



Smithsonian Institution

# MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

INSPIRING CULTURAL INNOVATION  
IN SMALL-TOWN AMERICA  
SINCE 1994



Museum on Main Street has revitalized the spirit of what once  
was and hopefully will be again, pride in our small town.”

—GREG MESSENGER, PRESTON COUNTY SPORTS MUSEUM, WEST VIRGINIA

25  
YEARS





# YEARS

1994  
2019

Each year, millions of people journey to the Smithsonian's museums in Washington, DC, and New York City, visiting exhibitions and participating in educational programs that help define the American experience. There are many more people who will never have the chance to come to the Smithsonian, and we are deeply committed to engaging with people in their own communities, from large cities to small, rural towns. Programs like Museum on Main Street (MoMS) from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service invite all Americans to experience the Smithsonian, to participate in conversations on topics of national importance, and to add their own voices to our always-developing national narrative. With its impassioned focus on local history, education and community redevelopment, Museum on Main Street is one of the Smithsonian's most inspirational and enduring outreach programs.

**David J. Skorton**

*Smithsonian Institution Secretary*

Celebrating its 25th year, Museum on Main Street (MoMS) has been a catalyst for real change in more than 1,600 communities across all 50 states, and I've seen firsthand that this grassroots program has the power to bring communities together in an absolutely unprecedented way. People from all walks of life—from teachers and librarians to business owners and government officials—get involved when the Smithsonian comes to town. One neighbor helps with advertising, another with installing the exhibition, yet another with creating local events like lectures, parades, art installations, and concerts. This heartfelt community engagement not only inspires a deeper understanding of local history, but also a renewed sense of collective spirit. With that, the MoMS program has given millions of Americans an opportunity to discover how understanding the past can be a solid investment in the future.

**Myriam Springuel**

*Director, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and Smithsonian Affiliations*



## WHAT IS MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET?

Museum on Main Street (MoMS) is a collaboration between the Smithsonian and state humanities councils that brings traveling exhibitions and humanities programs to small-town America. This powerful outreach program engages audiences and brings revitalized attention to rural communities.

Traveling exhibitions bring Smithsonian scholarship and expertise. State partners provide respected scholars, professional assistance, and grant support to help local hosts. Small towns bring their local history and culture to the table along with energy and enthusiasm that delight and educate their local audiences.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SMITHSONIAN COMES TO TOWN? PLENTY!

The host museum becomes the focal point of community energy. Traveling exhibitions inspire creative programs that change lives, open dialogue, and transform communities. Local collaborations revitalize places with innovative ways of thinking. Culture becomes a driving force in improving communities through strategic partnerships and outreach to new audiences. Communities rediscover their own stories, contemplate what they mean, and create a new vision for the future.



It's more than just the opening of a new exhibition but an opportunity for an entire community to come together and celebrate its past, present, and future. The town of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, officially launches its showing of *Journey Stories* with a high-spirited ribbon cutting.

*Courtesy Creek Council House Museum*



MoMS exhibitions inspire dialogue, engagement, and more than a little fun. Teens in Dade City, Florida, mull over trivia questions at *Hometown Teams*.

*Courtesy Florida Humanities Council and Chris Zuppa Pictures*



# SUPPORTING THE HUMANITIES IN SMALL AND RURAL TOWNS FOR 25 YEARS



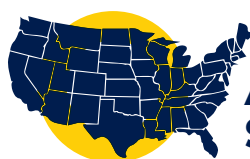
"1994 was an important year in D.C. Two national programs—the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Smithsonian, which both supported history and culture and whose mission was communicating knowledge to the American people—came together. They realized that the humanities were not just a movement of elite artists but that they belonged to all the people. It's rare that there's that kind of intersection of interests, but that synchronicity is when the magic happened. It's just golden . . . I look at this moment in history where that idea of humanities belonging to the local community was born in a big way.

We all wanted to reach more deeply into America, to get closer to people. The creation of the Museum on Main Street program was the proving ground for what it would look like when it happened right. It's a win-win for the country! There's nothing quite like it anywhere. It's the story of America."

—JAMIL ZAINALDIN, GEORGIA HUMANITIES (RET.)



**One fifth of Americans live in rural areas.**



**All 50 States**

Museum on Main Street exhibitions cover a variety of broad topics and are designed to be flexible and easy to install. MoMS has visited all 50 states and Guam.



**One half of all U.S. museums are located in small towns.**





# THE MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET STORY IS ABOUT THE SPIRIT AND STRENGTH OF SMALL-TOWN COMMUNITIES.

