

Describe Involvement during the current year in FOUR areas that your organization participates in.

The four areas the DPM participates in: Community Partnerships, Leadership & Mentorship, Engagement, and Outreach & Fundraising.

Community Partnerships

Local Schools

As a repository for local history, objects and archives, DPM is uniquely placed within the community to enhance schools and education institutions with programs on local history and activities tied to culture, art and science, including hands-on activities and educational games. We provide detailed and varied programs that align with South Dakota educational standards, and strive for interactive and experiential learning, where students use multiple senses and learn new skills to support the hard work South Dakota teachers are already doing. DPM's educational programs benefit teachers, students, parents, school administrators, and communities within Brown County. We provide educational programming at no cost to area schools, covering travel expenses, supplies, and program development while making multiple visits to elementary classrooms in the academic year. Students gain additional knowledge and insights from curators on subjects such as local landmarks and monuments, using a paper map, recognizing, and employing symmetry, many various accounts of local history, and learning about local wildlife. The people of Brown County benefit from the Museum's educational programs as students develop an interest and attention for local subjects in their town, county, and state. This connection is one that can endure to adulthood, developing fully engaged and enthusiastic citizens who are invested in their community.

On average, DPM curators make over 400 annual classroom visits and over 7,000 student interactions, mostly with students in preschool to third grade. DPM staff see students in every elementary school in Aberdeen, including public and private schools, in addition to visits to surrounding schools in Groton, Frederick, and Northwestern School in Mellette (with specially tailored Spink County content). Staff works hard to review, adjust, and enhance programs to align with changes in classrooms, incorporating content for interactive computer white boards (smart boards) now becoming standard in many classrooms. In addition to classroom visits, the museum education staff hosts nearly 500 elementary students for "Afternoon into the Past" (APAST) hands-on programming and an additional 600+ students for museum tours. The DPM Education Department continues to seek out ways to engage students.

Community Partners

DPM commits to being a good downtown neighbor in supporting the local business improvement district and providing quality content for organizations to recruit other businesses to Aberdeen and the downtown area. Having a museum downtown enhances the arts and culture in the heart of our community.

Our staff provides support for beautification of the core downtown with landscaping and sculptures. We also coordinate with the Aberdeen Downtown Association, K.O. Lee Public Library, Aberdeen Area Arts Council, Aberdeen Recreation & Cultural Center (ARCC), and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) on event scheduling to provide a wide range of activities for locals and visitors of all visitors.

We have an excellent working relationship with the CVB to showcase quality of life in Aberdeen and Brown County by providing tours to visiting groups and promotional marketing materials for outside groups. We also coordinate with the CVB to raise awareness of museum traveling exhibits that are bigger draws to the area.

As a member of the Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce, we have participated in Leadership Aberdeen, both by sending staff through the program and by hosting a tour and visit of the museum for each year's class. Additionally, we have relied on our chamber membership for mailing lists for our annual appeal and we provide a display for the non-profit showcase hosted by the Chamber each year.

Service Groups

The museum has a long-standing history of hosting service groups in our building such as PEO chapter meetings, organizing and hosting collaborative and community supported annual Christmas Tree Lane exhibit, and providing entertaining and educational content and updates on museum activities at community meetings and events. The DPM recently worked with the service group, Zonta, in the handover of their two time-capsules; one in Wylie Park due in 2050 and one in Melgaard Park scheduled to be exhumed in 2026, coinciding with the United States' 250th anniversary.

Library/ARCC

Since books cannot be sold at the public library, the DPM gift shop acts as a point of sale to offer featured books to patrons and support the K. O. Lee Public Library's All Aberdeen Reads program and various other author visits/book talks.

Our great working relationship with the Aberdeen Recreation and Cultural Center (ARCC) allows us to use their spaces for our student art workshops and to borrow the mobile stage for our annual fall event.

Leadership & Mentorship

Junior Docents

The Junior Docent program involves 6th grade students from Roncalli Elementary and began as an offshoot of Catholic Education Week over 29 years ago. The 6th grade students act as activity leaders for select visits to second grade classrooms (at both Roncalli and public school classrooms), practice scripts and act as tour guides of exhibits at the museum during Catholic Education week, and help during "Afternoon into the Past" program (APAST) visits at the end of the school year. Students learn leadership skills and gain public speaking experience.

Dakota Student Art Exhibition: The John Sieh Legacy

This event is for middle and high school students from approximately 20 North and South Dakota schools that showcase student artwork at the ARCC during one week in April every year. The program is held over the course of two days with gallery sessions and art workshops. In its 28 years it has provided constructive and supportive feedback to young artists while letting them learn new skills from professional artists in hands-on workshops. One student art piece is awarded "Best in Show" and additional "Judges Choice" awards are given in 6 different media categories. One school from each state is awarded the "Best Team" trophy. The Lora Schaunaman "Rising Star" award is awarded to a student who exhibits budding potential to grow artistically into the future. New in 2023 was an honorable mention for the best middle school art piece. Winners are publicly announced the Friday following the event. An open house is held for the public to view the gallery show of student artwork during the event at the ARCC's beautiful 2nd floor Library Auditorium. Student artists have gone on to be leaders in their field and thrive in the art world and the museum has received much positive feedback from both teachers and students.

