

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2021



**LIVING
HISTORY
FARMS**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of Living History Farms, I would like to express our deepest gratitude for the outpouring of community support we experienced in 2021.

As the pandemic continued to challenge us all in new ways, we continued to adapt our programming to serve the community in new ways. Participation bounced back nearly to pre-COVID levels in many of our programs, including Day Camps, Barnyard Readers, and many special events. However, challenges persisted for schools, leading many to drop field trip experiences from their offerings. That void is slowly being refilled.

This year we welcomed guests from 47 states. I would like to highlight three significant partnerships that promoted Living History Farms as a cultural destination to our many stakeholders in 2021:

- We celebrated our 25th year as a partner of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area and renewed our commitment. As a partner site, Living History Farms helps celebrate Iowa's contribution to world agriculture.
- Our partnership with Harvest Hosts exploded as RVers from across America visited Living History Farms in record numbers.
- In 2021, we continued our lifelong journey toward cultural competence, enhanced through Bravo Greater Des Moines' opportunity to collaborate with other nonprofit organizations in the Des Moines metro's arts and culture sector in order to build capacity in the areas of inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. This is



a key area of focus that remains at the forefront of our new five-year strategic plan.

We are grateful for their continued partnership.

Living History Farms also received a historic amount of government support in 2021. We secured a second fully-forgiven Paycheck Protection Program loan and competitive funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act/American Rescue Plan, and we are in the process of applying for the employee retention tax credit.

Private support continues to be the foundation that sustains us and helps us serve the community. Hundreds of individuals and families, together, helped us surpass our annual support goal, assuring that we could continue to adapt, to innovate, and to become a more inclusive and representative museum.

As we look ahead to 2022, we are excited to bring stories of under-represented communities to the forefront of our

programming initiatives, thanks in large part to a generous competitive grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Our small professional staff is in the process of rebuilding. In the fourth quarter of 2021, we hired a curator, an event planner, and a program registrar. Postings for additional positions can be found at LHF.org/Employment. We are returning to pre-COVID staffing levels more quickly than anticipated thanks to generous community support and the federal grants we have been awarded.

Last, but not least, I want to say how grateful we all are for the time and talents of our volunteers, young and old. These 500+ volunteers supported us in countless ways in programming, maintenance, and general operations. We are humbled and grateful for their dedication to our mission. I also want to personally thank Dave Austin, our Board Chairman (2020-2021), who is retiring this year. His leadership and that of the entire board supported the organization through these past two years, the most difficult in our history.

Living History Farms has just adopted a five-year strategic plan for 2022-2026. It is not only a recovery plan from the historic COVID pandemic of 2020-2021, but one that will ensure that the museum will thrive as a vibrant and relevant place in the community. This strategic plan will leverage our 51-year history as a trusted cultural institution in our community for high-quality historical programming and respectful dialogue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Haus'.

Ruth Haus, President

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FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)



2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION "Cultivating our future by experiencing our past."

MISSION "Living History Farms is an interactive outdoor history museum, which educates and connects all peoples to the many stories of Midwestern rural heritage."

CORE VALUES

- Hands-on experiences
- Inter-generational learning
- Authenticity
- Community engagement
- Diverse rural/agricultural histories
- Fun

GOALS

- Cultivate a community of life-long learning with robust programming.
- Create a richer, more diverse and dynamic visitor experience.
- Build meaningful connections with the community as a cultural heritage destination.
- Preserve the legacy and financial stability of LHF. ■

PROGRAMMING

SUMMER DAY CAMP



"I just wanted to say again what a great job you all do with camp! Attending LHF camp was one of my favorite summer memories as a child, so I was really happy that my daughter enjoyed it as much as I did."

"Wow! We did the 1900 house dinner and just loved it. The food was so delicious. The staff was personable and knowledgeable. I don't think there was a question we could ask that they wouldn't have known the answer to. Even the animals seemed to be performing for us. We were so entertained that I didn't notice the time flying."

