

20 YEARS OF WONDER



NATIONAL MISSISSIPPI RIVER
MUSEUM & AQUARIUM

Advertising supplement to the
Telegraph Herald, Wednesday, June 28, 2023



As the Dubuque County Historical Society celebrates the 20th Anniversary of its National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, we pause to say thank you.

Thank you to the amazing board and volunteers who have spent countless hours in service to guide and support our mission to inspire stewardship by creating educational experiences where history and rivers come alive.

Thank you to the amazing staff whose expertise and passion has led to regional and national recognition, local partnerships, and an amazing guest experience.

Thank you to this community who has championed our work through countless contributions, memberships, and visits.

The last 20 years brought great growth and change to our physical campus, and as we look to the next 20, we seek to grow our community and become an even better community partner through the following:

- Finding new ways to engage our audiences with history, conservation, and science.
- Making our facilities more physically inclusive and our programming more financially accessible for our more than 250,000 annual visitors and program participants.
- Creating more educational opportunities to be able to meet the needs of learners of all abilities and all stages of life.
- Entertaining and educating our visitors through dynamic permanent exhibits, internally curated exhibits, and visiting traveling exhibits.
- Increasing partnerships with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), as well as others, to tell more diverse stories.
- Expanding our national presence and awareness for our organization through a new national traveling exhibit.

It's an exciting time to be part of this organization. Today, I am proud to publicly announce that we are 72% of the way towards a \$12.75 million capital campaign that will *Preserve the Wonder* for the next generation. This effort has already resulted in the opening of River of Innovation and Rivers to the Sea... and we're just getting started. As we look to complete the campaign, funds will create a new national traveling exhibit, restore the interior of the Mathias Ham House, increase our endowment, fund infrastructure improvements necessary for the health and safety of our animals, artifacts, guests, and redo portions of our Mississippi River Discovery Center—including otter and paddlefish exhibits.

Throughout this publication, you'll notice most of the articles are written by our own staff members. Through their work and writing, I hope you get a sense of the community we are building each and every day. That community has grown in the past 20 years. It is estimated more than 3.5 million guests have visited our facility and more than \$250 million in economic impact has been generated for the region through our organization.

We invite you to celebrate with us and share in the memories over the last 20 years and look forward to what the next 20 will bring to our facility, guests, and community!

Kurt Strand

President and CEO

ON THE COVER

Temwa Phiri and his children enjoying the new Marshall Islands aquarium in our newly reimagined Rivers to the Sea exhibit.

📷 Mike Burley

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EVER-CHANGING AND ALWAYS EXCITING

River Museum's Exhibits Bring Diverse Experiences to Dubuque

One of the comments guests share about their River Museum experience is that it's hard to pick their favorite exhibit or activity—and that's based on a one-day visit! Imagine trying to pick a favorite exhibit from the past 20 years!? The River Museum regularly swaps out exhibits and brings in traveling features, ensuring there is always something new to explore!

Here are a few of the favorite exhibits that have made a stop at the River Museum since 2003!



TOADALLY FROGS (2007)

Longtime Dubuque residents probably remember seeing fiberglass frogs around the Downtown when *Toadally Frogs* was at the River Museum. The exhibit featured different species of frogs from all corners of the world and even one famous frog that captured guests' hearts: Kermit! The exhibit had a unique local connection that has made it one staff, members, and visitors continue to talk about since its stint in 2007!

WOMEN & SPIRIT (2011)

Women & Spirit shared the untold stories of the innovative, action-oriented women who played such a significant role in shaping the nation's social and cultural landscape. The historic exhibit was a milestone compilation of artifacts and multi-media presentations revealing a new perspective of American history. The River Museum partnered with Clarke University to showcase the exhibit and during the four-month span of its tour, more than 20,000 sisters and numerous parochial school groups from around the world came to the River Museum to see it!

TITANIC: THE ARTIFACT EXHIBITION (2015)

At an interpretative center like the River Museum with a focus on river and maritime history, bringing Titanic to Dubuque was a great fit and a huge hit! *Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition*, featured actual artifacts from the sunken ship along with an immersive experience that brought guests on their own journey as a first, second or third class passenger. The exhibit highlighted the ship's historical significance while preserving the memory of not only the vessel but the people who sailed with her.

