

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Society will reach thousands more PK-12 students with new history hub.

The Wisconsin Historical Society is an educational institution at its heart, and plays a key role in providing history education for PK-12 students throughout the state. Thousands already descend on Madison each year for museum field trips, but a new place to immerse themselves in the history of our state will dramatically transform our reach and impact on the next generation.

The new history center will be the hub around which the Society's educational vision will revolve. Inside, bigger and better spaces will enable us to provide a meaningful educational experience for 200,000 guests and double the number of visiting students to 60,000. In addition, digital distance technology will bring the history center and its programs to residents in all 72 Wisconsin counties.

New, exciting exhibits!

The heart of every museum is its exhibits, which students often expect to be dusty "old stuff" embalmed behind glass. We're going to shatter that stereotype. Research suggests that children remember only 10 percent of what they read but 90 percent of what they do, so the new history center will highlight hands-on activities. It will awaken students' curiosity and challenge them to reflect on their place in history. "You can't beat a



GAIL NAYES PHOTO

Fourth-grade students from Jim Falls, a community 200 miles northwest of Madison, have a unique way of preparing for their annual field trip to the State Capitol and the Wisconsin Historical Museum. See their story inside.

first-hand experience of the place you are studying," said Gail Nayes, a fourth-grade teacher at Jim Falls Elementary School. "It makes it so much more concrete."

Exhibits, activities and programs will be designed to excite this technology-savvy audience while engaging their senses and accommodating a range of learning styles. For example, students could dirty their hands and please their palates while learning food science in a demonstration kitchen. They may examine Wisconsin's dairy heritage by making butter or ice cream, or learn about immigration by making tortillas, pasties or spaetzle. One thing certainly will be made: Memories!



"Visiting the museum and listening to a storyteller while observing the artifacts brings Wisconsin history to life for the students. It tells them that, 'Yes, this really did happen!'"

Jana Van Dreef, 4th-grade teacher, Wittenberg Elementary



THE SOCIETY'S HUB FOR EDUCATION

Americans consider museums their most trustworthy source of information, rating them higher than newspapers, government, or college professors. The Society's history center will honor that trust by delivering unparalleled access to the authentic past and challenging visitors to think critically about it. To succeed at this, the Society will engage students, teachers, and lifelong learners in multiple ways:

Welcome New Partners: While planning the building and designing exhibits and programs, the Society is involving a diverse range of community members around the state, reaching out to peer institutions, key stakeholders, and previously underrepresented communities to ensure broad participation.

Valued Amenities: Guests will find the center easy to navigate and a fun place to learn. School groups will have a safe drop-off area, an orientation space, and enjoy a comfortable lunch facility. They will benefit from learning areas integrated into exhibit spaces, allowing teachers to pause and discuss what they've just experienced.



All of the Society's educational outreach programs will benefit from coordination by staff centrally located out of the new history center, including the traveling Hands-On History (top) and National History Day (above).

Address All Ages: The Society will double the number of in person visits by students, including teenagers, and engage them in activities aligned with state education standards. The Society also intends to entice vacationing families, people who work in the area, and retired tourists. Multigenerational activities will help kids and grandparents learn together and make memories.

Reflect Cultural Diversity:

Wisconsin is home to dozens of distinct ethnic communities and all will see themselves reflected in the history center. Whenever possible, appropriate community members will decide how they will be represented and tell their own stories, in their own words and languages.

Share Stories (not just objects):

Names and dates are history's lifeless skeleton; stories are its flesh and blood. The Society will use artifacts, media, and digital technology to tell compelling personal stories of Wisconsin's past. Stories will help people contemplate where they came from, where they fit today, and where they may go in the future.

Delight with Technology: The Society will capitalize on devices that visitors carry with them into the museum and astonish them with custom-made applications designed to help tell stories and inspire emotions.

Provoke Critical Thinking: Exhibits, programs, and tour guides will challenge guests with questions that force them to confront preconceptions, formulate explanations, advance arguments, or solve problems. Students will maximize this learning through pre- and post-visit lessons delivered to their classrooms from the Society's education staff.

Extend into Local Communities:

The boundaries of the history center will be the boundaries of the state, as staff and technology bring the visitor experience to those unable to visit in person. For example, programs will be live-streamed into schools and public libraries. (See next page for more.) Local history partners can book traveling exhibits. Staff educators will visit distant schools with the Hands-On History program. Classes will visit historic sites using the same curriculum developed for the history center.