Back in 1994, we only dreamt of what Museum on Main Street could be. We wanted to build high-quality exhibitions and send them to rural communities, but we had no idea that the program would evolve into so much more. It's become a partnership in the truest sense of the word. We couldn't do any of it without the tireless efforts of state humanities councils who help train community members, assist with funding, and inspire engaging local programs and educational activities. It's because of the humanities councils that MoMS exhibitions make it to towns across the country.

And, what can I say about the communities that host our exhibitions? Unbelievable, truly. We're so humbled by the sense of teamwork, volunteerism, and local pride that comes to fruition at small museums, libraries, and community centers. The American spirit is alive and thriving in these towns, and we are honored to help inspire it.

—CAROL HARSH, DIRECTOR, MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



“Museum on Main Street is what public humanities ought to look like. I can't think of a better example.”

—BRIAN BOYLES, LOUISIANA ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES




**8,300 people**  
MEDIAN TOWN SIZE

The median size of a MoMS host community is around 8,300 people. Despite their small size, these towns produce big ideas for programs that reflect community pride and spirit.

Kyle Yates Photography: Kenneth Sponsler/Shutterstock.com





It's all about teamwork! In Minnesota, staffers assemble part of the *Water/Ways* exhibition.

Courtesy Minnesota Humanities Center

"It's important for the Smithsonian to know that anything that goes into a small, rural community helps against the feeling of being forgotten or unimportant."

—PATRICIA PEOPLES, TEACHER, FLORALA, ALABAMA

# BUILDING CONFIDENCE ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



State humanities councils give communities the tools to succeed. The High Springs Museum in Florida built an underwater cave entrance to their version of the *Water/Ways* exhibition.

Courtesy Florida Humanities Council

"This exhibition has revitalized our community's trust and faith in us."

—SHAKIA GULLETTE, BANNEKER-DOUGLAS MUSEUM, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND



The "MoMS experience" often means learning a new skill, like creating secure object displays or writing text for exhibition panels. Participants in Annapolis, Maryland, put the final touches on their *Hometown Teams* installation. *Museum on Main Street photo*



# THE SMITHSONIAN AND STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS SHARE KNOWLEDGE, RESOURCES, AND EXPERTISE TO GUARANTEE SUCCESS.

"I felt triumphant that we had pulled it off after so many months of planning, and I felt grateful that so much fantastic information was about to be shared with my community. I felt humbled at how much I didn't know I didn't know. I would see that same experience through the faces of our visitors over the next several weeks.

—EMILY BUERMANN, BECKER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM, DETROIT LAKES, MINNESOTA

"We did not have a museum, a library, or an exhibit hall. What we did have was an old middle school. Making that space accessible took a lot of effort with building ramps, updating lighting, and creating faux walls for the exhibition space. I was so proud that we turned this old gym into a museum. This was one of our greatest accomplishments."

—JOE JENNISON, FIRST STREET COMMUNITY CENTER, MOUNT VERNON, IOWA

"Sometimes people are intimidated, nervous about managing something this big, this important . . . We find out about their great ideas and try to make those ideas happen!"

—CAROL TAGGART, MICHIGAN HUMANITIES COUNCIL

"We help train communities to do project management, interpretation, fabrication, finding out who the audience is. It's not just about content development."

—MEGAN VAN FRANK, UTAH HUMANITIES

"These are small institutions that are the sole gatekeepers of local history, a town's entire legacy. To know that they can come and talk to other organizations involved with this exhibit, to know that they are not alone in this effort means so much to them."

—KEITH SIMMONS, FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL



Help with an installation is never far away. Community members learn to assemble exhibitions in workshops led by the Smithsonian and state humanities councils. Here, volunteers install *Journey Stories* at the Harford County Public Library in Abingdon, Maryland. *Museum on Main Street photo*



**2,500  
Volunteer  
Hours**

**Did you know?** Volunteers in Kewaunee, Wisconsin, (population 2,869) donated more than 2,500 hours working on the *Barn Again!* exhibition while partnering with more than 20 local organizations to create companion programs.



# FORGING LASTING PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

"The exhibitions are really exciting and get a lot of people thinking in different ways. It gives organizations like us the chance to touch base with others we've never worked with before. Maybe, they've never had a reason to work with humanities organizations. [For *The Way We Worked* exhibition] the Miners Hall Museum in Franklin, Kansas, was on fire with their approach! They held a press conference and reached out to businesses and gave each group, from teachers to car dealerships, a month to create an exhibit about their particular line of work, sharing stories about how they got there and the history of their businesses."

