

The following information has been assembled to assist and inspire you in developing local exhibitions and public humanities programs to complement the themes of the *Hometown Teams* exhibition. The information is organized according to the themes of each section of the exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

Local Exhibition Themes and Ideas

As the theme of the exhibition suggests, our love of sports begins in our hometowns whether it is the local youth/adult sports leagues, schools, colleges or the pros. The run of the exhibition is an excellent opportunity to appeal to segments of the community's population that more traditional historical programs might not reach. Helping to shape this universally popular topic to focus on local people and events is sure to be a winner. Nothing gets folks in the door faster than seeing themselves or their friends and family represented and honored. Are there local halls of fame honoring athletes, coaches and winning teams? If so, work with the sponsoring organization to host collaborative exhibitions or programs. Many historical societies act as the local sports hall of fame so if there is not an entity with that responsibility, this might be the time to start one. Be sure to be inclusive to honor not just the winners and stars but also recall trailblazers such as the club team that started the first all-girl hockey team, etc. The run of the exhibition might be a great opportunity (especially if you have a local component) to host an upcoming class reunion or an important anniversary of a winning season or school rivalry. Who knows, you may attract new members and patrons.

The beginning of the run of the exhibition might be an opportunity to organize and host an oral history workshop as you begin to collect local stories and because the exhibition itself encourages storytelling both in the gallery and online. Oral history is a particularly useful tool to join generations in telling and sharing stories. You might be able to help create and package a workshop that other *Hometown Teams* host sites in your state or region could join. Take advantage of sporting events and other community gatherings to scan photos and collect stories for your patrons and your own collection. A contemporary display of sports in your community might grow out of this activity. Consider adding your local exhibition or history projects to the Stories from Main Street website.

History Day! Does your town or a contiguous town compete in and celebrate History Day?? Host a workshop -usually the HD themes are so universal it is easy to plug any event into the theme. How can you help local competitors (or encourage) to use sports to fill in the blanks?! Get non-history geeks involved in the prospect!!

Is the family audience a segment of the population you are trying to reach? Meet them where they are –on the sports field. Use a small amount of your marketing money to sponsor a youth sports team or to take out an ad in a program. What could be better than 15 kids running around the soccer field with your museum or library's name on their T-shirts!? *Go Team History!!* Photos of the team given to local sponsors might be a future exhibition.

Program Ideas

There are a number of films (see accompanying film list) that depict sports in American life – the sports we play, the ones we watch - and the exhibition celebrates how they unite us as Americans. To avoid any public viewing licensing problems, work with your local library or a movie theater to host a film and discussion series in conjunction with the exhibition's run in your community.

There is also a wide range of books for children, young adults and adults (see accompanying reading lists) exploring sports, fitness, athletes and fans. Work with your local library and/or bookstore or reading clubs– or host your own – to develop reading programs in conjunction with the tour of the exhibition in your town.

Ask to have space set aside in each respective area in your library or bookstore to showcase *Hometown Teams* theme-related books (audio books and DVD's too) pulled from the collection. Depending on the time of year, you might want to focus on sports being played that season. The World Series, America's Cup race, U.S. Tennis Open, the Super Bowl, the Masters Tournament or other championships provide a great backdrop. Ask your local librarian to focus children's story-times to reflect the sports themes. Consider adult programs too – encourage reading groups to endorse sports themes during the run of the exhibition. Have a computer handy to use the library card catalogue and/or the internet to help identify other films and books.

Along with your library and bookstore, work with your local community/senior center, or YMCA or sporting goods store to join in and encourage reading or film programs as a part of their outreach and workshops from health clubs.

The sports cards offered in the exhibition's introductory section relay lots of facts, stats and historical nuggets for a variety of sports – it might be fun to host a game show. Get a local sports radio or TV personality to add some local lore and emcee the event. Ask your local newspaper to reprint or feature important and nostalgic articles on local sports while the exhibition is in your community.

