



# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

# 2025

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Let me take a moment to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the community for your overwhelming support in 2025. If I had to select one word to describe the year for Living History Farms, it would be *collaboration*.

Our success this year was a direct result of working side-by-side with many of you as individuals and with many essential cultural organizations.

From the 29th season of "Antiques Roadshow" featuring three episodes filmed here, to the grand opening of the Kemin Cultivation Center and the MidAmerican Energy Foundation Pavilion, to the launch of the America 250 Iowa Task Force, we are honored to serve the community and humbled by the trust placed in us.

The educational programs we offer and the learning that inspires tens of thousands during their visits each year simply would not be possible without your support. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to reimagine experiences, to strengthen our relationships, and to discover new initiatives to engage with our community.

On the precipice of America's 250th birthday, we invite you all to reflect, commemorate, and celebrate our freedoms to explore, learn, and collaborate to provide the best possible visitor experience at Living History Farms.

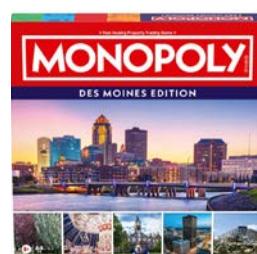
Warm regards,



Ruth Haus



Where the Story  
of American Agriculture  
Comes to Life.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT



ANNUAL ECONOMIC  
IMPACT IS  
**\$5 MILLION**



SUPPORT  
**140 FTE JOBS**

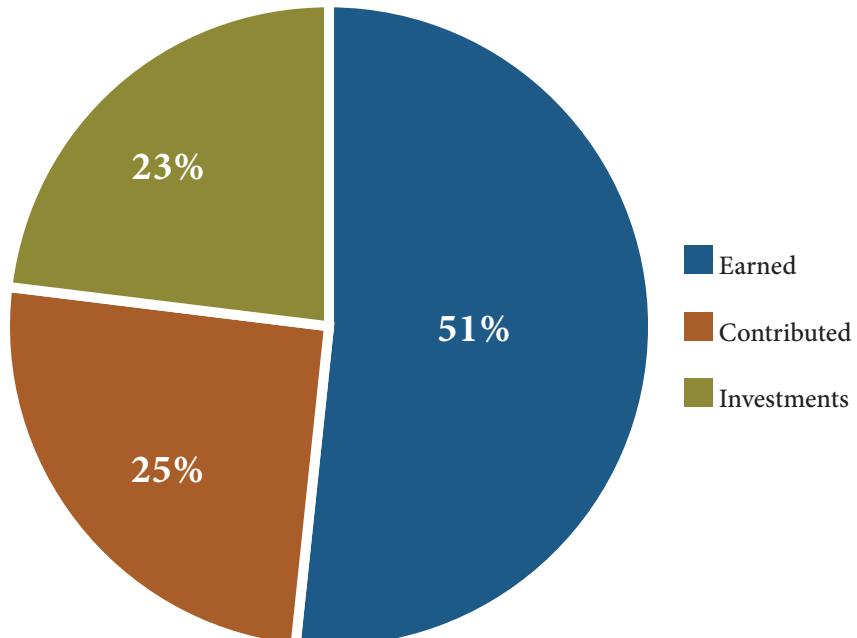


**\$215,000**  
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
REVENUE



**\$265,000**  
IN STATE TAX REVENUE

## OPERATING BUDGET



# CULTIVATING OUR FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

This year brought the culmination of a master planning process of the Board of Directors, staff, and community leaders that began in 2017 to reimagine the visitor experience at Living History Farms. While the Covid-19 world pandemic resulted in a pause, this effort resumed in 2022 and raised \$6 million. This generous support enabled Living History Farms to create a new arrival experience, including:

- Kemin Cultivation Center
- Andringa Way to a new courtyard with the MidAmerican Energy Foundation Pavilion and the W.T. & Edna M. Dahl Trust firepit
- Renovation of the former visitor center to become the new Learning Center for all of our education programs, including day camps

This campaign also provided much-needed enhancements to visitor amenities, including:

- Bravo Greater Des Moines Family Restroom
- Iowa Machine Shed Mother's Lounge
- New museum-appropriate space for modern agricultural exhibits, the Vermeer Charitable Foundation Curiosity Corner, and items from our own historic collections



## → CULTIVATING OUR FUTURE— CONT'D

The Capital Campaign gave us an opportunity to create safer and more secure spaces with controlled access, hard surface parking, and upgraded mechanical equipment.

