

Brick Off the Old Block

The 12-year-old son of Santiago Ruiz, senior manager, financial accounting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, made a replica of ONEOK Plaza out of LEGOs®.

Every summer, Santiago Ruiz's 12-year-old son, Noah, begs for a chance to go to work with his father.

"He's always enjoyed being in the office, exploring the halls and meeting some of my coworkers," said Ruiz, senior manager, financial accounting in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Inspired by those visits, Noah constructed a replica of ONEOK Plaza out of LEGOs®, including various floors and workspaces on the inside – populated, of course, with LEGO® employees.

At first, Santiago presumed building a replica of the Plaza was just a passing idea, one Noah might abandon once the challenge set in.

"I was wrong," he said. "I watched him carefully study the building structure, calculate the number of bricks he'd need and translate those discoveries into a concrete plan. He worked tirelessly all summer. When he finally placed the last brick, I knew he hadn't just built a model; he'd built a memory. I couldn't be prouder of him."

Noah fell in love with LEGOs® after receiving a set for his third birthday. He'd follow instructions on LEGO® sets -- "Lord of the Rings" sets are a particular favorite – then eventually started building his own projects. He also enjoys the LEGO® Technic sets – a specialized LEGO® line designed to create advanced models of vehicles and machines featuring components that allow for realistic movement and functionality.

This hands-on creativity and knack for figuring things out is fitting as, per his dad, Noah wants to be an engineer when he grows up.

"He likes the process of understanding how to make it work," Santiago said. "He also loves watching videos about science and engineering."

This engineering mindset lent itself to the ONEOK Plaza creation. Ahead of the project, Noah calculated how many bricks and pieces he'd need for construction. Although his birthday wasn't until August 11, he asked for an early present of LEGOs® so he could begin his miniature Plaza – about 1,200 individual bricks on top of about 800 he had already.

Inside, details include a first-floor area with security turnstiles, with additional floors of workspaces – even a breakroom with a fridge and ice dispenser. Some employees are in costumes because, as Noah put it, "it's ONEOK at Halloween time."

Next, he plans on creating a model of ONEOK Field – all his own creation with no rules to follow, which he likes about LEGOs®.

“You don’t always have to follow the instructions, and you can change stuff about what you build,” said Noah.

Santiago is grateful that his work has had an impact on his son.

“I realized this was not just a creative project,” continued Santiago. “It’s his way of showing how much he admires where I work. It reminded me that I’m fortunate to be part of something that inspires him.”

###

PHOTOS



