



Vesterheim

Norwegian-American Museum

Volunteer Newsletter

Spring 2015



Volunteers who helped during *The World of Jan Brett* exhibition attended a special appreciation event on Valentine's Day 2014.

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- *Kjære Frivillige*

Stay in touch with
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Vesterheim is fortunate to have hundreds of marvelously talented and willing volunteers to call upon for help, making a wide variety of programming and events possible each year. Volunteer hours for the past year have been tallied, with thanks to volunteer Joyce Epperly who helps enter hours into Volunteer Reporter, a volunteer management database, throughout the year. The records show that 293 volunteers worked 3,374 hours in 2014 on behalf of the museum. According to the people who calculate the value of volunteer time (http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time) those hours are worth over \$70,000 to Vesterheim!

More important than hypothetical monetary value, volunteers are at the heart of much that is accomplished at Vesterheim. Volunteers are on the front lines taking care of countless visitors and helping with annual events and programming. Many work

Vesterheim's Valuable Volunteers

I found that there were these incredibly great people at doing certain things, and you couldn't replace one of these people with 50 average people. They could just do stuff that no number of average people could do. ~ Steve Jobs

behind the scenes as well, including planning and facilitating events and receptions. In every instance, volunteers are essential to Vesterheim's functioning.

This time last year, we were reflecting back on the exhausting but exhilarating run of the special exhibit, *The World of Jan Brett*. During the time it was on view, typical visitation patterns were exceeded as 2,023 schoolchildren toured Vesterheim to see it. There were 44 group tours representing 29 different schools over three months, as well as six special events. In connection with these Jan Brett activities, 22 volunteers worked 147 hours. These wonderful experiences could never have been offered to so many young visitors without volunteer help!

While the *World of Jan Brett* experience was wonderful, it was

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Help Wanted:

Tour Guides: Spring guide training will take place on April 20, 28, and 30. Attending does not obligate you to volunteer, but we hope you'll be tempted. Former Vesterheim curator Darrell Henning will be presenting. Contact Martha for a full schedule.

Volunteer Referrals: If you enjoy your time volunteering at Vesterheim, consider recommending the opportunity to others. New volunteers are always welcome in many capacities.

Dance event help: This year at Nordic Fest, Foot-Notes is collaborating with Vesterheim on a large group schottische event! Volunteers will be needed to help with participant sign-in and other tasks. Let Martha know if you are interested.

Lodging for folk artists: There is ongoing demand for private rooms in homes for instructors and students involved in Vesterheim's Folk Art School. Contact Darlene Fossum-Martin if you have hospitality to offer.



Hillary Vamstad and Boyd Wasson make *rømmegrøt* for the Norwegian Christmas Celebration in December 2014.

Kjære frivillige,

Recently, *Parade* magazine ran an article entitled "Cheater's Guide to Living to 100." One of the four tips for longevity recommended in the article was volunteering, as a way to keep a sense of purpose in one's life. Reading something like this confirms what I see and feel from many of you. The years of dedicated volunteering typical of Vesterheim volunteers affirms both purpose and enjoyment. There is a strong precedent for meaningful volunteering here, and I hope that your time spent on behalf of the museum is also beneficial personally.

Steve Jobs' observation about finding individuals with unique skills resonated very much with me, based on eleven years of working with Vesterheim's volunteers. Countless times each year, I have the great satisfaction of matching volunteers with rewarding experiences for which they are perfectly suited. Each of you is a valuable part of the museum's activities, whether at special events or in the museum's daily operations. Never doubt our appreciation of your contribution of time and talents!

Many of you are aware that, beyond volunteer administration, I am also responsible for incoming tours and coordinating the annual events that happen onsite at the museum. It's a natural fit, since volunteers are central to all of these activities.

Interesting trends in group tours are becoming apparent. For one, there seems to be an increase in kindred heritage organizations making special plans to visit Vesterheim. Last year, the Daughters of Norway held their national conference in the Twin Cities and planned a pre-conference day trip to Vesterheim. Initially planning for one bus, they ended up filling three! One afternoon in mid-July last year, we welcomed over 150 Daughters of Norway simultaneously. Later this year, we are looking forward to a similar situation when the Seven-Lag Stevne meets in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Attendees of the stevne (gathering) are descendants of Norwegian immigrants from counties in Oppland, Buskerud and Telemark, and there will likely be two busloads of them. Participants in this type of tour are among the most interested visitors, and we hope the trend will continue!