Jim Falls 4th graders 'run' to the museum every year!



Gail Naves

To say that Gail Naves goes the extra mile for her students is selling her short. In fact, you could say she actually goes an extra 200 miles.

The Jim Falls Elementary School fourth-grade teacher has a unique way to build excitement and integrate her students' annual field trip to

Madison and the Wisconsin Historical Museum into not only social studies classes, but math and physical education, too.

Jim Falls, north of Eau Claire, is almost exactly 200 miles from the museum. So, in addition to reading books and studying facts about Wisconsin, Naves coordinates a "Run to Madison."

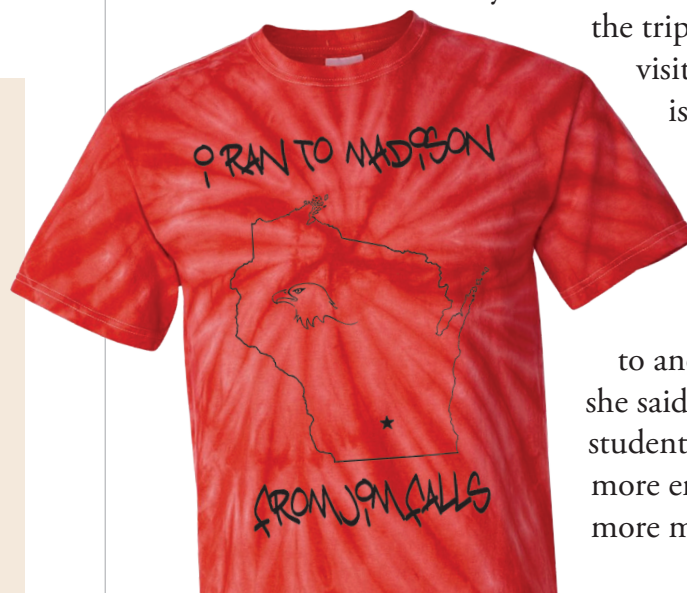
"Each student gets a pedometer and we track their steps and convert them to miles in math," said Naves. "As we progress, each student has a 'foot' that advances on the road to Madison (on a board)."

Those who complete 200 miles earn a "I ran to Madison from Jim Falls" T-shirt, which they proudly wear during their March trip.

Naves, who has been teaching for over 10 years,

says students look forward to the trip all year, and visiting the museum is extremely valuable.

A new history center would take their visit to another level, she said. "I think the students would be even more engaged with a more modern facility."



“This is an exciting trip for our students. Our fourth-graders ask about this trip every year. They can’t wait to come!”

Julie Schussler, *Farmington Elementary School, Kewaskum*



Fulfilling a mission

As an educational institution, the Wisconsin Historical Society transforms people’s lives by expanding their knowledge, touching their emotions, and challenging how they see their world and the world of others.

Society education encompasses museums, historic sites, the library and archives, books published by the Society Press, advice provided by consultants sent around the state, and through online tools such as digital archives and webinars.

Through the new history center, the Society will more than double the number of in-person visitors, reach into cities and towns in all 72 counties with distance learning technology, and ultimately cultivate well-informed and engaged citizens.

The transformative power of distance learning technology

As any parent who has recently set foot in a classroom knows, education is increasingly tethered to the digital world, with iPads and tablets replacing paper. Thus, the new history center will utilize distance learning technology, allowing staff to engage students directly in their classrooms and connect them with others across the state via real-time streaming video.

Imagine students from Sheboygan and La Crosse visiting the center and participating in a program that also includes a live video feed with students in classrooms in Beloit, Bayfield, Milwaukee and Wausau, as well as on the Menominee Indian Reservation in Keshena. Just like their peers at the center, students in classrooms examine artifacts or reproduction objects (which their teacher will have received in a “traveling trunk” from the Society). Society educators encourage the students from the diverse schools to “think like a historian,” and facilitate a discussion, exposing the students to perspectives that likely would not have occurred to them.

Scenarios such as this will be possible with a new history center. The ability to bridge socioeconomic, racial and other divides while connecting new generations to a shared heritage will be transformative.

To learn more about the new history center campaign or to join us, please contact us:

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The Wisconsin Historical Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization that receives grants and private contributions benefitting the Society and administers the membership program.