

## *Principle Three:*

### *Make Sites and Programs Come Alive*

#### **HANDOUT: 72 Creative Ideas**



#### **1. Taste of the Past, Conner Prairie Living History Farm**

Historians researched foods that would have been eaten during different seasons of the year on a 19<sup>th</sup> century Indiana farm. A program called “A Taste of the Past” allows visitors to enjoy three seasonal menus where they sample authentic foods. There is also a meal host who discusses what would have been the culinary tastes and customs of the residents during that time period.

#### **2. Capturing the Spirit of the West, Old Cowtown Museum**

This museum in Wichita, Kansas held an event centered around photography. Activities included a photo contest with all of the pictures staged to look historic. Winning photos were displayed at the museum. A Photography Weekend included workshops on preserving photos, an opportunity to have a tin-type photo taken with visitors wearing historic clothing and photos with 1870s living history characters.

#### **3. 48-Hour Family Live In, Norlands Living History Center**

This 19<sup>th</sup> century farm in Maine invited families to experience life on the farm by role playing a member of the original family. Participants slept in a bunk house and tried their hand at farm chores, cooking, cleaning, playing period games and attending school. They also learned about the lives of the original family and the family member they were portraying.

#### **4. Elect Jackson!, The Hermitage**

The Nashville plantation home of President Andrew Jackson became the setting for his 1828 run for the presidency. An exhibit traced the history of the campaign, and tour guides discussed the use of Jackson’s home as headquarters for his campaign. To kick off the “campaign,” a special event was held nominating Jackson for the presidency. Visitors were given “Elect Jackson” stickers to wear and could vote for the candidate of their choice – Jackson or John Quincy Adams.

#### **5. Breakfast with the Curators, The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture**

This Sante Fe museum offers a “Breakfast with the Curators” series each summer. Programs include behind-the-scenes tours and discussions on topics such as traditions in silverworking, weaving and collecting oral histories. Participants have the opportunity to meet and learn from anthropologists who are experts in their fields.

## **6. Train Excursions, Texas State Railroad Park**

The Texas State Railroad Park operates 50-mile round-trip historic steam train excursions through the East Texas park. A Victorian Christmas train excursion during the holidays includes hostesses in early 1900s dresses serving wassail and fruitcake, and carollers stroll through the train.

## **7. Fire Drills, Old Salem**

Old Salem in North Carolina holds 18<sup>th</sup> century fire drills each summer. Visitors and interpreters form bucket brigades and pump water into the museum's 1780s reproduction fire engine. (Salem had a fire in 1784 and bought the community's first fire engines in 1785. Regulations required that all homes had water buckets.)

## **8. Lady Washington Day, Mount Vernon**

On Mother's Day weekend, tours of Mount Vernon emphasize the life of Martha Washington and the role she played in President Washington's success. Actors portraying George and Martha Washington perform an original 30-minute play based on their letters.

## **9. Interactive Map, Greenfield Village**

The web site for Greenfield Village in Michigan offers visitors an interactive map. The map depicts each of the buildings and exhibits in the village. Visitors can "explore" the village – with a separate page for each site – and print out the map before visiting. Themed itineraries can also be downloaded and printed on specific topics of interest such as flight, gardens and rural America.

## **10. Student Docents, Briggs Museum of American Art**

Elementary school students are involved in intensive study of the artwork at the Briggs Museum of Art in Delaware. Then the students are trained as volunteer docents to conduct guided tours of the museum during the summer.

## **11. Museum Madness!, Chicago**

Thirty Chicago-area museums joined together for Museum Madness!, a program offering discounts to families who visit the museums in the summer. Families who visit three museums have a chance to win prizes. Participants enter to win by visiting a web site where the entry form is located. The entry form has two questions for each museum that was visited.

## **12. Touch-It Room, Winterthur**

Winterthur in Delaware has a Touch-It Room with a parlor and general store area, hands on displays and activities about lighting, kitchenware and crafts from early America.