DINOSAURS: UNEARTHED (2016)

Many guests are surprised to learn they can feed a stingray when they come to the River Museum, but during the summer of 2016, guests were even more surprised to see 14 animatronic dinosaurs when they came for a visit! *Dinosaurs Unearthed* brought a dynamic visual representation of prehistoric feathered creatures to life. Hands-on activities for guests, a children's dig area, and a chance to control the Stegosaurus' movements and roar completed the experience!

POPNOLOGY (2023)

The newest exhibit at the River Museum fits right in during a summer that highlights the River Museum's evolution of the past 20 years. POPnology tells the story of how science fiction has become science fact through the influence of authors, inventors, and pop culture. The exhibit features movie props like R2D2 from *Star Wars*, the DeLorean Time Machine from *Back to the Future*, and even E.T! Throughout the summer, guests can test out virtual reality sets, take part in their own Mars expedition, play Donkey Kong, and see the first 3-D printed car. Adults will be captivated to see some of their favorite science fiction marvels from childhood and grandparents and parents will have an opportunity to share some of their favorite films with the next generation.





Jerry Enzler
President Emeritus

AMERICA'S RIVER BECOMES DUBUQUE'S VISION

How the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium Became a Tourism Fixture

In 2003, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium became a reality.

The Dubuque County Historical Society had already opened the steamboat *William M. Black* in 1980 and the Woodward Riverboat Museum in 1982. We established the National Rivers Hall of Fame in 1985 and opened the Iowa Welcome Center exhibits in the early 1990's. Board president Bill Woodward had a bigger dream: a hands-on River Discovery Center. He started the ball rolling with a bequest just under \$2 million. We hired a team of national and local experts and kept moving forward.

We knew Mississippi River history would be central to our message, but incorporating aquariums was an ideal way to explore the interaction between people and the river, a connection that shaped the river and river habitats we have today. It was then we realized that we had the opportunity to create a world-class facility.

We partnered with the City of Dubuque and the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitor Bureau under the title of America's River. With additional

partners, we collectively set out to create the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, the Grand River Center, the Grand Harbor Resort and Waterpark, the Riverwalk and related infrastructure. The America's River project was the largest public-private partnership in the history of Dubuque at that time. It was an exciting, albeit daunting, challenge.

With the help of Development Director Teri Hawks Goodmann forming invaluable national, regional, and local partnerships, we received remarkable support from our U.S. senators and representatives, our governor and state officials, our city and county leaders, and Vision Iowa. The City of Dubuque invested significantly and funded the parking and infrastructure. Dubuque County was an important partner, as were others. Corporations and foundations made outstanding lead gifts, and local and regional donors contributed at all levels.

On June 28, 2003, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium opened with the William Woodward River Discovery Center, the restored Train Depot, the Wetland, and the Boatyard. In our first year, more than 300,000 people visited the River Museum. The average length of stay was three hours, and surprisingly, 11% of guests stayed five to six hours. More than 50% of our visitors said their visit increased their awareness of and interest in the health of the Mississippi River. America's River became an economic boom for Iowa and the tri-state area. Tourism revenue increased in the tri-state area, and revenues from hotel motel taxes almost doubled overnight.

The National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium was an intricate undertaking. We went from original concept to professional design, fundraising, construction, exhibit creation, and aquarium installation. Our museum staff, board, and committees worked diligently. It was immensely rewarding that we could work towards such a valuable and meaningful facility. We are grateful to all the partners who helped make this magnificent dream a reality and