—TRACY QUILLIN, HUMANITIES KANSAS

"We've hosted five Museum on Main Street exhibitions since 2005. In that time, we've worked with shopping centers, national parks, and the university for starters. Every exhibition we do, we bring in a whole new set of partnerships, working with the Guam National Guard, for example, with the *Journey Stories* exhibition. For *Water/Ways*, we worked with scientists, ecologists, water engineers, and the public utilities. We even had a wonderful partnership with the people who shipped the exhibition to us all the way from Los Angeles to Guam . . . for free!"

—KIMBERLEE KIHLENG, HUMANITIES GUĀHAN



**Built New  
Museum**

**Fact!** A local lumberyard in Butler, Tennessee, (population 4,416) offered up materials to the town to help them build a brand new museum in anticipation of the arrival of the *Barn Again!* exhibition.



No matter what their day jobs, volunteers and participants find new reasons to collaborate and stay in touch as a result of the exhibitions. *Courtesy Arizona Humanities*





Teachers gather for a *Hometown Teams* training workshop at the Howell Living History Farm, New Jersey. Exhibitions accommodate hundreds or even thousands of local students.

*Courtesy New Jersey Council for the Humanities*

## SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITIONS OPEN DOORS TO NEW, UNEXPECTED COLLABORATIONS.

“We reached out to organizations that weren’t considered related—like hospitals and farm-to-table agribusinesses. The local government even provided a trolley service to go to some of those destinations. Not only were we able to say ‘The Smithsonian is coming,’ we said ‘don’t you want to be a part of this?’ and potential partners jumped on it. The name recognition was huge.”

—ALISON DARBY, BELTON AREA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, BELTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

“We say ‘we’re here for you.’ Partnerships go hand and hand. MoMS has reinforced for us that when we invest in a community, we invest for the long term. These partnerships don’t begin or end with the six-week traveling exhibition. It’s so much bigger than that.

—PATRICIA PUTMAN, FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

“This project allowed us to showcase what increased collaboration between communities can do for our county.”

—KIM ORTH, NAUVOO TOURISM OFFICE, NAUVOO, ILLINOIS



The Oklahoma City Thunder’s mascot, Rumble the Bison, squeezes into a photo at the opening of *Hometown Teams* in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The NBA basketball team helped promote the exhibition across the state. *Courtesy Oklahoma Humanities*



MoMS exhibitions spark creative partnerships between cultural centers and schools. Students in Somerset, Kentucky, work on an oral history project in connection with their local showing of *Journey Stories*.

*Courtesy Donna Eastham, Somerset Community College*

**Did you know?** In Franklinton, Louisiana, (population 3,781) a local bank donated a complete HVAC system to the Washington Area Varnado Museum as it prepared to host *Produce for Victory*. The state added another \$30,000 to build restrooms at the site.



**Full HVAC  
+ \$30,000  
Donated**





Local host organizations develop creative ways to engage visitors around the topic of the *Water/Ways* exhibition. A canoe trip on Ringo Lake in Spicer, Minnesota, is a perfect way to get out in nature. *Museum on Main Street photo*

It's not just the exhibition but enriching companion programs that bring people out to celebrate, like this *New Harmonies* musical performance in Meridian, Mississippi. *Photo by Andrea Stevens*



# BRINGING PEOPLE

"The fellowship created through *Water/Ways* among our community's non-profits whose missions are devoted to conserving water and water culture has been unprecedented. Watching individuals from organizations meet each other for the first time in our planning meetings and events, making plans for future collaborations has been powerful to witness."

—CASEY MATHERN, GOODHUE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, RED WING, MINNESOTA

"In the town of Newkirk, Oklahoma, with something like a population of 2,300 people, the exhibit was at the public library and virtually every organization in town was involved. They reached out to all the businesses in those two blocks and all of them had small exhibits. They put footprints down on all the sidewalks to connect all the locations and for people to experience the entire town, with the footprints ending up at the library."

—ANN THOMPSON, OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

"They literally had everyone in the whole town involved, the mayor, the school principal. There was a parade, and it was just amazing. We visited the site, and they showed us the whole town, how each piece fit together for the arrival and display of the exhibition . . . and in Southeast Michigan, there were people from all over the lower portion of the state coming into tiny Hartland to see the exhibit. Everybody got involved and wanted to be a part of it. It had such a huge impact on the community."