## **13. Get Arrested in Wyoming**

Visitors to Wyoming Territorial Park's Frontier Town can make a "complaint" about friends or family, and the marshal will bring over his posse and take the "offending" party to jail. A pardon is \$5 – which includes a certificate and photo.

#### **14. Shaker Workshops**

Canterbury Shaker Village in New Hampshire offers a series of workshops that relate to Shaker history. Workshops include box making, the art of dovetailing furniture, learning Shaker songs and painting classes using Shaker gardens for inspiration.

#### **15. Underwater Dive, Michigan**

The Shipwreck Museum conducted an interpretive live underwater dive on the 1892 wreck of the steamer Vienna which sank after a collision on the Great Lakes. Through the use of technology, passengers on board a research vessel could see images transmitted by divers and ask the divers questions about their discoveries and the steamer's history.

#### **16. A Fashionable Exhibit, Kentucky**

The Kentucky History Center hosted an exhibit called "A Dressing Change" tracing 200 years of fashion history and its relationship to world events and societal changes. The exhibit showcased the Society's clothing collection. Programs accompanying the exhibit included a lecture on "African American Clothing and Culture," and the performance of an original play about a Kentucky dressmaker.

#### **17. Horrors Tour, The Molly Brown House Museum**

A special Victorian Horrors Tour is offered each October at the Molly Brown House Museum in Denver and is one of the site's most popular events. Victorian-era horror story authors such as Edgar Allen Poe and H.G. Wells appear to tell tales of mystery as visitors tour the house museum.

#### **18. Living History Encampment, Iowa**

The State Historical Society of Iowa hosted a living history encampment of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery that included demonstrations of military drills, blacksmithing, food preparation and other activities of the expedition party.

#### **19. Thanksgiving Explored, Massachusetts**

Plimoth Plantation developed an exhibit titled "Thanksgiving: On Memory, Myth and Meaning" tracing the history of the holiday. The exhibit starts with present-day celebrations and works back to 1621, exploring popular culture in each era. The exhibit includes computer and listening stations where visitors can add their own traditions and memories to the museum's collections.

#### **20. Little Rachel's Garden Party**

The Hermitage, home of President Andrew Jackson, held a 19th-century style party for girls, ages 8-12, based on the American Girl doll series. (Little Rachel was Jackson's granddaughter.) Girls came dressed up for tea, crafts and 19th century games and brought their favorite American Girl doll.

#### **21. Vintage Postcard Display**

A new resident to Springfield, Massachusetts discovered an extensive collection of early 20th century chromolithography postcards collected by her late grandfather of Springfield sites. The postcards were placed on display in an exhibit open to the public. Attendees were encouraged to write their memories in a book after viewing the collection.

## **22. Lights on Macon, Georgia**

Macon, Georgia has developed “Lights On Macon...Historic Intown Illumination Tour.” Historic neighborhood homes are dramatically lighted each evening to showcase their architectural features. Free tour maps are available at the visitors center for these self-guided tours.

## **23. Heritage Corridor Tours, Washington**

The Washington State Arts Commission, along with a series of partners, developed a series of heritage tours including a guidebook and audiotour to lead visitors through less travelled areas and acquaint them with the unique geography, history, arts and culture of each area. Voices of local residents are heard on the audiotour telling stories about their hometowns and their traditions.

## **24. Civil War Trails, Virginia**

Virginia’s Civil War sites worked together to create a statewide system of trails to help visitors connect with different stories of the Civil War. A brochure including a map, illustrations and stories helps visitors along the trail. Interpretive signs are placed at important stops containing human interest stories and anecdotes to ensure broad interest and appeal.

## **25. A Living Cultural Exhibit, Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Arts Board worked with the Smithsonian Institution to develop the Wisconsin Folklife Festival as a “living cultural exhibit.” The festival featured demonstrations by craftspeople of music, foodways, and occupational and recreational activities.

