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Big Ideas for Small Museums

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AASLH SMALL MUSEUMS AFFINITY GROUP

Volume 5, October 2011

To view past issues, visit the [AASLH Small Museums](#) webpage.

Collaborations that Work!

Carrie Gustavson, Director, Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum, Co-Chairman, Cochise County Arizona Centennial Committee

As the Director of a small museum in rural Arizona with a track record of not only thinking BIG, but "doing" BIG, I was asked to think outside my walls and to take the lead position on the Cochise County Arizona Centennial Committee. Our task was to develop a project that celebrated the human stories of those who have impacted the development of our County and our State during the last century.

The project:

- **Part 1:** *Cochise County History on the Move*, a travelling exhibit comprising thirty three "Historymakers" (life-size photographic cutouts from participating museums, historical societies, and family archives). Cochise County's Historymakers are the men and women whose stories represent the complex interweaving of history as the Apache, Hispanic, and Anglo Americans converged upon what became Cochise County, southeastern Arizona. This exhibit serves as an anchor for community centennial celebrations and is available free to all communities through 2012.
- **Part 2:** *Come Face to Face with History*, a companion booklet written for the people of Cochise County by the people of Cochise County that tells our historymakers' stories, 25,000 copies are being distributed free to County families.
- **Part 3:** *Cochise100.org*, the project website designed to collect stories from Cochise County families. In doing so, we personalize our history, inviting history home in a sharing that bridges

Big Ideas for Small Museum is a quarterly email just for people who work in small museums. Through this publication, the AASLH Small Museums Committee shares resources that are pre-tested and approved by actual small museum professionals. The articles are brief and practical - giving you the shortcuts you need when don't have enough time, money, or people.

AASLH Resources

To sign up to receive **Big Ideas for Small Museums**, join the AASLH Small Museums Affinity Group. The Affinity Group is not a membership organization and there is no fee to join. Go to the [Small Museums](#) webpage and click on "Join the Small Museums Affinity Group" at the top.

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Not an **AASLH** member? Check out benefits that our members enjoy. **AASLH** is the ONLY national organization dedicated to the field of state and local history. It is a membership association - A home for institutions and people who work in the field of state and local history. AASLH provides leadership and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful.

Need information on our workshops? Go to our [Professional Development Workshop Series](#) webpage to see

generations. In 2013, this collection will be transferred to the Arizona Memory Project's digital repository.

The success of this project is based on a unique collaboration of thirteen museums and historical societies, representatives of city and County governments, Cochise College, businesses, cultural organizations, and historians. Shepherding a volunteer group of seventy five Type-A personalities through this two-year process proved both our greatest challenge, yet was the foundation of our success.

Working collaboratively in such a large group isn't for the faint hearted. To highlight a few points, our collaboration was based on:

- a well-thought-out plan that could be achieved through collaboration...the "think-outside-the-box" approach;
- leadership that can both listen and organize
- a strong relationship with your Board of Trustees that will support you through several years of planning
- inclusivity in inviting everyone with a shared love of history and pride of place to the table and
- mutual respect and enjoyment of our own diversity as a committee.

We raised funds to cover the cost of exhibit fabrication and printing; however, it was the committee members who brought their skills, talents, and connections that allowed us to actually bring project planning to completion.

- **Museum members** are contributing research, archival support, and nonprofit fiscal oversight as well as serving as exhibit hosts.
- **College personnel** are contributing fact checking, editing, and an internship to promote the website collection.
- **County and city staff** are providing technical support in web and exhibit graphic design; businesses and newspapers are providing promotional support.
- **City and county public works departments** are providing exhibit transport, and install.
- **Our libraries, museums, and historical societies as well as the County bookmobile** are distributing the booklet.
- **The County Fair Association** is hosting the project's public inauguration.

A small museum would rarely have access to all these resources, but in working collaboratively, a small museum took the lead in a BIG project.

what is coming to your area.

AASLH 2012 Annual Meeting Session Proposal Deadline November 15



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Is there payback for this effort? You bet! We have formed a countywide communications network and now work together to promote each other! Through sharing our stories, we bring our communities together; through our collaborations, we bring our museums together!



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