—CAROL TAGGART, MICHIGAN HUMANITIES COUNCIL



**50-year  
Reunion**

**Did you know?** In conjunction with *Produce for Victory*, the town of Delta, Utah, (population 3,457) sponsored an emotional reunion of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at the Topaz War Relocation Center during World War II. Most hadn't seen each other for more than 50 years.





From poets to business owners to town leaders, people from all walks of life get involved with MoMS exhibitions. Residents from Union, South Carolina, mark the launch of *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* with an animated opening event. *Museum on Main Street photo*



Members of the Southwest Florida Historical Society, Alliance for the Arts, and the Lee County Black History Museum get ramped up for *Hometown Teams* with Azul the Eagle, the mascot for Florida Gulf Coast University. *Courtesy Florida Humanities Council*



MoMS exhibitions bring people together around a shared commitment to community. A WWII veteran and Major General Phil Killey chat at a *Produce for Victory* program at the South Dakota State Fair. *Courtesy South Dakota Humanities Council*

# TOGETHER

MoMS EXHIBITIONS HAVE AN UNCANNY WAY OF GETTING PEOPLE TO MEET AND SHARE, REMEMBER THE PAST AND PONDER THE FUTURE.

"I remember Denham Springs [Louisiana] had been devastated by the big Baton Rouge floods of 2016. The exhibition became a rallying point. It meant a lot for them to be back and hosting the exhibit. It wowed me what that site had done to arrive at that point . . . *Water/Ways* has been really important here. It was a conversation starter about what's happening to our coastlines. People upstream needed to know a lot more about it. That doesn't happen without a Museum on Main Street exhibit. It was an understanding that other communities were dealing with the same issues and that was really heartening for everyone."

—BRIAN BOYLES, LOUISIANA ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

"The *Water/Ways* exhibition spurred conversations between people of different ages, generations, and backgrounds, especially the section that talks about how the lack of water may be seen as early as 2024."

—SHARIE TURGEON, OKEECHOBEE COUNTY HISTORICAL COURTHOUSE, OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA

**Fact!** In Afton, Wyoming, (population 1,995) the entire community worked together to transform a 1931 barn into the Star Valley Historical Society, created in anticipation of the *Barn Again!* exhibition.







You never know who will show up at a MoMS exhibition event. Ethel Kelly, who worked as a real-life Rosie the Riveter during World War II, was a guest at the *Produce for Victory* opening in Meridian, Mississippi. *Courtesy Mississippi Humanities Council*

# INSPIRING AMAZING PROGRAMS

"Since we hosted the *Water/Ways* exhibition in the dead of winter, we included a lot of snow and ice in our programming. Our opening event featured a live demo by an ice sculptor using a chainsaw and blow torch to complete a 4' x 4' sculpture! It was a huge hit in the community and really engaged people in the exhibit."

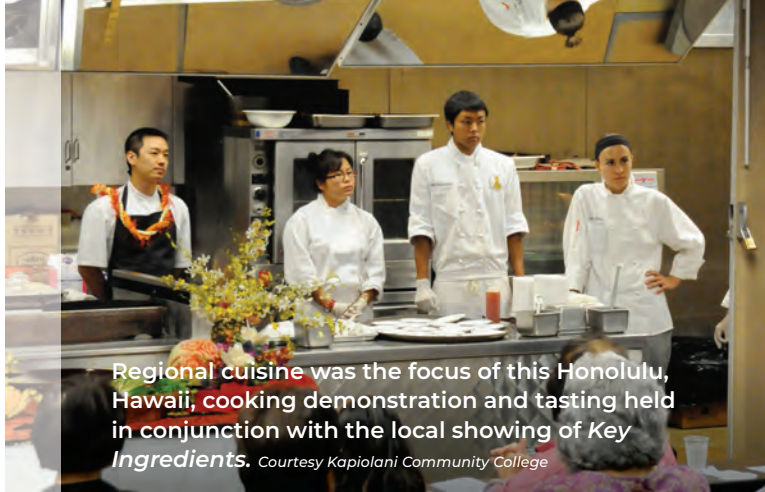
—JENNIFER RIFE, LARAMIE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM, CHEYENNE, WYOMING

**Did you know?** Inspired by *Produce for Victory*, the Robertson County History Museum in Springfield, Tennessee, (population 16,809) held an honorary graduation ceremony for veterans who had gone off to fight in WWII before graduating from high school.