Original concept rendering

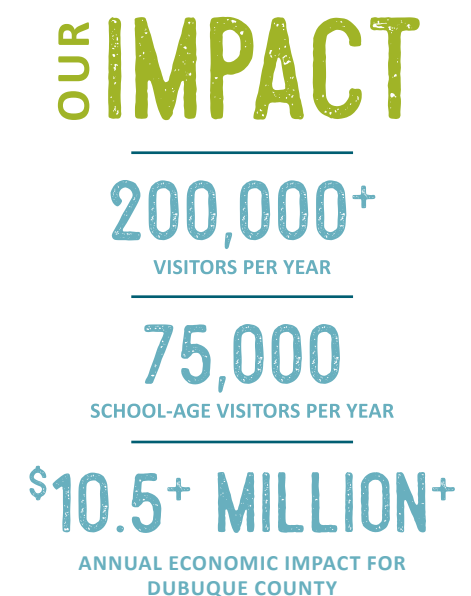


Enzler welcomes a crowd at the grand opening of the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium on June 28, 2003.

the many donors who continue to help this remarkable River Museum thrive. It has been one of the great joys of my life to have had the privilege of helping support the growth and direction of this organization and to see where it is today.



On March 2, 2023, the River Museum opened the reimagined Rivers to the Sea exhibit.





Emma Sundberg
Director of Curatorial
Services



Kristin Glomstad-Yoon
Curator of Historic
Collections

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

A look at how the River Museum's curatorial team cares for the Dubuque County Historical Society's collection

What are some of the first things that come to mind when you consider what you expect to find in a museum? Chances are that while we may think of, or visualize a different experience, they do share one thing in common: objects. Regardless of focus—art, history, science—all museums rely on objects to help present a story. Grouped together, these materials become the collection that represents the purpose of an organization. For the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, the historic collection reflects its foundation in Dubuque County history and the role of rivers in shaping our lives.

At the River Museum, objects in the collection can be large or small, glass or fabric, and in any combination from a dime-sized campaign pin to the floating *William M. Black* dredge boat in the Ice Harbor. With more than 20,000 objects cataloged and thousands more in process, the care, interpretation, and management of this collection is the responsibility of the curatorial department. For object care, the primary focus is on preservation. This means that we seek to maintain the object in its current state of health for as long as possible. No two objects are the same, meaning these needs can vary and include multiple safety precautions for any single item.

Consider a photo album. It may appear to be one object, but we look at it in its parts to decide how best to preserve it. While good for a temporary life of use, the album pages or

adhesive might turn out to be harmful over the long term to the photographs or materials inside. Pages can transfer color or blur writings, and glue can eat through film if left too long set on top of each other. In these cases, there are two options (these are good for you at home as well!) to best preserve an album. The most common option is interleaving acid-free tissue or paper in between each page to reduce physical contact and chemical change. Or, in some cases it is better to take the album apart and preserve images and pages separately in acid-free tissue or non-reactive sleeves of plastic. While this might result in removing metal binding spirals, paper clips or staples, it is better for preserving the pages and images of an album in the long run. There are exceptions though to every rule.

Our largest and most recognizable object at the museum is perhaps the *William M. Black*, a National Landmark, 1930s-era dredge boat that is open to the elements and visitors and floating in one of the worst things for preservation: water. Preservation is about limiting or slowing down the process of change and that is what we try to do even in the toughest of circumstances with the *Black*.