Scholarships for Brown County Students

The Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation (DPMF) recently established a scholarship endowment. The scholarship is open to all Brown County, S.D. students (either residents of the county or attend a school/homeschool within the county) who plan to attend any technical, 2-year or 4-year accredited post-secondary school in South Dakota.

This scholarship presents an opportunity to expand educational resources available for a new generation of scholars from our county. It also encourages young people to look at staying in South Dakota to continue their education and perhaps inspire them to return to Brown County to establish a future here.

The scholarship program is based on the following criteria: applicants must be a resident, or student, of Brown County and submit a current transcript, two letters of recommendation, essay questions regarding their community involvement, connection to Brown County, and future plans.

Award recipients are decided by the Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation Scholarship Committee comprised of museum board members and museum staff. Award amounts of \$1,000 will be sent directly to the intended post-secondary school upon

confirmation of enrollment. In 2023 8 of 16 applicants were selected to receive the award. Students from Aberdeen, Columbia, and Groton received scholarships to attend Northern State University, South Dakota State University, and University of South Dakota.

Internships/Work Experience

Now in its third year, the museum summer intern is responsible for coordinating and implementing social media posts, event planning, coordination and staffing, gift shop assistance, basic research, gallery docent duties, and general duties to assist in the Education, Collections and Exhibits departments. Further, this position gives the student an opportunity to learn how to manage research projects, allocate resources, manage deadlines, and also develop engaging writing skills all while working in a team environment with a common goal. Interns leave with a greater application of how a cultural institution operates and a deeper knowledge of Aberdeen and Brown County history.

Engagement

Traveling Exhibits

The DPM is committed to bringing in a variety of traveling exhibits that reach all ages. Traveling exhibits require at least 18-24 months of planning, including downpayments, exhibit space accommodations, staff training, and marketing. The resulting bump in attendance during these exhibitions has shown us that our community seeks out and appreciates this type of engagement. Exhibits and targeted audiences have ranged from children's (toddler - elementary), STEM, STEAM+History (upper elementary - middle), to adult (history-themed, social awareness) with a variety of sizes and price points.

The value of traveling exhibits extends into our community by providing quality displays which are entertaining, not otherwise assessable locally, sharing new ideas, experiences, and perspectives, with professionally curated and educational content from reputable institutions (ie: Smithsonian, Minnesota Children's Museum, ScienCenter of Ithaca, NY). They provide a substantial draw for the museum as well as other community groups to utilize for their marketing and promotion of Aberdeen. The 2023 summer traveling exhibit, Thomas & Friends: Explore the Rails from the Minnesota Children's Museum brought train enthusiasts of all ages to the museum. It more than doubled our average daily attendance during the summer months!

Camps/Special Kids Programming

The DPM has engaged school children in various camps and educational program since the 1970s. The long-standing "Afternoon into the Past" (APAST) allows students the opportunity to touch, handle, and use select artifacts, make dip candles, use a table loom, scrub clothes on a washboard, and churn butter. These activities give a tactile connection to our homesteading/pioneer past.

History Camp, Art Camp and specially themed day programs, host over 200 kids each summer and have a long-standing tradition since the 1990s and 2000s. Hosted at the museum and Centennial Village at the Brown County Fairgrounds, these camps provide unique locations to frame historical content and art concepts. New in 2023 an experimental STEM camp was added to enhance the already robust summer program offerings as well as Railroad Camp to accompany the visiting Thomas & Friends: Explore the Rails traveling exhibit from the Minnesota Children's Museum.

Because winter can begin to feel monotonous in the upper Midwest, a series of art camps/workshops were implemented in March, called Mondays in March for preschool and elementary aged students. These camps are usually tied to the seasonal in-house children's exhibit in the Helen Bergh Education Room each February through March. A special session was recently added for homeschool families to enjoy art together.

Workshops

Adults benefit from a variety of workshop offerings each year. Most recently was Museum School, teaching participants how to store and preserve their own family "artifacts" and heirlooms. Classes focused on photography, textiles, documents and writing their own family histories. The biggest hit of any of the classes was the viewing of the 1981 Aberdeen Centennial quilt with its detailed stitching in the shape of wheat and nostalgic earth-tone color scheme.

Past and future adult workshops are planned to include book talks by local and regional authors with subject matter pertinent to our area's history and population.

Events

We enjoy bringing more people to the museum for a variety of events, our hope is that there is something for everyone's interest. This includes receptions for local artists during the run of their art exhibition. Artists love to share and talk about their artwork and what inspires them. The next upcoming reception in fall of 2023 is for the 2nd Biennial Artists of the Prairie art show for artists from Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Over 30 artists have participated in this exhibition previously and a substantial show is anticipated later this year.