The Learning Center is scheduled to open for the 2026 season and will feature a new innovative space under a licensing agreement with the Smithsonian for a Spark! Lab. Stay tuned for more on this grand opening in the spring of 2026.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of our community which you will see in this report. Living History Farms is humbled to receive this outpouring of support to further enhance both the ways and the seasons we are able to serve the community.

We would also like to recognize FEH Design and the Ball Team for their exceptional dedication to helping us realize this vision. Their efforts made it possible for us to open our spaces to the general public a full year earlier than scheduled.

Thank you!



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## VOLUNTEER STATS

- 655 volunteers in 2025
- 6,545 volunteer hours
- Helped with spring/fall landscaping and cleanup, special events



## VOLUNTEER GROUPS

- Andersen Windows & Doors
- Ankeny Schools
- Bayer
- Carrier Access
- Cerris Systems
- Coastal Pacific Wine & Spirits Brokers
- Continental Western Group
- EMC Insurance
- Farm Bureau
- Foster Group
- Homemakers
- ITA Group
- Iowa Veterinary Medical Association
- John Deere
- Leadership Urbandale
- Morgan Stanley
- Principal
- VODEC
- Wells Fargo



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Laura Ingram, Chairperson
- Erin Herbold-Swalwell, Vice Chairperson
- Gina Graham, Treasurer
- Brian Hannah, Secretary
- Riaan van Dyk, Immediate Past Chairperson
- Anthony Aldridge
- Ian Asplund
- Bobbie Brenton Matthes
- David Bubeck
- Dr. Peter Coaldrake
- Staci Harper Bennett
- Lindsay Kirstein
- Jes Ludwigson
- Darcy Maulsby



## EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Ally Klepper
- Morgan Burtnett
- Tracy Ferguson
- Lindsay Grosse
- Tracey Klisares
- Veralynn Schilling
- Jenny Sinclair
- Marissa Stevens



→ **COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT—CONT'D**

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**FARMSTASIA**

- Annual fundraiser for education programs
- Celebrating 50 years of camp
- Honoring Teacher of the Year Janet Riordan, Four Mile Elementary

**PREMIER PARTNERS**

Iowa Economic Development Authority

Iowa Machine Shed

John Deere

Kemin Industries

MidAmerican Energy Company

Nelson Foundation

R.W. and Mary Nelson

Prairie Meadows

Todd and Connie Rueter

Charles and Kathy Safris

Stephen Smith

Sukup Manufacturing Co.

City of Urbandale



## → COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—CONT'D

### FEEDBACK

- "Absolutely a must-see living farm museum! They have thought through every detail!" —*Karrie H.*
- "This was one of the best attractions we ever experienced, a must for history lovers!" —*Jacob S.*
- "I now have a reason to come to Iowa where most of my family migrated to from Europe. I just wanted to say thank you for keeping this alive and having all this information!" —*Misty W.*
- "We had a wonderful time visiting the farm but the best part was Kirk in the printing shop. ... He really did what a 'living history' place should do: embody the time period and teach people about the profession." —*Jackie B.*
- "Thank you for such a great experience today. The students carried their energy all the way back to our classrooms." —*Nikki A.*
- "I send my kids to a lot of different camps across Des Moines each summer. At the end of each summer, I ask what was their favorite and the answer is always Living History Farms. Thank you for continuing to provide an awesome summer experience for our kiddos!" —*Ashley P.*
- "We just had the absolute best time at the Flynn Mansion Dinner this past Friday. ... Your host as well as the server were both so kind, efficient, knowledgeable, and fun." —*Jenevieve Y.*
- "Just wanted to pass along that the volunteers for the kids run were super nice today! My kiddo and I showed up a little late but they still let us run and made him feel special." —*Laura K.*
- "I wanted to say thank you again for everything you did for the wedding. You were truly amazing. We couldn't have pulled it off without you." —*Linda C.*



## → COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—CONT'D

### PARTNERS

Adventures in Social Development  
Ballet Des Moines  
Blank Park Zoo  
Blue Ribbon Foundation  
Blue Zoo  
Catch Des Moines  
Central Iowa Tractor Club  
Christkindlmarket  
Collins Community Credit Union  
Democracy in Dialogue  
Des Moines Radio Group  
Downtown Doggy Daycare  
Drake University Head Start  
Fareway Stores  
Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden  
Greater Des Moines Partnership  
Dr. Christina Gish Hill  
A Home for EveryBunny  
Iowa Arboretum and Gardens  
Iowa Barn Foundation  
Iowa Orchard  
Iowa PBS  
Iowa School for the Deaf  
Iowa State Fair  
Iowa Total Care  
Iowa Wild  
The Little Book  
LMNT  
Miss Polk County/Miss Iowa  
Ralph Moisa Jr.  
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Scripps National Spelling Bee  
Sweet Swirls  
Sweet Tater TeRonde  
Travel Iowa  
Urbandale Hy-Vee  
Urbandale National Night Out  
Urbandale Police Department  
VODEC  
Wallaces Farmer  
Dr. John Whittaker



## → COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—CONT'D

### DONORS

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Ankeny  
Bondurant  
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Clive  
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Norwalk  
Pleasant Hill  
Polk City  
Urbandale  
Waukee  
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Windsor Heights  
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Des Moines Performing Arts  
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Farm Credit Services of America  
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John and Jerri Hooker  
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## → DONORS—CONT'D

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Cliff and Meridee Swart  
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Sylvan Learning Center  
Tara Tarnowski  
Ted Lare Garden Center  
Jan Thomas  
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Vern and Susan Thorp  
T-Mobile  
Toas-Tite, LLC  
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Robert and Molly Veenstra  
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Michael and Diane Versackas  
Patricia Verschoor  
Gene and Loa Dawn Vincent  
Ashley Voboril  
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City of Waukee  
Webspec Design  
City of West Des Moines  
Michael and Kim Whalen  
Joyce and Matt Whipps  
Donald and Ramona Wilson  
City of Windsor Heights  
Marc Wold and Madeline Shea  
Thomas Zimmerman

+ Three anonymous donors

+ Many more gifts under \$100

# PROGRAMMING

## GENERAL TOURING SEASON

- May through October
- Interpretive theme for 2025: "America's Rural Experiment"
- Special events: Decoration Day, Circuit Court Day, Emancipation Day, Pioneer Wedding, Independence Day, Grain Harvest, Cast Iron Cook-Off, Applefest, Indigenous Iowans Day, and Victorian Funeral
- Six Medicine Shows
- Six Historic Baseball games/demonstrations



## FOODWAYS PROGRAMS

- 39 Historic Dinners at the 1900 Farm, re-creating a harvest dinner served family-style
- Seven dinners at the Tangen Home, representing a middle class family's gathering in 1876
- Eight coursed dinners at the Flynn Mansion, showcasing Victorian etiquette and expectations
- Three Triskaideka dinners at the Flynn Mansion, highlighting the Victorian obsession with themed parties, specifically superstitions such as fear of the number 13
- 15 teas at the Flynn Mansion, including a new Strawberry Tea in June and a Jane Austen Tea celebrating her 250th birthday in December



## LIVESTOCK PROGRAM

- Duke and Doc, 5-year-old Belgian geldings, acquired at Waverly Sales Company barn in March
- Farewell to our beloved Percheron draft horses Sam and Ben
- Multiple litters of Berkshire piglets
- Other livestock include shorthorn cattle/oxen, sheep, and chickens



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## → PROGRAMMING—CONT'D

### EDUCATION

- 164 school field trips from Iowa and Missouri
- 14 Exploration programs—in-depth visits to one site outside general admission season
- 13 school and four adult outreach programs
- 12 sessions of Barnyard Readers for preschoolers and family, including new Farm Tractors topic
- 24 Historic Skills classes, including these new offerings: breakfast session of Wood Stove Cooking with Kids, Old Dishes meet the Modern Kitchen, and Receipts and Recipes—Exploring Old Cookbooks
- Homeschool Days in spring and fall
- Professional development seminar for teachers, "Westward Expansion: An Upper Plains Perspective," in partnership with Teaching American History and Iowa Council for the Social Studies
- Launched Democracy in Dialogue: Food for Thought for high schoolers in partnership with the Smithsonian



