

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
April/May 2025

DATA SUMMERY OF ACTIVITIES IN APRIL

Collections Management	April
Major Activities	Number
New Accessions	8
Artifacts cataloged	885
Artifacts inventoried	517
Inquiries handled	12

Attendance April	2025	2024
Adult	149	86
Senior	63	46
Child	47	32
Free	176	68
TOTAL	435	232

Museum Memberships	April
Membership Renewals	28
New Memberships	7

Planetarium	March 2025	2024
Adult	40	46
Child	10	23

School Field Trips, April 2024 we had 220 students – April 2025 we had 173. Almost all field trips include the students visiting the planetarium.

In April 2024, we also held the Solar Eclipse event and 624 attended. (That income is reflected in the financials.)

GOVERNANCE: June 17th is the Membership Meeting and election of new Board Members.

1. June will be the last meeting for Claudia Chapman (10yrs), Tuffy Cross (10yrs), Michelle Miller (10yrs), Janet Young (9yrs) and Jim Johnson (9yrs). Jim will opt to stay on another year if the board chooses according to the bylaws.
2. According to the bylaws, the Board will consist of no less than 12 and no more than 21. We have consistently tried to maintain a board of 15 members. We have one new board candidate up for nomination, Linda Baker. Her application was presented to the Board in April. I meet with her on May 16 to go over board roles and expectations. She will be sending her bio that will be included in the Membership newsletter and proxy letter that will be sent to all member a least ten days before the June meeting according to the bylaws.
3. As of right now, with Jim remaining on the board and Linda Baker stepping on the board, we are at eleven board members. I have reached out to a few potential board candidates and am waiting to hear back.

FACILITY:

1. Facility Manager Matt Klimczak is seeking estimates for the Spratt Church roof. The roof is missing shingles. The church was brought to the museum in September of 1990 and there is no record of the roof being replaced since its arrival, which is now 35 years ago. The church windows still need some repairs, and the exterior of the building needs to be painted.

2. Matt has secured an estimate from Lakeshore Plumbing and Heating for a boiler pump. There are two pumps on the system. They automatically rotate usage to extend the life of each pump and also serve as back-ups if one fails. Recently, one failed. The estimate and photos are available on the museum's website under Board Information.
3. Matt is getting an estimate from TRC roofing for the museum roof over the Trelfa Gallery. We have had issues with water draining off that corner of the roof in the past. We are experiencing this again. The water is washing away the earth in front of the concrete flowerbeds. When we had the roof repaired over the new history exhibit due to leaks, TRC we had a couple more years before the entire roof will need to be replaced.
4. The side parking lot needs to have the cracks filled in with blacktop filler.
5. Matt and I met the Brad Jensen, Executive Director of Huron Pines, to discuss the invasive species clean up on the museum grounds and educational interpretation for our Nature Trail. We also discussed input for the lower-level exhibit and possible rehousing the leaf collection to another visitor center in his jurisdiction.
6. We met with three volunteers to discuss the museum's landscaping and flower beds.
 - a. Maryln Bloomberg, Lisa Dahlinger and Linda Baker will be working on watering and weeding. They will also plant some annuals for color in the front and back planters. We are in need of several more volunteers to help. Museum Assistant, Nicole Page is calling several of the individuals listed in our volunteer database. Many are unable to do this type of physical activity.
7. There is still a lot of debris from the ice storm that needs to be cleaned up behind the Historic Village and on the Nature Trail. Matt sent out an email to museum members asking for help. We got one volunteer, Bruce Honeycutt, who came on May 15 to work with Matt and Nicole to help with the cleanup. I will be bringing in my little electric chainsaw to help with smaller branches. We could still use volunteer help.

EUDCATION:

1. **Spring Field Trips:** There are approximately 934 students, plus their teachers and chaperones visiting the museum for field trips this spring.
 - a. The students love their museum experience: especially the new exhibit. Their all-time favorite is the fossil park.
 - b. The educational booklets I developed work perfectly to engage the students in the new history exhibit. These booklets also serve as marketing materials as they go home with the students with the museum's logo and information about the new exhibit.
 - c. I am also using the Fish booklet created last year.
 - d. Museum staff, Sarah, Nicole, and John Heath have been working with me to host the students. Besser Museum Board members, Tuffy Cross and Jim Johnson are helping host students at the Great Lakes Fisheries Exhibit. Sara Winter will help out in the Green School for a few of the field trips.
2. **Alpena Public School Summer Program:** received a grant to run their summer enrichment programs again this year. I will be running four programs, two in July and two in August. The Besser Museum will receive \$2,520 for the four sessions
3. **4-H Summer Program:** are planning on bringing two groups to the museum sometime this summer. Dates need to be confirmed.