Community programs highlight the stories and histories of area residents. Dustin Kee leads the Homolovi Dancers for the *Journey Stories* exhibition in Winslow, Arizona. *Courtesy Todd Roth*





Regional cuisine was the focus of this Honolulu, Hawaii, cooking demonstration and tasting held in conjunction with the local showing of *Key Ingredients*. Courtesy Kapiolani Community College



With the *New Harmonies* exhibition, local organizations sponsored incredible concerts and performances like this one in Meridian, Mississippi. Courtesy Mississippi Humanities Council

## WHETHER IT'S A SNORKELING CLASS, A FILM PREMIERE, OR AN ART INSTALLATION, MoMS EXHIBITIONS INSPIRE SIMPLY INCREDIBLE EVENTS.

"When it was all over, we ended up having a red-carpet premiere—and, yes, we actually went to buy a red carpet! We had the high school drama club play the paparazzi, asking the students questions about the couture they were wearing. It really set the tone for a huge celebration, and boy, the kids thought they were something special. They had never been part of something like that before . . ."

—ALISON DARBY, BELTON AREA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, BELTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

"With our showing of the *Water/Ways* exhibition, we used eco-friendly waterproofing spray to stencil famous quotes about water all over downtown Moscow. The installations were invisible on dry pavement, but when it rained and the concrete was saturated, the quotes magically appeared. It was awesome!"

—DULCE KERSTING, LATAH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MOSCOW, IDAHO

"*New Harmonies* was a really unique experience. We opened in Idabel with a free concert of Oklahoma roots music. We had the opportunity to work with wonderful musicians who donated their time to play and choirs from across the state, performing everything from Native American music to Gospel and spirituals. It was an incredible evening."

—ANN THOMPSON, OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES



In conjunction with *Water/Ways*, one community held a snorkeling class. Guam's local version of the exhibition was called *Hita I Hanom, We Are Water* and brought together the island's scientists, artists, master cultural practitioners, historians, and engineers.

Courtesy of Humanities Guåhan

**Fact!** The Cascade County Historical Society in Cascade, Montana, (population 617) reported that 25,804 people engaged in programs associated with the *Barn Again!* exhibition.



**Soaring  
Attendance!**





Everyone has a place at the table, or the theater, in this case. Visitors in Chestertown, Maryland, attend the *Choppin' at the Shop* premiere, an original play created in conjunction with *The Way We Worked*. Courtesy Maryland Humanities

# A PLACE FOR EVERYONE'S HISTORY

MoMS EXHIBITIONS INSPIRE PEOPLE TO SHARE STORIES THAT HAVEN'T BEEN WIDELY TOLD, WHILE HIGHLIGHTING COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE OFTEN FELT MARGINALIZED.



Dr. Evangeline Parsons Yazzie (right) and AnnaDel Paxton presented "The Long Walk of the Navajo People, 1864-1868" in conjunction with the *Journey Stories* exhibition in Winslow, Arizona. Courtesy Old Trails Museum

"For *The Way We Worked*, the community in Chestertown, Maryland, recruited Marlon Saunders, a fellow at Washington College, to create a musical incorporating oral histories about work. It was called *Choppin' at the Shop* and was set at a barber shop/beauty parlor. It was all about family, race, gender, and economics. They had a red-carpet premiere, and it was a huge deal! There were attendees from town who said they remembered not being allowed to sit in the main part of the theater. The performance was the first time they had been back there."

—THERESA WORDEN, MARYLAND HUMANITIES COUNCIL

**Fact!** For the *Produce for Victory*, the Harvey County Historical Society in Newton, Kansas, (population 19,105) unearthed little-known stories about women inventors in Kansas. The resulting exhibition was appropriately called *Mothers of Invention*.





As part of the *Between Fences* exhibition, organizers at Lyon County Library in Yerington, Nevada, tied hundreds of bandanas to fences along the highway. It was meant to represent the idea that it was possible to reach across the proverbial fence, listen to each other, and hear others' stories.

*Courtesy Lyon County Library, Yerington Branch*



"Their stories just weren't being told . . . In conjunction with the *Water/Ways* exhibition, we started an oral history project with the Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City, Kansas. We interviewed whole families who'd lived in what was called the 'Mexican Village,' built on the outskirts of town around 1910 and separated from the town by the river. They lived in converted box cars and talked about not being allowed to swim in the community pool, having to swim in the river. The museum created a companion exhibit about the Latino community there. It was their story. They were finally being heard."

—TRACY QUILLIN, HUMANITIES KANSAS

"We greatly appreciate the opportunity to create a space where stories about athletes from Maryland's four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) can be told. Our goal is to honor the legacy of those who have come before us while celebrating the history which is currently being made by today's college athletes. Sports unite every American, and through *Hometown Teams/Untold Stories*, we hope to broaden the conversation on HBCU athletics."