The DPM excels at community events with a historic twist. The annual Harvest Stroll was born out of the pandemic year of 2020 when our staff wanted to reach out to our community in a safe and healthy manner. We invited patrons to "stroll" by our building, pick up a fall activity kit, a cookie and hot cider, register for the holiday raffle and view student artwork displayed in the large first floor windows. It was a hit with over 140 people attending. The next year the outdoor event was expanded to include pumpkin decorating, carnival style games, live music, and, of course, more hot cider and cookies. That year over 900 people attended. In 2023, the event will expand again with a larger footprint to accommodate crowds and allow for more amenities and programming.

New (but actually revamped) this year will be a Living History Evening event at the Museum for all ages. Previously the DPM had hosted a History Alive event at Centennial Village which was discontinued due to the challenges of using a satellite location and attendance. Taking cues from many successful programs onsite at the museum that have been successful, the Living History concept will be evolved into a "Special Night at the Museum". In October the DPM will offer lantern tours of the exhibits with characters that "come to life but not in a scary way" to tell the stories of the people of the Dakota prairie.

The annual Holiday Open House has been an anticipated event in our community for nearly a decade. This event combines Christmas Tree Lane, Jolly ol' St. Nick, activity stations, cookie decorating, live music, and refreshments. Between 800-900 patrons visit the museum that day. It puts a nice cap on the museum year and everyone takes home pleasant holiday memories.

Volunteers... Make it all happen!

None of our activities or events would be possible without the 2,200+ hours volunteers donate to us each year. They handle the front desk to greet and direct visitors, work in the gift shop, help with educational programming, perform collection/artifact tasks, and help set up and take down exhibits and events. There are several collections projects ready for volunteers to step in; among which are recording blueprints and cataloging reference books. The impact of having the reception desk and gift shop staffed by volunteers to free up staff to accomplish other duties is significant!

The United Way's Day of Champions every April sends us student athletes that have moved large artifacts and bound newspapers to our storage units, hauled debris from the basement, reclaimed artifacts from storage containers, deconstructed and reconstructed shelving units, etc. One day of labor from a dozen students accomplished more than staff could do in a week or more.

All of this, along with Junior Docents, enables us to devote more time and concentration on continuing our mission.

Outreach & Fundraising

Pickleball Tournament

Pickle on the Prairie! In 2023 the museum instituted Aberdeen's inaugural pickleball tournament to benefit the Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation. It was billed as an event for those that already play pickleball or just "pickle-curious" and want to know more about the sport. Many joined the Aberdeen players to have fun and raise money for the Dacotah Prairie Museum. Aberdeen pickleball enthusiasts are eager to share their love of the game and bring more people into the sport. It was a fun way to raise funds for the museum and accomplish the pickleball player's goal at the same time.

This year hosted 56 players at the Holum Expo building on the Brown County Fairgrounds with another 90+ people coming by to offer support or to just check out the sport. The response from the pickleball community was overwhelmingly positive and the DPM will host this event again next year.

Annual Appeal

With all of the programs, camps, gallery upgrades, and traveling exhibits, it's necessity for the museum to raise funds to supplement our operational county budget and our foundation endowments. The annual appeal has been recently updated and streamlined with QR code links and online donation through the new Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation website. It's vital to continue raising funds to support our mission and work well into the future.

Offsite Exhibits

The DPM currently hosts photography exhibits at the Chamber and CVB offices and will soon open an exhibition in the Milwaukee Depot called "Open for Business" with historic scenes from early Aberdeen business. In partnership with the CVB, themed artifacts are on display in the kiosk at the Aberdeen Regional Airport. Upon request, the DPM has furnished exhibits for the library, South Dakota Snow Queen Festival, Mayor's ADA Advisory Committee, NSU Constitution Day, school reunions, and other gatherings.

Activities at other Festivals

The DPM provides interactive booths at the annual Fort Sisseton Historical Fest, Oktoberfest, The NE Celtic Faire, Brown County Fair, and at other various events by request.

Why does your business deserve this award?

Our purpose and number one goal is to preserve and share the stories of the Dakota Prairie and its inhabitants. We ask ourselves if we are meeting this purpose with our programming and events.

More importantly are we making Aberdeen and Brown County a better place to live and work? Yes! We work hard to contribute to the overall quality of life in our community. We preserve the area's history to share with current and future generations and instill a sense of connection and belonging for in our youth. We bring new perspectives with our museum exhibits to get people thinking and talking. We support local art and culture. And ultimately, we want individuals and families to feel they have a welcoming, safe place to go that will enrich and entertain them, their family, and their friends.

If there were one unique idea that you would like to see for Aberdeen, what would it be?

This may not be unique but would make a significant impression on visitors to our community: more green spaces downtown and rehabilitate the unoccupied buildings on Main Street.