HISTORY EXHIBIT:

1. PHASE 2:

- a. Split Rock Studios will be submitting a contract for the schematic design phase soon. According to their estimate for the lower-level exhibit project, this should be approximately \$91,000. This will produce the graphic design images needed for the fundraising campaign.
 - b. We are still waiting on the million-dollar grant proposal for the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Community Museum Grant Program to be announced sometime in May.
 - c. An interpretative concept for the lower-level exhibit was drafted.
 - i. I meet with Tim Kent to discuss the exhibit concept and talk about the potential use of space for this French, British, and Early Colonial Period exhibits that will be displayed in the lower level.
 - ii. Community content experts will be invited to join an exhibit committee. Any board member is welcome to participate in this committee.
2. Omega is working the donor wall. Should be installed by the end of May.
 3. The new Alpena Flyer exhibit reader rails are expected to be shipped by May 30.

STAFF:

- Angela Addington started as the Creative Media Specialist May 13. Her first assignment is to clean up the website.
 - Angela cleaned up the new logo, making adjustments to balance the image and adding new font that fits the image and streamlines everything. These small tweaks look great.
 - Angela and I have been discussing the changes needed to the overall look of the website and how it should function. She will spend the bulk of her time and energy on reworking the website starting with the home page, which will feature the new exhibit, along with other exhibits currently on display.
 - Angela is also helping with social media posts and designing newspaper ads.

GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

• Chinook:

- Jim Johnson is putting in an enormous amount of time and energy working on the interpretation panels for the Chinook exhibit.
- Good Design Group is continuing to refine the schematic design and secure bids from subcontractors for the fabrication and installation. They have projected that the installation will occur by August/September.
- We received an extension on our grant deadline. We now have until April 30, 2026, to complete this grant funded project.
- We received an advancement on the DNR grant in the amount of \$151,079. This money was electronically deposited into the museum's Nicolet bank account and will help cover for the expenses on going expenses.

Planetarium:

- The planetarium is still operating with one projector.
 - a. I am in communication with Norbert Vance from Eastern Michigan University.
 - b. Eastern Michigan University recently upgraded in 2023. The system installed is a Digitalis Education Solutions "Digitalium Lambda" which comes in at around \$100,000 versus \$300,000 and up. For more information on this system:
https://www.digitaliseducation.com/products-digitalium_lambda_fixed.html

- c. Norbert will be stopping by the museum on May 30th for a visit and discuss options for our planetarium. Mike Beaulac, Gary Goren, John Heath, and Matt Klimczak have been invited to this meeting.
- d. The Besser Museum would like to add a digital program to our planetarium library called Seasonal Stargazing. That will give audience a short presentation on what constellations and other astronomical features can be seen in the night sky for each season. Here is the link to read more about the program. You will see the price for a 20-year license is based on the size of our planetarium dome. This would be a great addition to our digital library, because that is what a lot of visitors want to see. John would normally do a star talk before a featured film, but again, he is unable to do that right now because of equipment failure.
https://www.lochnessproductions.com/shows/ssg/ssg_flyer.pdf

- **Planet/History Walk:**

- Gary Goren is putting in a lot of time and energy in the planet walk project.
- Gary Goren submitted a grant Youth and Rec grant. \$34,479
- Gary has also been in contact with Fossil Inc. This company designs and fabricated durable outside signage for exhibit like this.
- Angela Addington will work with Gary on graphic design for the signs. One side will be planetarium information, and the other side will be Alpena history information. Sarah will be able to provide photos and information of the history.

Misc.

- Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Audit and 990 Tax Return have been completed. I submitted the documents to the State of Michigan Charitable Trust Section to renew our Solicitation License. It expires June 30, 2025.
- I will be out of the office the week of June 9 -13th. I will be participating in an American Alliance of Museums reaccreditation peer review at The History Museum in South Bend, Indiana June 11, 12, and 13. AAM has been inviting me to be a peer reviewer for a few years now and I finally accepted the invitation. This will help me prepare for our reaccreditation. Besser Museum's next Self-Study is due March 1, 2028. After AAM received the self-study, they schedule peer-reviewers to visit our site and do an assessment of our operation, including programs, facility, etc. This report is submitted to AAM for determination of accreditation status.
- We will start planning for the June 28th Log Cabin Day event.