— SHAKIA GULLETTE, BANNEKER-DOUGLAS MUSEUM, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND



The stories and traditions of Guam's Chamorro community were an integral part of *New Harmonies* when it appeared at Gef Pago Cultural Center in Inarajan, Guam. *Courtesy of*

*Humanities Guahan*



Local history connects with people on a personal level. *The Way We Worked* exhibition at the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, North Carolina, included many contemporary stories from local residents about their own jobs. Museum on Main Street photo

# The Way Watauga Works

## CONNECTING THE NATIONAL STORY WITH LOCAL HISTORY

Exploring the history and essence of work of individuals in our local area of Watauga County, NC

This project was made possible through the support of the North Carolina Humanities Council, the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street Stories: YES! Program, Appalachia State University's Center for Appalachian Studies, and the Appalachian Studies Center's Appalachian Studies class for the fall of 2017. Dr. Kristine Moore, Tom Mansell, and the 31 hardworking individuals who gave up their time and shared their stories with us.



"The communities are encouraged to take the lead on planning, and the exhibitions are designed to spark their stories. They are the ones telling their stories."

—ESTHER MACKINTOSH, FEDERATION OF STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS

"As visitors walked through the exhibit, suddenly they could see how our region fit into the nation's history!"

—VIRGINIA HAYNIE GAUSE, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN, EDINBURG, TEXAS

"Putting the Smithsonian side-by-side with a local sports exhibit made visitors realize that their stories are valuable to the greater American story."

—BETH RYAN, ATLANTIC CITY FREE LIBRARY AND HISTORICAL MUSEUM, ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY

Museums often put a call out to local residents to find artifacts and photographs related to the exhibition. Here, jackets and other objects round out the local showing of *Hometown Teams* in Wayland, Kentucky.

Courtesy The Mountain Sports Hall of Fame

Regional stories are the focus of every local exhibition. This *New Harmonies* presentation in Guam highlights traditional celebrations on the island. Courtesy of Humanities Guåhan





# LOCAL PRESENTATIONS, BASED ON THE SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION, REVEAL THE RICHNESS OF REGIONAL STORIES AND THE PASSION OF VOLUNTEERS AND COORDINATORS.

"As part of the local exhibit, we put up a large photo of the 1947 NCAA national wrestling champions from Mount Vernon, waiting for a train to go to San Francisco to compete. We had the current wrestling team recreate the pose from the train station. It was so fun. We had so many people comment about that. Some of the children and grandchildren of the men in the original photo even came to the exhibit."

—JOE JENNISON, FIRST STREET COMMUNITY CENTER, MOUNT VERNON, IOWA

"The MoMS exhibition was an excellent catalyst to bring Mid-Ohio Valley residents together, sharing their memorabilia and stories. Everyone was proud to be exhibiting their items alongside a display from the Smithsonian Institution!"

—ABBY HAYHURST, PARKERSBURG ART CENTER, PARKERSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA

When the Wormfarm Institute in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, hosted *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, the town commissioned several art installations in nearby farm fields, with the belief that "the arts are a key ingredient for a thriving rural community."

Courtesy Wormfarm Institute



Communities sometimes include interactive or immersive elements in their local exhibitions, like this video station which features films created by area students about sports in Iowa. Courtesy Joe Jennison



# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LEGACY



Communities come together around issues that matter to them. People from various host sites in Minnesota share their aspirations for the *Water/Ways* exhibition.

*Courtesy Minnesota Humanities Center*



“The lasting impact is that it’s opened doors for the cultural sector, students, teachers, and the community that would never have happened without MoMS. The museum is now the center of the action and partners with local businesses and school districts.”

—ALISON DARBY, BELTON AREA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, BELTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Window fronts, like this one in Newkirk, Oklahoma, become mini exhibits and advertising for local events. Businesses around town frequently take part in the celebration, becoming longer-term partners with cultural organizations. *Courtesy Newkirk Public Library*



# FROM FOSTERING DIALOGUE TO RENOVATING COMMUNITY SPACES, MoMS EXHIBITIONS ARE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE.



Students working in conjunction with MoMS exhibitions develop essential 21st-century skills. Here, youngsters in South Carolina work on transcribing video interviews of war veterans. Courtesy Alison Darby



**Raised Over  
\$100,000**

**Fact!** In Monticello, Utah, (population 1,980) the community raised over \$100,000 to move an old barn to house the *Barn Again!* exhibition and become the town's official museum.