WINTER BREAK CAMP



The 2021 theme of **farm power** was highlighted in programs old and new, in-person and virtual. We explored the sources of power to work in the field, barnyard, and farmhouse, and we extended the theme to include ways rural people were empowered through purchasing choices, community celebrations, and even legal systems.

Spring Break Camp included two new topics: "Garden Sprouts," focused on raising vegetables and fruits,

and "Farm Hands," allowing older campers to participate in livestock and household chores at the 1900 Farm. "Forms of Power" was a new **Summer Day Camp** session for sixth- and seventh-graders. They learned about the power provided by draft animals, machines, and humans, while exploring the social, economic, and political power of Iowa's farm families. We awarded 25 scholarships, again made possible through the support of the Meier Bernstein Foundation. **Winter Break Camp** was the best-

attended in six years.

Educational offerings including **school visits** continued to rebound from the 2020 COVID drop. Most **Historic Skills Classes** sold out quickly, especially those involving blacksmithing. Our **Barnyard Readers** series for preschoolers included a new spring program on "Baby Chicks." Summer featured the ever-popular "Farm Animal" series, and the "Harvest &

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PROGRAMMING (CONTINUED)



WOOD STOVE
COOKING WITH KIDS



BARNYARD READERS

Holidays” programs in the fall also sold out. **Homeschool Days** in May and September highlighted activities and demonstrations of traditional forms of power. At our Farmstasia Gala in October, we honored **Teacher of the Year** Dave Gascho, a fourth-grade teacher at Ankeny Christian Academy. He has been bringing students to Living History Farms for more than two decades.

Throughout the touring season, **historic demonstrations** highlighted the power needed to plant and harvest gardens and fields. In spring and early summer, the 1700 Ioway Farm and 1850 Pioneer Farm hand-planted gardens and engaged guests in weeding and hoeing with period-appropriate tools. Later in summer, 1850 farmers demonstrated a hand-powered flail to process grain, while sharing their knowledge of oxen power. At the 1900 Horse-Powered Farm, staff cut oats with an early 20th-century horse-drawn oat binder.



“I feel it is important that fourth-graders have a strong understanding of how blessed they are to live in such a great state with beautiful rolling hills and some of the best farmland in the world! I want them to understand the hard work ethic that goes into farming and the pioneering spirit which kept former Iowans progressing forward with new and inventive ways of growing and harvesting crops. In my mind, the experience students receive from attending Living History Farms is invaluable. It helps our fourth-graders live out a piece of Iowa history that makes it come alive for them.”

—Dave Gascho, Living History Farms 2021 Teacher of the Year

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PROGRAMMING (CONTINUED)

TOUR AT 1850



GRAIN HARVEST

For **Grain Harvest** day in August, the 1900 Farm hosted a steam engine crew and their historic Rumely Co. engine, which powered the museum's 1929 McCormick-Deering All Steel Grain Threshing Machine. Guests could help pitch bundles of oats into the thresher and watch as the machine separated grain from stem and chaff. These oats helped to fuel our horses during the fall and winter. Grain Harvest day also included a ceremony renewing our partnership with the Silos and Smokestacks Heritage Area.

In the 1876 town of **Walnut Hill**, interpreters offered a look at new technology for the period treadle sewing machines in the Millinery, treadle-driven presses in the Print Shop, and drill presses, wheel straighteners, and forge bellows in the Blacksmith Shop. A circuit court re-creation in June showed a "jury" of museum guests how farmers and townspeople accessed the power of the justice system, based on Iowa court cases of the 1870s.

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PROGRAMMING (CONTINUED)



SPINNING AT 1850



INDIGENOUS IOWANS DAY

In October, we debuted a new event to celebrate the legacy of native cultures that farmed the land now called Iowa. **Indigenous Iowans Day** offered a variety of presentations on indigenous culture. Speakers were Ioway tribal historian Lance Foster, Cherie Haury-Artz from the Office of the State Archaeologist, Iowa State University professor Dr. Christina Gish Hill, and ISU graduate student Emma Herrighty. At the 1700 Ioway Farm, demonstrations included flint knapping, spear throwing, and corn braiding. Guests could grind corn in a mortar and savor the smells of cooking on an open fire.