Each of the themes in the exhibition provides an excellent opportunity to work with local scholars and experts on the topic to provide deeper context and meaning. A few suggestions follow.

MORE THAN A GAME

Local Exhibition Themes and Ideas

No matter if it is your local school or college teams or the pros, icons and images abound in pop-culture merchandise of all kinds – fashion, toys, even food. An easy and entertaining exhibition might be a display of these images – past and present. Whether it includes baseball caps, Air Jordan sneakers or Wheaties cereal boxes the whole community can get in on curating the show. Invite guests to the opening of *Hometown Teams* to sport jerseys and other fashion objects from their favorite teams. This is especially fun if the town has divided loyalties. Have guests vote with their clothing and see which team is the local favorite. Again, get the local school store or sporting goods outlet to donate prizes and help support the exhibition and programming.

Baseball cards are still collected by young and old alike and continue to bring record sale prices. Does someone in the community have a particularly exemplary collection he/she might be willing to display? What about other sports-related collectables such as Soccer Barbie or board games? Host an appraisal day with a local collectables store. Perhaps a local dealer or scholar might give a lecture on this pop-culture phenomena to put it in historical context.

Nutritional aids, fitness gizmos and fad diets are nothing new, especially as Americans readied themselves for the twentieth century. Dig deep into your collection to find nineteenth and twentieth century advertisements and artifacts to exhibit this. Library bookshelves themselves hold evidence of these fads and a number of scholars have written about the topic (see reading list). Bring the dialogue into the last ten or so years. What does this say about us as Americans now and then? What fads were out there that we scoff at today?

Program Ideas

Sports in American life and how it is reflected in our pop-culture is continually written about and lectured on by scholars. Host a program on sports looking at how manufacturers and the media portray us as a nation. You might want to organize this as a series and focus more narrowly to explore specific topics such as the portrayal of women or minorities.

Considering fads in fitness and well-being, invite medical personnel, a nutritionist and a fitness trainer to deliver a program on today's best advice.

Organize a children's program around sports related toys. Have them bring in their favorites. Show and talk about sports-related toys from the past.

FIELDS OF GLORY

Local Exhibitions Themes and Ideas

Nothing sparks the imagination and memory more powerfully than "sense of place". This section tugs at our sense of nostalgia – the classic ball field where baseball is played or the field, the pool, court where years of athletic contests of every kind are performed. We remember the sounds of the crowd, the smell of the hotdogs and the chill of the rink. Pull together historical images from your collection and/or the local newspaper's archives to highlight fields and sports venues. Is there a sports facility that is gone or modernized or a sports team that left town that the community is still mourning and talking about? See the book list to find complementary stories that address this. This section lends itself nicely to the ever popular "now and then" look at your town. Be sure to explore why decisions and changes had to be made to expand or rebuild facilities. The exhibition has opportunities throughout for visitors to post stories but you might want to have a comment book on hand as well.

Host an exhibition encouraging local photographers, professional and amateur alike, to submit photographs of sporting venues locally or anywhere in the world. Reach out particularly to the school or community college photography classes or clubs. One can imagine the solitude of a golf course juxtaposed against sailboats with full sails battling the wind and waves. Are there iconic images nearby worth featuring, such as Fenway's "Green Monster," that every fan can relate to? Again, have a comment book on hand!

Do the same for visual artists. Host an exhibition of local artists. Spark interest by featuring prints by artists represented in the show:: Ralph Fascenella and LeRoy Neiman.

Program Ideas

A number of workshops can be imagined. Work with your local photo shop and photography club to organize photography workshops for all ages to help beginners find just the right angle or lighting or ways to capture action shots. Consider the same for the visual arts.

Is there a city basketball court, a sports facility that is gone or modernized or a sports team that left town and community is still mourning or talking about it? See the book list to find stories that re-enforce the subject. Host facilitated discussions on the topic. Record local memories to add to exhibitions and future programs. What about community efforts to raise funds and build facilities to accommodate new activities such as skateboard parks and other extreme sports arenas? Those too should be recorded.