## **26. Creole Exhibit, Louisiana**

The Louisiana Folklife Program developed a Creole State exhibit that showcased artifacts and sought to preserve cultural traditions. As part of the project, recordings were made of traditional music, workshops were held and a book on Louisiana folklife was produced. The exhibit included folk toys, domestic crafts, folk instruments and festival and religious artifacts.

## **27. Port Townsend Family Portrait**

Begun in 1985 by the local Main Street Program, the Port Townsend Family Portrait invites residents and visitors to gather in a prominent downtown location for a group photo that is printed as a full-color poster. Advertising well in advance assures attendance of over 2,500 people. Through the years, they have documented the growth of children to adulthood, marriages and births. Posters are sold for \$5 and are given to high school seniors as a memento from the town and a reminder to come home for future town pictures.

## **28. Honor Vets on Fourth of July**

Invite veterans from all over the area to participate in a pre-fireworks event that could take place throughout the day. One downtown honors its vets with dancing in the street to music from a relevant era (Big Band from the 1940s for WWII vets, music from the 1960s for Vietnam War era vets, etc.

### **29. Ghost Town Tours, Colorado**

The Colorado Historical Society offered tours called “Ghost Towns, Colorado Style.” The guide was a historian and author, and the tour included three well preserved ghost towns. The guide conducted walking tours of each town, telling the story of each of the buildings and the people who once lived in the towns.

### **30. Ice Cream Celebration, Maryland**

In celebration of National Ice Cream Month (July), Maryland also honored a state resident who opened the first wholesale ice cream business in 1851. The state’s tourism department’s web site features a directory of ice cream factories, ice cream shops, creameries and restaurants including historical anecdotes on each place.

### **31. Public Art**

Unveil a new piece of public art such as a sculpture or a wall mural. Think about ways to relate public art to the heritage of your community. Is there a well-known local artist who lives, or has lived in your community whom you could commission to create a piece of public art? Can you use indigenous materials, such as a rock from a local quarry?

### **32. Lewis and Clark Chautauqua, Missouri**

The Missouri Humanities Council hosts an annual Chautauqua – a weeklong community festival on a single theme. The 2003 theme is “Changed Lives: Lewis and Clark Meet the West.” A touring company of historians/actors will travel to communities across the state speaking in first person as historical characters who participated in the famous expedition

### **33. Traveling Exhibits, Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma Humanities Council and the Oklahoma Museums Association partnered to create TRACKS, a selection of travelling exhibits. Some exhibits include supplementary materials such as brochures, posters and curriculum. Topics focus on various aspects of Oklahoma’s history such as “Indians of Oklahoma,” “Oklahoma in the Great Depression” and “Oklahoma’s Wild West Exhibitions.” The Humanities Council offers grants to cover the costs of hosting an exhibit.

### **34. “Best of...”**

Sponsor a contest to identify the best (...place to go for an anniversary dinner, place to stay, place to find that perfect gift, place to watch a sunset). Include as many categories as you think are appropriate. Promote the contest through the local media and distribute flyers through local businesses. Invite residents to vote and announce the winners at a community celebration and in the media. Use the list of winners as a “locals guide” for visitors coming to town.

### **35. Downtown Progressive Party, Nashville**

Historic Nashville, managers of the downtown Main Street project, hosted a progressive dinner party in a historic row of warehouses. The idea was to get people to come downtown again, to encourage appreciation for the Victorian buildings and to build interest in their restoration and preservation. Each part of the dinner was held in a different building. Food was donated by local restaurants, and each stop featured a different kind of music from local bands.

### **36. My History is America's History**

[www.myhistory.org](http://www.myhistory.org) is a virtual front porch of "My History is America's History," an initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Visitors to the web site are encouraged to share their family stories, talk with others who can help with research, learn about resources such as web sites, books and films and plan trips to visit historic sites that tell of the nation's past.

### **37. Letters to the Editor, Pennsylvania**

Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania researched all of the letters to the editor from its 200-year history. The letters reflected many changes in the community over the years and addressed major issues ranging from the Civil War to Civil Rights. A playwright compiled the letters into a play that was presented to sell out crowds and gained national publicity.

