopper can co-exist in a retail habitat. Majestic Springs is the mall's new fish pond and live eco-system.

A stroll down the escalator from the food court reveals native rocks surrounded by flowers and other vegetation. Colorful koi fish swim through fiber-optically enhanced water arches. Small rainbows and a loop of bird sounds complete this communion with "nature." Shoppers pause between stores and admire the view.

"We really wanted to update our Majestic Court and really pay tribute to Colorado," said Park Meadows spokeswoman Stephanie Jackson. Koi fish are more associated with Asia than Colorado, but the bottom-feeding koi are colorful and easier to keep than trout.

Jackson unveiled Majestic Springs last Friday in a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Douglas County Commissioner Melanie Worley and the John F. Kennedy High School Junior ROTC Color Guard participated.

Franktown-based BR&D Landscape began building Majestic Springs in February. The construction crew had to work from 10 p.m. until 7 a.m. so as not to interfere with Park Meadows operations.

Although the hours were



PHOTO BY PETER JONES

Park Meadows unveiled its Majestic Springs fish pond last week. The man-made indoor eco-system is designed to be self-sustaining and is cleaned with naturally occurring bacteria.

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decidedly unnatural for BR&D owner Bud Kiebler, the design itself stayed as close to nature as possible.

"What we did is mimic what keeps mountain streams clean," he said. "If you look at a mountain stream, there's a whole bunch of sands and gravel and naturally occurring bacteria. It's actually more simple to design them this way. There's less equipment, less chemistry."

The shopping mall eco-system will not require much more maintenance than a natural one would, according to Kiebler. Trimming the plants back is just about it.

"If we need to, we can feed the fish," he added, "but I'm

sure there's going to be enough bread crumbs and stuff tossed in there."

When koi are full-grown, the long-living fish can become up to three-feet long. Koi are not known as picky eaters.

Although the Park Meadows eco-system is more elaborate than some, Kiebler builds about 70 ponds a year, mostly for backyards. This kind of manmade-nature has become so popular that BR&D has become a sponsor of the Parade of Ponds, an annual trade show.

"Instead of trying to fight nature, we just go with it," he said.