

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting  
March 2019 – April 2019

**1. AAM Reaccreditation:**

The Besser Museum must provide the AAM Accreditation Program staff an update on the space and collections management improvements that we've made by March 1, 2024. Work is ongoing in the following areas:

- a. Space reallocation:
  - i. We are waiting to hear back from R.S. Scott. They are still working on the drawings/plan
  - ii. Cranbrook Animal Collection: The museum has to decide if they are going to sell or give this collection to JJ's for an offsite educational exhibit. Proposal attached to April Board Packet
  - iii. I scanned all the original accession logs from 1966 to 2014 so there is a digital back up.
  - iv. Speaking with Past Perfect technical support to set up an Excel template so that volunteers can help with data entry. I also order some training DVDs from Past Perfect.
  - v. **CMU Museum Studies** instructor and students visited Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. One of the immediate concerns the students noticed were collections sitting on the floor.
    1. The Head of the Museum Studies and History Department and the Collections Manager of CMU Museum will be meeting with me soon to discuss further collaboration with CMU.
    2. I have established a relationship with ACC instructor, Tim Kuehnlein, as we have a few more work-study students filling their hours at the museum helping in various capacities.
- b. **Collections Management Policy and Procedure Manual.** I have discovered some deficiencies in our current and our proposed policy that I am working on. I have been in conversation with AAM, CMU, Mackinac State Parks to ensure our policies align with best practices and benefit the operations of the museum.

**2. HR Committee:** The Board of Trustees formed an ad-hoc HR Committee to help review the **Employee Handbook:** The handbook makes no mention of sick days or how to account for time off when sick. The handbook also states that employee vacations are determined by years of service, but that the vacation time resets at the start of the fiscal year. A Board discussion on both these topics needs to occur.

- a. Should vacation time be awarded on the employees' anniversary date?
- b. Should the handbook be revised to mention sick days (pay)? Should it be part of their vacation days? Should full-time employees receive up to 3 personal/sick days per year?
- c. I have sent the LARA Michigan State law for sick days, which only pertain to Attended and will be joining the Northern Michigan Human Resource Committee. They formed 30 years ago, and meet at ACC 9 times a year to discuss HR issues such as changing laws, practices, etc. They bring in guest speakers, glean from each other's years of experience, and hold training conferences.
- d. I will be participating in two HR webinars through Skill Path. I have also order training DVDs from Skill Path.

**3. Facilities:**

- a. I am waiting to hear from Susan Edwards from R.S. Scott Associates on the progress on their plan.
- b. Good Design submitted a first draft of an exhibit redesign for the upper level. This has been postponed until we hear back from R.S. Scott and also know where the Native American Gallery and Art Gallery will be located.

- c. Matt Klimczak's monthly Facility Report provides more details. Matt is currently doing an assessment of how much it cost to light each gallery in the museum. The most expensive gallery to light was the Wild Life Animal gallery.

#### 4. **Native American Exhibit Project: ONGOING**

- a. Communicating with Good Design to finish the exhibit concept and narrative.
- b. The Committee is meeting April 18<sup>th</sup> to review the research that has been conducted; review the conceptual design from Good Design; and decided on the next steps to further the project
- c. Research and development are ongoing.

#### 5. **Fisheries Exhibit:**

- a. Jim Johnson is arranging meetings with city officials to discuss plan B for the Chinook being added to the Fisheries Heritage Exhibit.
- b. Zach Irving completed the video interview tour with Tuffy. We will eventually get that up on the internet for self-guided tours.
- c. An interview with Albert LaBlance and his brothers is being arranged for June. Proposal for this project was presented to the Board. Funding will come from the restricted Katherine V exhibit fund.
  - i. The Katherine V restricted fund currently has \$5,148.93 available. The CFNEM Special Fund with designated funds for the Fisheries Exhibit has \$7,481.22.