### **38. Welcome Center Days**

State welcome centers provide a great venue for showcasing local crafts. During National Tourism Week in May, many communities or organizations reserve a welcome center near their community. Committee members set up displays of crafts, serve lemonade and cookies and hand out information on things to see and do in their community.

### **39. Heritage Days**

Plan an event focused on history with activities of interest to children and adults. Include a number of components such as historic book publishers, genealogical research companies, etc.; workshops on topics such as preserving historical records and researching family histories; lectures on topics related to state and local history; and entertainment with historical dramatizations.

### **40. Folklife Festival, Iowa**

The state of Iowa celebrated its sesquicentennial with a folklife festival highlighting traditional artists from throughout the state. All forms of a traditional arts including painting, carving, sewing and others; folkways such as traditional cooking styles, and folk music were included in the festival.

### **41. A Capitol Celebration, Iowa**

Citizens from across the state of Iowa gathered at the State Capitol to witness re-enactments of important dates in the state's history. Costumed re-enactors performed, and the governor participated by reading messages from previous governors.

### **42. Folk Music Directory, Tennessee**

The Tennessee Arts Commission compiled and published a list of folk music groups in the state for use by local organizations planning festivals and special events. Each listing included the size of the group, the contact person, a description of the type of music performed, cost and equipment needed.

### **43. Historical Moments**

The Smithsonian Institution produced a series of historical moments in celebration of 150 years of history. Well known celebrities were featured in the spots asking a historical question then providing the answer using an artifact from the collection. This could be adapted to a local radio or television PSA using well known locals.

#### **44. Century Farm Awards, Tennessee**

Middle Tennessee State University's Center for Historic Preservation researched family farms in Tennessee to identify those that had been in the same family for a century or more. A book was compiled, and a traveling exhibit was created showcasing these family farms.

#### **45. Photographer's Guide, Tennessee**

A tourism organization in Southeast Tennessee published a photographer's guide to the three-county area. The guide included maps, the locations of beautiful scenic views and recommended times of day for the best shots. The guide was publicized through photography magazines, photography schools and film developing businesses.

#### **46. Create a Culture Card or Passport Card**

Historic sites, arts groups and event and festival planners can work together to create a special card which provides reduced admission or discounts on purchases at the site, performances and events. The card can be distributed locally and through tourism outlets. The card can be stamped at each location. Participants visiting a certain number of activities will receive a prize such as a commemorative T-shirt, poster or book.

#### **47. A Child's Life, Tennessee**

The city of Knoxville researched and wrote an original script on what life would have been like for a child in Knoxville in the 19th century, what children's lives are like today, and what they will be like in the future. A video titled "A Child's Life in Knox County: Past, Present and Future" was produced for use in the local museum.

#### **48. Architectural Survey, Idaho**

The state of Idaho conducted an architectural survey of buildings throughout the state as part of its celebration. This project could result in a keepsake photography book showing how architecture has changed through the years and could be developed as a walking or driving tour for visitors.

#### **49. Kentucky Encyclopedia**

The state of Kentucky chose as a legacy project for its bicentennial the publication of an encyclopedia of the state. The book included themes such as education, medicine, economics, tourism, military history, ethnic groups, literature, political history and religion. Kentucky leaders, journalists and historians contributed entries for the book.

#### **50. Washington Portraits**

The state of Washington's celebration commission chose theater groups to form a traveling exhibit acting as famous Washingtonians and historical characters. This group traveled through Washington school and various festivities, teaching through acting about the lives of these characters.

#### **51. Progressive Plantation Dinner, Tennessee**

The Tennessee Antebellum Trail, a collection of historic homes, offers a Progressive Plantation Dinner. Groups select three of the historic homes for touring and dining. Drinks and appetizers are served at the first home, the main course at the second and coffee and desserts at the third.