"Abita Springs, across from New Orleans, used the opportunity to open a small museum in the town square—an old rail station where they hosted the *New Harmonies* exhibition. They still had parts of the local exhibit there years later when *Hometown Teams* came. They said so many great things about what it had meant to them. It's a great community builder—an opportunity to build partnerships you hadn't had before—schools, libraries, churches."

—BRIAN BOYLES, LOUISIANA ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

"It was a fantastic experience and a great opportunity for our town. The success of this exhibit will benefit Purcell for years to come. Our staff gained skills and equipment for conducting future oral histories, and the information will be of lasting significance. The community as whole is very proud of our success, and they were energized by the positive experiences for our guests. This created a real spirit of success for Purcell. What an experience!"

—PEGGY COOK, PURCELL PUBLIC LIBRARY, PURCELL, OKLAHOMA

"Some of the things that grew out of the exhibit have become permanent here, like the local exhibit *Journeys to Winslow* and the History Highlights speaker series. The fly in and car shows are still going on too. Having *Journey Stories* was the impetus for the city actually saying, 'let's do this.' It all happened because of the exhibition."

—ANN-MARY LUTZICK, OLD TRAILS MUSEUM, WINSLOW, ARIZONA

"This has completely changed our community. We remodeled an empty Main Street building into a permanent community arts center as a result of this exhibit! This is the first Art Center in our town."

—MELISSA BOND, WHITLEY COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE, WILLIAMSBURG, KENTUCKY

A barn in Morenci, Michigan, was the perfect place to advertise that the Smithsonian was coming to town! After the traveling exhibition left, many local barns were renovated or even added to the historic register.

Courtesy the Stair Public Library



# EMPOWERING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

## WHAT IS *STORIES: YES*?

Since 2012, this MoMS program has brought digital technology and storytelling to 1,100 young people in 15 states. With help from local professionals like teachers and librarians, students research their communities and local histories. They conduct interviews with town residents, collect images and footage, and craft digital stories and documentaries that illuminate familiar places. As they work on this project, students have a deeper understanding of not only local history, but also of why their communities matter. *Stories: YES* is supported with internal Smithsonian Institution funds from the Youth Access Grants Program.

“What they discover is that their communities have real worth. They’re already aware of problems in their towns but to find out that there are amazing stories too helps them see where they’re from in a positive light. It gives them a renewed sense of place and identity.”

—SHANNON SULLIVAN, MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

“All 281 students had a finger on the project—not just the gifted and talented students but the special needs students as well. They learned so much, even their manners were affected. Every student wanted to do it again, so we did it using the equipment we had purchased through the grant. We have all been so honored to be a part of this program.

—ALISON DARBY, BELTON AREA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, BELTON,  
SOUTH CAROLINA



Youth participants become effective digital storytellers with the *Stories: YES* program. In Houston, Minnesota, students have produced thought-provoking projects that interrogate local history as well as youth perspectives on living in small-town America. Courtesy Sean Kearney with Kollektive

With funds from *Stories: YES*, communities purchase recorders, cameras, software, and lighting that can be used for years to come. Brunswick, Maryland, students make use of their newly learned interviewing skills.

Museum on Main Street photo





# THE *STORIES: YES* PROGRAM HELPS YOUTH MASTER TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT WHILE GAINING CRITICAL LIFE SKILLS.

In Belton, South Carolina, 5th graders talk about their videos with a technical advisor. In various communities, museum professionals, archivists, and technology specialists help students understand how to write, edit, and present a compelling story. *Courtesy Alison Darby*

“Through this program I learned that there is so much history I never knew about such as Whirlpool, shipping companies, and the farming businesses that were once here.”

—STUDENT, ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN

“This project and working with these three young women is the highlight of my career.”

—ERIN DORBIN, LANESBORO, MINNESOTA

“I think just knowing that they could do any of these things, learning how to use the technology, speaking with people, learning how to interview, doing the interviews . . . Then afterward, they would come back and do the editing. I think it was such a valuable experience because they really did learn that they could do anything, that they were quite capable.”

—ROBIN GOETZ, BRUNSWICK PUBLIC LIBRARY, BRUNSWICK, MARYLAND




A student in St. Joseph, Michigan, hones her listening skills during a chat with a resident. Program mentors say that they witness a transformation in the students as they gain confidence in themselves. *Courtesy The Heritage Museum and Cultural Center*



**Core Tenets  
Going Strong  
3 Years Later**

**Did you know?** Three years after their official involvement with the *Stories: YES* program, mentors in Belton, South Carolina, (population 4,134) continue to teach the project’s core tenets. Hundreds of students have collaborated to produce short films about everything from the Vietnam War to segregation in sports.