The fields and facilities don't just take care of themselves. They are lovingly cared for by sports parents and town workers. It is also a profession. Host a program featuring turf managers from the local golf club or instructors from the university's turf management program. Consider discussions by historical landscape architects and other preservationists too. Think what homeowners might learn from this offering.

A community's love of its ballparks, gyms, and other sports venues spans generations and can be link to years of good memories and connections to family and friends. Encourage visitors to think about what connects them to their favorite places to play. What inspires them to love that stadium? What does it mean to them to play where an ancestor or a favorite coach or player was a star?

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME

Local Exhibition Themes and Ideas

A local exhibition of team mascot costumes and images might be amusing – or controversial. Team mascots are both celebrated and criticized with concerns of racism and stereotypes popping up. Has the mascot or icon of your local team changed over time? What are the origins of the local mascots? Stage an interactive station where visitors can suggest and design updated mascot images.

Just as you might invite photographers to submit photographs for an exhibition of sports venues - athletes, fans, cheerleaders and pep clubs might also be highlighted. Don't forget the coaches. All the emotion - "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat" can be captured in the expression of the coaches.

A collection of vintage sports programs, sports related sheet music and other memorabilia is historical and a fun and colorful side addition to the exhibition.

Program Ideas

The opening for the exhibition(s) is almost too fun to imagine. Besides inviting guests to sport favorite team apparel, the appetizer menu writes itself. Hotdogs, nachos, popcorn, peanuts,

Cracker Jacks and soda are a given. Are there local or regional favorites? What about involving the town in a community tailgate party? Imagine the library or museum parking lot with hatches and trunks open brimming with food! (You will want to check as you do with local health codes and food restrictions). Maybe a community tailgate collection of menus and recipes could be sold to benefit the sports boosters and alumni clubs. See the Cooperstown Curriculum for food ideas in the Curriculum Section. Another cookbook to create is one for healthy, fast dinners on the fly for those afternoons that youth and school sports dip into the family dinner hour. Moms in the stands already trade Slow Cooker and quick dinner recipes – collect them!

This section recognizes the fans, cheerleaders and pep clubs including all the traditions and the superstitions related to hometown sports. Collect them! Host a concert by the local pep or community band complete with a community sing-a-long of *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* and popular fight songs and cheers. Don't forget the organist that plays at the hockey and baseball games! Is there local lore or history related to these songs and chants? Collect them too.

Team mascots are both celebrated and criticized. Concerns of racism and stereotypes pop up in heated debates. Has the mascot or icon of your local team changed over time? What are the origins of the local mascots? A facilitated discussion of these issues with marketers, scholars, fans and representatives of offended groups might clear the air. Have a crafts activity with children to name and design new mascots. Have them create posters and masks.

What if the local mascot(s) was the storyteller of children's programming? Besides reading appropriate children's books, he/she might tell his or her own personal narrative as the team mascot. Maybe the mascot can work with a local author to create an illustrated children's book!

PLAYING THE GAME

Local Exhibition Themes and Ideas

Hometown Teams highlights a number of athletes that competed and excelled against all odds. Focus a local exhibition on “ground breakers” - women and girls, minorities and challenged athletes. Are there any superstars that should be honored? – Someone that competed in the Olympics? a runner that performed well in the Boston or New York marathon? Is there a Special Olympian or Unified Sports athlete that should not only be recognized but can draw attention to opportunities for challenged competitors?

The evolution of sporting equipment is a natural exhibition and one that can help start inter-generational discussions. It does beg the debate over sports safety and injuries.

Be sure to honor the coaches throughout the run of the show. In some communities coaches are local heroes. Do you know who many of your local fields and gymnasiums are named after? Not only are coaches recognized for winning teams but as important teachers and role models in the athletes' lives. Add a local component featuring coaches. Don't overlook the umpires and referees too. Not only do they exercise the rules but keep the game safe.