#### 6. **Art:**

- a. **Erv Lewandowski & Mark Beins:** was extended to go through April 27<sup>th</sup> to be up during our AAM Community Celebration and open house for the Apollo 11 exhibit opening.
- b. **Erv Lewandowski** will hold Drawing Workshops this summer.
- c. **2019 Winter Blues:**
  - i. We had 67 entries at \$20 each for a total of \$1,340.
  - ii. We had 205 votes cast at \$1 each for a total of \$205
  - iii. We award \$200 to two winners for a total expense of -\$400
  - iv. We printed the brochures in house. With printing and postage, we paid \$-\$86.11
  - v. **Total Revenue from Winter Blues = \$1,058.89.**
- d. **Shirley Ritzler Art Exhibit and Fundraiser Proposal:** Shirley Ritzler is a local artist from the 1980--who has taken different elements from local homes and developed paper cutting art. For the past several months, research was conducted to evaluate the feasibility of using the prints of the original exhibit that was displayed at the Besser Museum in 1981 as a fundraiser and art exhibit. After working with Allegra Printing, it was decided, due to the low quality of the prints, that the best option would be to make have prints mounted on foam core for the exhibit. The cost of the exhibit would be \$850.00. It was also discussed that the best option for a possible item in the gift store was to make a coloring book, rather than note cards or postcards. The original prints do not print well on a small postcard or note card. However, the Ritzler family does not want a coloring book created using their mother's artwork. The family did suggest possibly having individual 8 x10s reproduced for sale. We are still discussing if these reproductions will sell in our gift shop.
- e. **The Besser Museum received the Alpena News Best of the Best for Art Galleries in 2019. That was an awesome surprise.**
- f. **May 15<sup>th</sup>** the Besser Museum is hosting an Alpena High School art exhibit. The exhibit is expected to run through August. We will also be hosting the NEMAG art exhibit in the Wilson Gallery May through September.
- g. Noel Skiba will be this year's Juried Art judge. We will also host an exhibit by Noel Skiba in the Wilson Gallery in January 2020 through September 2020.

## **7. Collections:**

- a. The Museum needs to decide on how we want to proceed with the Cranbrook Animal education collection and if we want to transfer the collection to John Benson for display at JJs. The Besser Museum will provide the educational materials for the outreach program.
- b. There are some changes that need to be made to our current collections management policy.
- c. Besser Museum is working with CMU, AAM, and other professional colleagues to achieve intellectual and physical control of our collections.

## **8. Education:**

- a. The Education Coordinator is receiving several field trip bookings for the Spring Field trips.
- b. I will be going to Rockport with Fish and Wildlife Services to host a field trip in the quarry.
- c. The Besser Museum is working with 100 High School students on a special Place-Based education project. The students are creating an exhibit on Jewish Resistance during WWII. The exhibit is set to open in June and run through August.

## **9. Planetarium Highlights:**

- a. Besser Museum received \$4,000 CFNEM grant for the Apollo 11 exhibit which included buying a planetarium presentation about Apollo 11. We received a \$700 CFNEM Youth Advisory grant in support of the July 20<sup>th</sup> Free Family Fun Day.
- b. Working is ongoing for the Apollo 11<sup>th</sup> exhibit and programs. The plans are as follows:
  - i. May 30 a Communication Conversation facilitated by ACC instructor, Tim Kuehnlein
  - ii. July 13 a moon gazing/telescope event at Rockport
  - iii. July 20 a free family fun day to celebrate the first man on the moon.
- c. Working is ongoing to create a planetarium focus group to provide programming feedback.
  - i. John Caplis and Kristin Sharpe are working with Johnathan. He has received instruction on writing lesson plans. Johnathan has visited both Kristin and John's classrooms to do classroom observation.
  - ii. Thunder Bay Theater Director, Jeff Mindock will be working with Johnathan and the staff to develop presentation skills and team building.
- d. The March Museum Membership Appreciation campaign offering free planetarium passes to members from March 11 – March 31 was well received. All visitors will provide survey. We hosted shows seven days of the week. The planetarium surveys are continuing to be used. Johnathan is also collecting antidotal notes about the visitor's experiences in the planetarium.

## **10. Other:**

- a. Accounting: I am continuing to work with Marie Williams making changes to the accounting system. Improvements are being made to utilizing the donor restricted funds as appropriate. We will continue to finalize the new accounting system after the April 15<sup>th</sup> Tax Season. We will also work on the new budget for the next fiscal year that starts July 1, 2019.
- b. Kennedy Lundquist is an ACC work-study student assigned to the Besser Museum through one of her ACC instructors. Kennedy is majoring in Business/Marketing/Advertising and will be working on helping create a marketing plan starting with an advertising schedule. Kennedy will help organize all the markets where the museum can advertise both free and paid.
- c. May Museum Membership Drive kicked off in the newsletter and we are already receiving positive responses from that campaign. The campaign will run through May 31<sup>st</sup>.