Historic Dinners returned in 2021, with health and safety precautions in place. This year marked the second season for fall Flynn Harvest Home Dinners and a limited return of Triskaideka "13" Dinners. For those not able to attend a dinner, our bakers offered the fan favorite 1900 Farm buttermilk chocolate cakes for sale for Valentine's Day. ■

COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES & EXHIBITS



THRIFT STYLE

Collections and Exhibits started the year with the premiere of a new **Jr. Curator Camp** in January. Children were able to follow Living History Farms' curator for a day, experiencing unique historical artifacts up close and visiting behind-the-scenes places typically off-limits to guests. The day concluded with the kids creating mini exhibits of their interests or pets.



JR. CURATOR CAMP

In July, the **Thrift Style exhibit** opened in the LHF Market Place Gallery. This exhibit looked at the "upcycling" of feed sackcloth to make clothing and other household items in the 1920s and '30s. Featuring 41 upcycled garments, it illustrated past ingenuity and highlighted sustainable practices. Thrift Style was organized by The Historic Costume and Textile Museum and the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, both at Kansas State University, and ExhibitsUSA, a program of Mid-America Arts Alliance.

The Visitor Center also hosted a display from the State Historical Museum of Iowa titled "**Iowa's People & Places**," honoring the 175th anniversary of statehood. The display traced 13,000 years of Iowa history, from the first indigenous inhabitants through the Louisiana Purchase and the Civil War to the 20th century and present day.

2021 was also a big year for **artifact restoration** and saw the recaning of multiple historic chairs by hand. Caned chairs have been around for centuries



IOWA'S PEOPLE & PLACES

but became popular in European colonies (including the United States) during the 17th and 18th centuries. ■

EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENTS



From Easter to Christmas, special events drew families to Living History Farms for crafts, games, wagon rides, and treats all year long.

Family Easter in April was the first of our holiday celebrations. Guests enjoyed egg rolling, relays, pancake races, and visits with the Easter Bunny, as well as a chance to meet real-life bunnies and baby chicks.

During our touring season, we tailored activities for **special event Saturdays** including Decoration Day, Independence Day, Fido on the Farms, and Applefest, our busiest Saturday of the year. Visitors could help press apple cider at the 1900 Farm, print apple recipes in the Print Shop, guess apple pie spices in the Drug Store, and meet—who else?—Snow White at the Gazebo.

October brought two consecutive weekends of **Family Halloween**. Storytellers spun tales at the Flynn Barn while trick-or-treaters walked through Walnut Hill collecting trinkets and candy. Madame Zara told fun



FAMILY HALLOWEEN

fortunes at the Millinery, and games at the gazebo included pumpkin bowling, sack races, and relays.

Family Christmas, the first Saturday in December, gave visitors a chance to take a wagon ride to Walnut Hill and participate in period Christmas preparations. Music ranged from jazz at the Visitor Center to sing-along carols at the Church of the Land to Victorian carolers at the Flynn Mansion.

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3,913
FAMILY HALLOWEEN

1,523
FAMILY EASTER

364
FAMILY CHRISTMAS

12
WEDDINGS

31
**DAYS OF HOLIDAY
LIGHTS**

"I always learn something new, every single visit. Everyone who works here is so kind, and all of the holiday and special events are so much fun."



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Despite the lingering COVID-19 pandemic, Living History Farms served as a venue throughout the year for a variety of community events. Health Gauge provided essential community health services daily in the first quarter of 2021 with their **drive-up COVID testing** station. Literally thousands of tests were administered.

Spring brought many **weddings, receptions, and meetings**. Among them, Ministry Life held their annual retreat on the grounds in April. Twelve weddings and nine wedding receptions were held at our Church of the Land and Historic Flynn Barn. A graduation party, a home school dance, and Dowling Catholic High School's 50-year class reunion also took place here. The Food and Family Project,



Iowa Radiology, and the National Pork Council held events here. In August, the **Mustang Car Show** returned to showcase these classic car collectors.