Program Ideas

Host a panel discussion on the 1972 ground breaking Title IX legislation leveling the playing field, so to speak, for girls and women. Invite a woman athlete whose career predated the

legislation, a first or second generation athlete that benefited from Title IX and a current woman athlete. Another discussion might include the challenges faced by minority athletes or anyone competing in an arena not overtly receptive to his/her participation. The reading and film list will help focus this discussion.

This section might be an opportunity to bring the message of the dangers of performance enhancing drugs and supplements to young athletes. Someone that had sports injuries, particularly concussions, which is frequently in the news and on talk-shows. Work with medical professionals and coaches to find ways to bring these me ages homes.

While sports focus heavily on winning, and at least learning from defeat, “play fair” and non-competitive games are increasingly taught to young children (see curriculum resources). Work with the school to find instructors to help organize the programs at your site or in conjunction with youth centers and schools.

How sports are covered and written about in the media is an interesting topic and has become increasingly more inclusive recently – especially with the popularity of women's sports (school, collegiate and new pro sports teams). Host a program with TV and radio personalities, sports writers and authors.

Sports convey character to athletes and fans. What values do visitors derive from sports? What do they mean to our communities? Invite speakers to talk about how sports helped mold their personal character and inspired them to help/work with others. Organize a forum that looks at the positive and negative impact of sports on our behavior and our culture. Ask visitors to share what they think those positive values mean in the community.

ROOT, ROOT, ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM (Community Pride)

Local Exhibition Themes and Ideas

Whether it is the Yankees and Red Sox, Army and Navy or local high schools this section again focuses on rivalries. Is there a long history or interesting reason that the competition exists in your town? Organize an exhibition featuring notable rivalries in your community. Are there rituals (bonfires, parades, pep rallies) associated with the big game? Include those photographs and props in the show.

Our interest in sports and fitness does not end at high school graduation. Highlight active elders in your community in an exhibition. Are there senior men's/women's athletic teams? Octogenarian competitors?

Hometown Teams concludes with what they refer to as a “sports explosion”. It chronicles the rise in popularity in youth soccer, lacrosse and NASCAR racing. It also explores rise in new extreme sports. What is popular in your community? Encourage folks to exhibit photographs and equipment.

Program Ideas

Besides geographic distinctions, are there historical reasons that your town has divided loyalties between local or pro teams? Were there industrial or town teams that led to these differences?

Start Sunday afternoon fireside chats and invite old timers in to reminisce about the old days including local rivalries and teams from the past. Museum or library staff might want to use this time to collect stories and identify residents to conduct future in depth oral histories.

Simply show up! Get your staff and volunteers to attend local sporting events. Not only is this a great way to market the exhibition at your site, but to really get to get a feel for the enthusiasm for athletics in your town. Get your museum or library in the local parade! What better marketing than to have staff and volunteers dress up in vintage costumes and march in the Little League opening parade or Homecoming events. Show that history can be fun.

Host a vintage ballgame or other sport. Lots of states have a number of vintage teams that play each other regularly. Sponsor one in your town. Provide an opportunity for the players to describe what is the same and different between now and then and another historical trivia about the teams they are representing. Invite children to experience the old fashioned rules and equipment.

Host a discussion of extreme sports. Have competitors talk about what attracts them to the sports – the thrills, dangers and training for competition. There are several films, particularly comedies, on these activities.

Have visitors think about emerging sports like slamball and footvolley that combine elements of familiar games like basketball, tennis and hockey to create new sports. Let visitors create a sport of their own from a mashup of different activities from familiar sports. Give visitors or students a sheet of paper to draw out their sport and give it a name. Post them near the exhibition.

Work with fantasy sports leagues. Host a discussion of importance of statistics and the other nuances that go in to sports strategy. Have a discussion on the future of sports with rising salaries, increased competition, recruitment of foreign-born players etc.

Focus children's programming on fair play, good sportsmanship, teamwork, and determination. Several children's books address these issues.

Find a way to honor the unsung heroes – parents and local sponsors – that give their time and money to make this all possible.