### **52. Downtown Birthday Bash, Georgia**

The City of Decatur, Georgia, celebrated its 175th birthday with a downtown birthday bash featuring a 6-foot wooden cake decorated with 175 candles in special candle holders. Businesses, residents, schools, artists and organizations were invited to place a candle holder on the cake. Participants could either make the candle holder from scratch, or buy one and decorate it. Candles were auctioned at the end of the event. Celebration activities included musical entertainment and a fireworks display, along with visits from Decatur city commissioners and mayors, both past and present

### **53. HandMade in America, North Carolina**

HandMade in America is a nonprofit group whose goal is to make North Carolina the center of handmade objects in the United States. They have developed a system of self-guided “trails” that present their craft heritage to the visitor. A guidebook, filled with descriptions and pictures of crafts and the people who make them, studios, galleries, restaurants, historic inns, and other places of interest, divides the 21 western mountain counties into seven driving trails.

### **54. Explore the Yellowstone!**

The Yellowstone Heritage Partnership brings together a regional network of historic, cultural and natural sites. One project was the development of an exhibit titled “Explore the Yellowstone!” that traveled to 15 communities in three states. The exhibit told of the region’s history and included hands on activities.

### **55. Downtown Artwalk, Florida**

Downtowners from Delray Beach, Florida’s Pineapple Grove District created a new Artwalk with sculptures, murals, obelisks and information kiosks scattered throughout the area. Visitors can walk to each exhibit independently or to take a conducted trolley tour. Selected sculptures remain on display for a year when artists are given the option of putting their work up for auction. While the main purpose is to entertain, educate and draw more people to the district, the organization also sees benefits through additional jobs and businesses. In addition, teachers can hold arts-related classes in area like sculpting, painting and glass blowing for children.

### **56. Second Story Tour, Texas**

Sequin, Texas hosts an annual “Second Story Tour” to encourage people to rediscover the district’s historic and architectural treasures. Participants receive a watercolour print of a historic building and complimentary cold drinks. A fundraising dinner featuring a social hour, silent auction and entertainment follow the tour.

### **57. Day of Public Thanksgiving, Virginia**

Charlottesville, Virginia hosts an annual Day of Public Thanksgiving where residents and visitors are invited to step back into history and mingle with statesmen, soldiers and others from the Revolutionary War. The event features recreations of historic events that occurred in Charlottesville, including military skirmishes, political town meetings, religious gatherings and festive music, dancing and games. Historians in authentic costume portray famous characters as they roam through the streets of downtown.

### **58. “Bars and Bordello” Tour, Washington**

Port Townsend, Washington had a rather colorful past as a Victorian era seaport community. During the annual Victorian Festival, volunteer actors recreate “scenes” from this era in downtown historic buildings. Small vignettes are enacted in 10 different locations.

### **59. Downtown Bike Maps on the Web, Kentucky**

The Louisville Downtown Management District draws attention to a web site that shows bike paths and points of interest in the downtown area. Sponsored by the City of Louisville Public Works Department in partnership with local bicycle clubs and other city agencies, the site displays shared-road bicycle paths, off-road routes, bike parking facilities, restrooms and water fountains. The maps encourage visitors explore the downtown’s hidden architectural treasures and to enjoy its ice creameries and soda fountains.

### **60. Downtown’s Cookin’, North Carolina**

Merchants and other business people in downtown Henderson, North Carolina were asked to submit their best recipes for a *Historic Henderson Cookbook*. Many stores displayed the book, which is sold at a local bookstore. The goal was to generate favorable publicity for downtown, as well as to publicize and promote the historic buildings by featuring them in the book. A spin is to include “historic” recipes, as well as contemporary and launch the book as a special event to link good eating and history.

### **61. Chautauqua Birthday Book, Colorado**

School children in grades 4-9 were invited to tour Chautauqua Park in Boulder, Colorado and work with art teachers to draw the historic buildings, write their own history of Chautauqua, create word search and crossword puzzles and write stories and poems about this historic district. The children’s art and writings were combined into a 20-page *100th Birthday Book By Kids for Kids*. The book’s centerfold featured a scavenger hunt to lead children (and their parents) to many of the historic landmarks. If the child was able to find all the answers, a prize awaited at the final stop on the hunt – the Chautauqua Gift Shop. Ten thousand copies of the booklet were printed and given out free of charge at the Chautauqua Centennial events and at the Chautauqua Dining Hall to diners with children.