### DAY CAMPS

- Celebrated 50th year!
- Two camps offered over spring break for second through fifth grades
- 21 unique camps offered over 10 weeks in summer for kindergarten through eighth grade or for families, including new civics camp: Movers and Shakers
- New Iowa's Eras camp offered over winter break for third through fifth grades in conjunction with America 250
- 15 scholarships awarded

### BOOK CLUBS

- Third year of Historical Facts in Fiction Book Club for adults
- America 250 Book Club started in November, focused on original documents and secondary authors
- Three sessions of Youth Book Club

# COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES & EXHIBITS

## CURATED EXHIBITS

- “Moving Day” showcased our prairie schooner and other artifacts, with an activity asking guests to consider what they would take on a life-changing journey
- Seven quilts from our collection
- Ca. 1879 hearse with a casket and “widow’s weeds” (mourning dress)



## TRAVELING EXHIBITS

- “Immigrant Letters, Oceans Apart” told the story of Swedish immigration (on loan from the Swedish American Museum)
- “The Fourth Grade Project” displayed images and words of children from around the world (on loan from ExhibitsUSA/Mid-America ArtsAlliance, sponsored by Bankers Trust)
- “Happy Czech Holidays” explored traditions celebrated throughout the year (on loan from the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library)



## THE ROAD TO LIBERTY

- Created by the White House and Prager U
- 86 interactive images of signers of the Declaration of Independence, women of the Revolution, and key events of the Revolution
- QR code brings images to life
- Unveiled at sneak peek of Ken Burns “The American Revolution” documentary



## NEW MODERN AG EXHIBITS

- 7 new interactive/photo op displays: Misconceptions in Agriculture, Fun Facts from the Farm, Soil Trivia, Soybeans: From Seed to Product, and facts about corn, eggs, and pigs
- 2 new pop-up banners with Iowa ag statistics



## CURIOSITY CORNER

- Curated to engage guests with unusual farm implements and tools from our collection



## EVENTS

### HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

- Family Easter
- Family Halloween
- Family Christmas

### LIVING HISTORY FARMS RACE

### 54 COMMUNITY EVENTS

- 25 weddings
- 30 days of Santa's Rock N Lights in November and December
- Naturalization ceremony
- Sneak peek at new Ken Burns "The American Revolution" documentary
- Filipino Day
- India Day



# FACILITIES & SECURITY

## IMPLEMENT DEALER

- New woodwork and paint on exterior



## CABINETMAKER

- New siding, front windows, and paint
- Funded in part by a grant from Prairie Meadows



## TANGEN HOME

- New pasture fence
- New water heater

## WALLACE EXHIBIT CENTER

- New HVAC system
- New water heater

## FLYNN MANSION

- New water heater



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

## EARNED MEDIA

- Three “Antiques Roadshow” episodes filmed at Living History Farms premiered on PBS in February and March and aired again in December
- 98 media mentions in 2025
- Five appearances on We Are Iowa (WOI 5 TV) midday news
- WHO 13 TV did multiple live broadcasts here on three separate days
- Living History Farms unveiled on new Des Moines Monopoly board



## PAID MEDIA

- Co-op with Travel Iowa funded advertising campaign in states bordering Iowa in March
- Advertisement on back cover of Catch Des Moines guide (co-op with Blank Park Zoo and Science Center of Iowa)
- Other advertising included print, radio, digital, and paid social



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Iowa State Fair—booth and games demonstrations
- Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden—Earth Day
- Des Moines Arts Festival
- Urbandale National Night Out
- Blank Park Zoo—Monarch Day
- Christkindlmarket
- Ankeny Southview Middle School
- Oak Park Elementary



## DIGITAL FOLLOWING

- 997,000 visits to our website
- 24,000 followers on Facebook
- 3,500 followers on Instagram
- 31,000 subscribers to e-newsletter

# STAFF

## PRESIDENT

Ruth Haus

## COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES & EXHIBITS

Christopher McDougal,  
Director  
David Hauge

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stacie Hooker, Director  
Jessica Stoelk

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Kirk Reisetter

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Jared Sherman

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Chase Thomas

Lily Tuttle

Izaak Wadle

Emily Waggoner

Sydney Weers

Georgie Wieth

Michael Witmer



Want to see more?

Check out the year in pictures on our website!

[LHF.org/2025Photos](http://LHF.org/2025Photos)