We closed out the year with the

ever-popular **Santa's Rock n Lights** display for thousands of people to enjoy during the holiday season. We want to thank the community for the opportunity to serve as a venue for these special moments in your lives. ■

STAFF

PRESIDENT

Ruth Haus

COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES & EXHIBITS

Jaime Nicolet Rutan

Lindsey Smith

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Jim Dietz-Kilen

Siri Hippler

Stacie Hooker

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Cody McCormick

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Tiffany Waggoner

Kerstin Wallace

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Kennedi Wright ■



DAVE HAUGE



STACIE HOOKER



SUMMER DAY CAMP COUNSELORS



MELINDA CARRIKER



MIKE WITMER

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Have we told you lately what a huge impact your support has on our museum and its ability to serve the community? Well, let us tell you again!

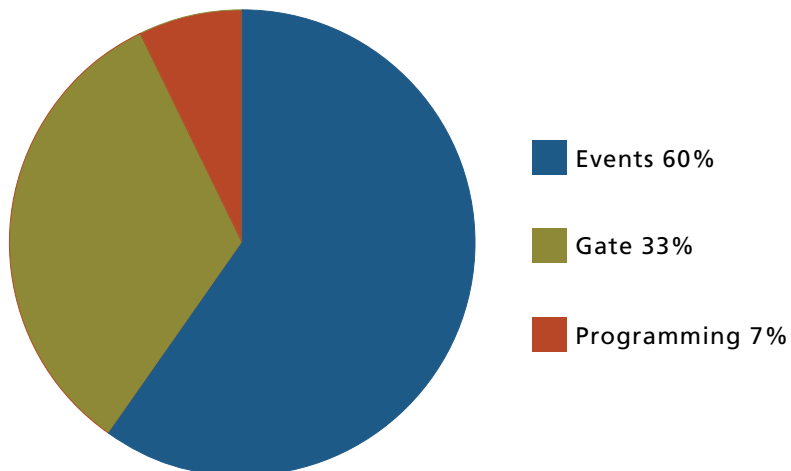
Your support has allowed us to begin rebuilding our staff, programs, and community impact more quickly than we could have imagined when we planned for 2021. Those plans, developed in the most dire days of the pandemic, called for each person on our reduced staff to take on additional responsibilities.

Government grants, funded through

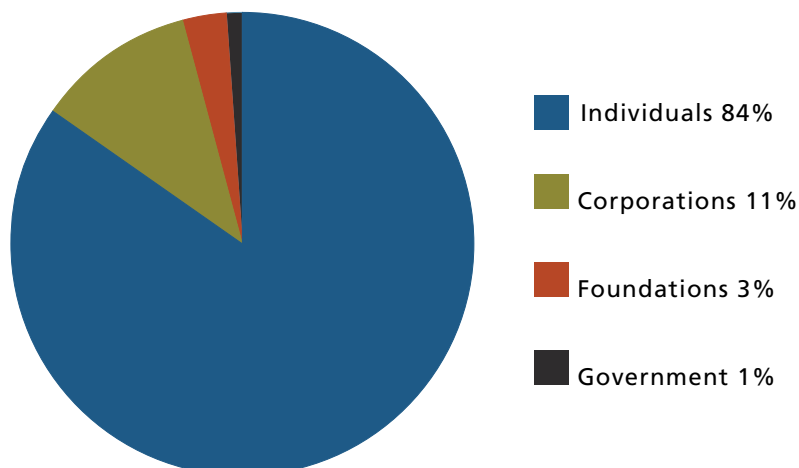
the federal CARES Act, have already helped us restore several positions. At the same time, your support has sustained and expanded the programs we provide to the community. These include new initiatives to better represent the histories of the indigenous peoples, immigrants, and Black Iowans who helped shape our state.