Vesterheim has many volunteers, but can always benefit from the involvement of new ones. Every volunteer needs to be able to say "no" at times, and the only way to ensure this is to have a deep pool of volunteers to call upon. Your recommendations have often led to wonderful new volunteers becoming involved at Vesterheim. It's a great tradition. Plans for a Volunteer Appreciation event are in the works for early summer this year. Look for a postcard announcing the details. We look forward to this opportunity to thank you for all that you do and to share current Vesterheim news, including plans for upcoming exhibitions.

Beste hilsen, Martha Griesheimer

Continued from the front page.

a one-time opportunity. It is important to remember that Vesterheim has considerable ongoing youth programming. Hundreds of schoolchildren benefit annually from intensive educational experiences at the museum through the Window on the World program for third graders, and the Pioneer Immersion Program for fourth graders. This programming relies heavily on volunteer help from people who remind me of those Steve Jobs refers to in the quote at the top of this article, who can “do stuff that no number of average people” can do. Volunteers who are willing to share their life experience and skills are valuable resources for these programs.

Anyone who has attended a gallery opening at Vesterheim has enjoyed the work of Vesterheim's Hospitality Committee. The efforts of these volunteers result in receptions worthy of a “big city” museum. Each is carefully planned and coordinated with the specific new exhibition in mind, providing consistently stunning results. Be sure to attend exhibition openings in 2015 for a great Vesterheim experience: become informed about what's new at the museum and enjoy some of the best receptions in town!

Several events for the benefit of Vesterheim take place offsite each year in Chicago, the Twin Cities, and elsewhere. These are also heavily dependent on volunteers for planning and coordination, as well as working at the events. In Decorah, Deck the Tables is organized by volunteers. The planning committee works hundreds of hours, practically year-round, on various aspects of the event like marketing and organizing fun activities. The table decorators at this event also volunteer their time and creativity to create amazing tablescapes. And finally, it takes a full roster of volunteers to make this festive weekend run smoothly. Records show that 46 volunteers worked 127 hours in connection with the event held at the Hotel Winneshiek last year on November 7-8. This year Deck the Tables is scheduled to be held again at the Hotel Winneshiek, the weekend of November 20-21, 2015.

Volunteers Anne Glenn-White and Norma Wangsness have fun at Deck the tables. Often volunteering leads to new friendships!



Volunteers Lee Grippen and Sue Pederson (in the distance) guide hands-on experiences with simple machines at two of four stations during Vesterheim's third-grade Window on the World program.



Members of the Hospitality Committee (Barbara Berg, Victoria Svenson, Doris Barnaal, and Helen Hendrickson) volunteering at the reception for the exhibit *Restored Connections* in September 2014.



VESTERHEIM VOLUNTEER

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Worth Noting:

Website and Social Media Vesterheim's new website launched in December and we're excited about the positive feedback. The Publications Department is gathering website analytics for future comparisons and marketing strategies. You can find volunteer information on the site at "Join/Give." Be sure to take a look. If you are active on social media, such as Facebook, Pintrest, and YouTube, you can "like" Vesterheim on each. Vesterheim's email newsletter, *Current*, is sent each month to over 3,700 subscribers. Anyone can sign up on our website to receive a copy.

Syttende Mai – May 16 (Saturday) Lots of great activities planned for this event including a presentation, *Ung kvinne til sjøs: Young Woman at Sea*, by Kari Grønningsæter and Nick Preus at 11:00 a.m. in the Bethania Church. Hear the tale of a voyage around the world in 1913-1914, based on the letters and journals of Grønningsæter's grandmother. The ship, a full rigger captained by Grønningsæter's great-grandfather, sailed to Australia loaded with timber and returned to Norway loaded with wheat. On the way home, in the Atlantic, they found out that WWI had started.

Did you hear the news? Vesterheim was named one of "15 Best Small-Town Museums in the U.S." by the world-respected travel guide, Fodor's!

