

# Large as Life: Wadlow Art on Display at Mineral Springs Mall

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ALTON - The life-size polystyrene sculpture of Robert Wadlow standing in the corner of Mineral Springs Mall started its life as an art project by Washington University artist William Shearburn in the mid-1990s.

It traveled across the country before finding its way to Arizona. Instead of moving all of the art back to St. Louis, Shearburn decided to sell his pieces in the American Southwest. It was purchased by former Crown Optical CEO Adam Aronson, who brought it to Alton. It stood in the Crown Vision Center on Broadway for more than a decade before that location was remodeled with drop ceilings about five years ago.

"We added drop ceilings, so he couldn't fit anymore," current Crown Optical CEO Matt Matthews said Thursday evening.

Matthews accompanied the sculpture, which has clay hands and head and is completely covered with felt, on its journey from Crown's Optical Labs in Wood River to Mineral Springs Mall.

It's Raining Zen owners, Donna and Dave Nunnally, said they were alerted to the sculpture's existence by veteran Crown Optical team member, Kitty Edelen, who is active in community events in Alton. She thought it would look great in the lobby of the mall. She was right. It does.

"We're probably going to add a plaque or something by him to tell people a little bit about who he was," Dave Nunnally said. "We have people come in here from all over, so we try to have some artifacts of Illinois and Alton history. We tell them about local restaurants and things to do, too."

The Wadlow statue joins an Abraham Lincoln with dreadlocks and a metal sculpture of a Piasa Bird. All are available for photo opportunities in the lobby of the Mineral Springs Mall.