### **62. A Minute of History, Rhode Island**

A local news station carried one-minute history spots during the 350th anniversary of the founding of Rhode Island in 1986. The spots were researched by the Rhode Island Historical Society and prepared by the local TV station. The spots aired during the evening news throughout the entire anniversary year.

### **63. Traditional Games Event, Montana**

The International Traditional Games Society in Montana held a traditional games event on the Blackfeet Reservation. Blackfeet artisans researched traditional Native American games, and artists created the pieces for the games. The event featured demonstrations of the games.

### **64. Chautauqua History Events, Colorado**

To celebrate their centennial, the Colorado Chautauqua Association sponsored a variety of history-based events. One event was “Teddy Bear Day,” a Victorian tradition where children

bring their teddy bears to tea (although in this case, every child who came to this free event went home with a new teddy bear and had a chance to see a puppet show about Teddy Roosevelt and the Teddy Bear.) Another was a game of baseball – played in costume and according to the rules of baseball from 1900.

#### **65. Oral History Video, Colorado**

A local television station worked with the Colorado Chautauqua Association to prepare a video that included interviews with many elderly Chautauqua residents. Their reminiscences of life at Chautauqua over the past century have now been captured for future generations. The video ran on public television and was also offered for sale by the Chautauqua Centennial Celebration Committee.

#### **66. Centennial Cottage & Chautauqua Tent, Colorado**

The Colorado Chautauqua Association restored one of their rental cottages to its turn-of-the-century appearance. The Centennial Cottage will be used for rentals and will be featured on tours of the historic district. In addition, one of the original tents from Chautauqua's early pre-cabin days was located, restored and featured at a variety of events throughout the year. The tent was furnished just as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century tents were, and guides were on hand to offer tours and provide security.

#### **67. Pecan Festival, Oklahoma**

The Annual Pecan Festival in Okmulgee, Oklahoma has been celebrating this local farm product every June since 1983. They began to bake bigger and bigger pies until they captured the world record in 1989 with a 40-foot diameter pie. Though they have since scaled back to a more manageable 10-foot diameter pie, the baking of the giant pecan pies and other cooking demonstrations are still a dramatic centerpiece of this local event.

#### **68. Pow Wow Primer, Wyoming**

The Wind River Heritage Center in Wyoming hosted the “Pow Wow Primer: Summer Native American Dance Exhibitions.” Visitors enjoyed the pow wow songs and dances and gained a deeper understanding of the importance of pow wows in Native American culture.

#### **69. Waterfire, Rhode Island**

To celebrate the revitalization of their waterfront, an event called Waterfire was sponsored in Providence, Rhode Island. Large dishes were constructed to hold bonfires on the river adjacent to the downtown. Bands appealing to a variety of musical tastes were stationed at key points along the riverwalk. Galleries and shops stayed open late to take advantage of strolling evening guests. Originally conceived as a one-time event, Waterfire proved to be so successful at bringing large numbers of people downtown it has now become a regular summer happening.

#### **70. Wagon Train, Tennessee**

The citizens of Tellico Plains recreated the route of the early settlers through southeast Tennessee with a wagon train ride. People could sign and pay to ride on all or part of the ride. Guides provided the history of the trip along the way and an arrival celebration was held at the conclusion of the trip.

## **71. Spirit of Tennessee**

A train was the setting for exhibits focusing on the development of business and commerce in Tennessee over 200 years. The exhibits transported visitors from the state's beginnings to its latest advancements in business.

## **72. Countywide Tour of Homes**

Organizers in one community put together a tour of homes that encompassed the entire county and reflected changing styles of architecture and decoration throughout the years. Flyers were printed to accompany the tour detailing different architectural styles and pointing out unique decorative elements.



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