A man and a woman are standing in a field next to a brown horse with a white blaze on its face. The man is wearing a blue hoodie, a patterned scarf, and a baseball cap. The woman is wearing a brown jacket and a pink beanie. The horse is wearing a bridle and a red halter. The background shows trees with autumn foliage.

Storytellers offer their own perspectives about life in small-town America. As part of *The Way We Worked* at the Blowing Rock Art and History Museum, North Carolina, Jacob Crigler and Kara Dodson talk about organic farming.

Courtesy Ashley Warren, Natural Craft Photography

# VOICES FROM SMALL-TOWN AMERICA

## WHAT IS *STORIES FROM MAIN STREET*?

*Stories from Main Street* is MoMS' digital storytelling project that encourages rural Americans to share their experiences about place, family, and community. These stories, gathered from hundreds of communities in more than 30 states, reflect the diversity of America's contemporary voices. Listen to stories from rural America at [www.museumonmainstreet.org/stories](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org/stories).



"I find it fascinating to hear people tell their stories. Life is made up of stories—each individual's experiences contributing to the whole. I'm a librarian because I've always loved stories. Having the opportunity to sit down with people and hear them tell their stories was a real treat. And with all of them, the conversation continued between us after the recording was done. I think it made people feel valued to have others interested in their stories."

—JUDI BOYCE, SUBLETTE COUNTY LIBRARY, PINEDALE, WYOMING

1,200  
American  
Stories  
Transcribed



**Fact!** The *Stories from Main Street* archive now includes nearly 1,200 stories, many of which have been posted and transcribed on the Museum on Main Street website. To date, residents of Alpena, Michigan, (population 10,483) and Jamestown, Tennessee, (population 1,959) have submitted more stories than any other American communities.



THESE SHORT, UNSCRIPTED  
STORIES RECORDED BY PEOPLE  
IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES,  
CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE,  
BUT THEY ALSO GIVE PEOPLE  
A CHANCE TO BE HEARD.

"I got a lot of personal satisfaction from collecting these stories. I knew five of the subjects before the exhibit, of those I knew what two of them did for work, but not why they chose that path. This was a great opportunity to learn more about personal acquaintances as well as meet many new people in my community. In addition to the new personal connections I gained from this, I also learned a great deal of local history and some of my family history."

—WILLARD WATSON, BLOWING ROCK ART AND HISTORY MUSEUM, BLOWING ROCK, NORTH CAROLINA



A woman listens to stories shared by local residents in Lanesboro, Minnesota. The Lanesboro Museum converted an old telephone booth next to its entrance into a one-of-a-kind, immersive listening experience. *Courtesy Adam Wiltgen*



As part of a pilot storytelling program in Minnesota, Gary Thompson from Detroit Lakes shared his experiences as an ice diver with local interviewers. Storytellers, inspired by the *Water/Ways* exhibition, spoke passionately about their connections to water.

*Courtesy Shanai Matteson*



**25** YEARS  
**50** STATES AND 1 TERRITORY  
**1,600** SMALL TOWNS  
**8,300** MEDIAN POPULATION  
**7,599,800** VISITORS  
**\$17,339,473** VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS  
**\$20,249,896** IN-KIND DONATIONS  
**\$99,456,000** IN ECONOMIC IMPACT



"I've lived my entire life with the desire to go to the Smithsonian. Now it's coming to me."

— VISITOR, ENDERLIN, NORTH DAKOTA

## Exhibitions, Past and Present

**Produce for Victory:** Posters on the American Homefront, 1941-1945 | 1994-2006

**Barn Again!** Celebrating an American Icon | 1997-2006

**Yesterday's Tomorrows:** Past Visions of the American Future | 2001-2005

**Key Ingredients:** America by Food | 2003-2015

**Between Fences** | 2005-2012

**New Harmonies:** Celebrating American Roots Music | 2007-2014

**Journey Stories** | 2009-2015

**The Way We Worked** | 2011-2018

**Hometown Teams:** How Sports Shape America | 2014-Present

**Water/Ways** | 2016-Present

**Crossroads:** Change in Rural America | 2018-Present

## Special Projects

**Stories: YES** | 1,100 student participants

**Stories from Main Street** | 1,200 stories gathered



Smithsonian Institution

Museum on Main Street is generously supported by the United States Congress and participating state humanities councils.

## MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service  
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