Many thanks to every one of the individuals, companies, foundations, and organizations listed on the following pages who helped us exceed our fundraising goals and kept history alive during 2021!

ATTENDANCE BY CATEGORY



DONORS BY CATEGORY



80,594
TOTAL
ATTENDANCE

2,090
MEMBERS

430
INDIVIDUAL
DONORS

54
CORPORATE &
FOUNDATION
DONORS

508
INDIVIDUAL
VOLUNTEERS

10
CORPORATE
VOLUNTEER
GROUPS

10,000+
HOURS
VOLUNTEERED

100%
BOARD GIVING

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VOLUNTEERS

This year, **508 community volunteers** contributed 10,044 hours at Living History Farms. Among them were:

- 15 English Language Learner students from Valley High School who assisted with a service project in September.
- 88 high school students who volunteered as Junior Counselors at Summer Day Camp.
- 6 volunteer members of the LHF Education Advisory Committee, who continue to provide valuable input about the museum's educational programming.

In addition, **10 local companies** contributed 324 employee hours:

- Bridgestone Americas Tire Inc
- ITA Group
- Target - Valley West
- Nebraska Furniture Mart
- Brick Gentry
- Iowa Veterinary Medical Association
- IMT
- Wells Fargo
- Venerablea
- Shazam

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IMT AT 1700 FARM



VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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University Adjunct Professor

Ruth Haus Ex Officio

COMMUNITY RELATIONS CONTINUED



FAMILY HALLOWEEN

Volunteers assisted with:

- Interpretation at historic sites
- Historic Baseball
- Event support for Easter, Halloween, and Christmas
- Maintenance—including painting, landscaping, and site/trail cleanup

LHF Melodrama Society volunteers provided entertainment throughout the year. They presented a summer series of medicine shows, hawking the fictitious Professor Savage's Swamp Root Elixir. At Christmas, they sang Victorian-era carols for visitors to the Flynn Mansion.

Finally, our volunteer **Board of Directors** continued to provide solid guidance as we developed our new five-year Strategic Plan. We would especially like to recognize outgoing chair Dave Austin (more about him on the back cover).

Thank you so much to all our 2021 volunteers! We could not provide our programs, experiences, and events without the community's support.

EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ann Krois

Tracey Klisares

Stefanie Rosenberg-Wager

Veralynn Schilling

Jenny Sinclair



SPRING CLEANUP



LHF MELODRAMA SOCIETY

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Altoona K-9 Unit
Blank Park Zoo
Drake University Head Start
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The Greensleeves
A Home for Every Bunny
Iowa 4H Foundation
Iowa Black Squadron Ghostbusters 13
Iowa Egg Council
Iowa Orchard
Iowa Service Dogs
Lutheran Services of Iowa
Machine Shed Restaurant
Mission Uproar Flyball
Science Center of Iowa
Urbandale Police Department
Windsor Heights Fire Department



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2021 ANNUAL SUPPORT

Names in bold signify new or increased support in 2021.

2021 PREMIER PARTNERS

Bravo Greater Des Moines and its 17 local government partners (Altoona, Ankeny, Bondurant, Carlisle, Clive, Des Moines, Grimes, Indianola, Johnston, Norwalk, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Polk County, Urbandale, Waukee, West Des Moines & Windsor Heights)

John Deere

Iowa Arts Council, a Division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor

\$25,000 AND ABOVE

Corteva Agriscience

Fred Maytag Family Foundation

\$15,000 AND ABOVE

EMC Insurance Foundation

Rick and Mary Harper

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Ruth and Robert Haus

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\$750 AND ABOVE

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Beth C. Wilson

And 2 anonymous donors

UNDER \$100

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... to Dave Austin, our retiring Board Chair, who has contributed not only his leadership but also his photographic talents to Living History Farms for nearly a decade. You can find his stunning work throughout this report—including the front cover and the photo above—and in many other museum materials. We look forward to seeing Dave and his camera at LHF for many years to come.