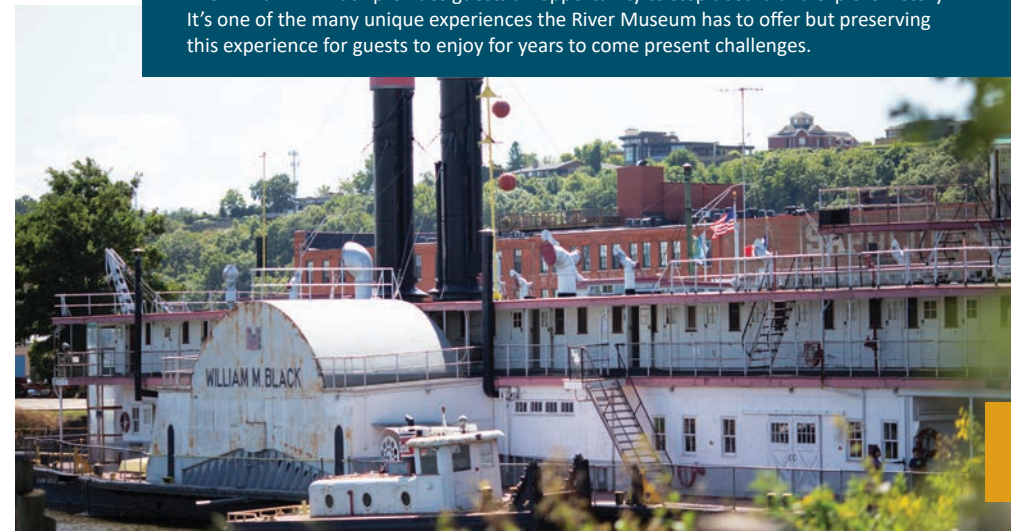
For an instance like this where we are unable to bring it into a climate-controlled environment, wrap it in protective packaging and limit its exposure to light, temperature change, and physical force, it creates its own rulebook of care. We invested in a system that helps decrease the speed of corrosion of the hull through magnetic charge. All oils and liquids are removed from the vessel and the exteriors and roofing are consistently maintained and surveyed to manage water damage. The work is never done and from a preservation standpoint, it is a constant determination of establishing priorities. In this case, the balance of care is weighed against the experience of interpretation we chose to pursue with the object.



Mike Burley
Curator of Historic Collections Kristin Glomstad-Yoon unveils a set of paintings in the collections storage.

Credit Mike Burley

The *William M. Black* provides guests an opportunity to step aboard and explore history. It's one of the many unique experiences the River Museum has to offer but preserving this experience for guests to enjoy for years to come presents challenges.



To reduce dust exposure, artifacts are stored in specialized containers, shelves are covered in protective plastic, and everything is organized in specific locations for easy access.

DYK

- **22,300 OBJECTS** in the collection
- **4,400 LINEAR FEET** of archival material
- More than **8,500 BOOKS** in the collection
- **350 FOSSILS** in the collection. Not all are dated, but there are many in the millions of years old range!
- Newest object based on age: COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine vial

OTHER FUN COLLECTION FACTS:



15 BOATS



300+ HATS



4 ZITHERS

When you visit a museum, how frequently are you invited to touch an original object on display? It is an unusual opportunity that we take advantage of with the *Black*. On board, both panels and docents provide information, but the experience of exploring it on the water helps bring the past into the present. Providing opportunities for objects to make these connections is the basis of how we make choices in collection care and interpretation. Just like every object needs its own care, not every object is as suited as the *Black* for representing our mission of making Dubuque and river history come alive.

The curatorial department actively works to survey and review the collection to keep it healthy both in care but also planning for its growth. History happens around us every day; in fact, most times we do not realize it's happening. Just as our collection has diversified and developed over the past 20 years, our team looks forward to what will become 20 years down the road when the next generation walks through the doors to take in the experience that is the River Museum.

Are you interested in donating to the collection, conducting research at the library, or getting more involved with the curatorial department? Contact Kristin Glomstad-Yoon at kglomstadyoon@rivermuseum.com.





Mark Beshel
Curator of Freshwater
Fish and Herpetology

NINETEEN YEARS OF WYOMING TOADS (*Anaxyrus baxteri*)

Conservation at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium

In a 21-year span, an entire species nearly went extinct. In a 19-year span, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium has helped it “jump” back to life.

The River Museum officially joined the Wyoming Toad recovery team in 2004 with the acquisition of 55 captive-bred adult toads from partner facilities. Wyoming Toads, a glacial relic species originally thought to be a subspecies of the Canadian toad (*Anaxyrus hemiophrys*), are managed by a Species Survival Plan (SSP) through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

Found only in Albany County in southeastern Wyoming, their numbers in the wild began to show a steep decline in the mid to late 1970’s, prompting them to be federally listed as endangered (EN) in 1984 and extinct in the wild by 1991 when the population dipped into the single digits.

The road to recovery for the Wyoming Toad has been difficult; hesitant landowners, abnormal weather patterns, water rights, and emerging diseases, to name a few. With AZA, Federal, and local governments working together, we’ve finally started to see some positive changes over the past decade. In the past ten years, surveys conducted annually in areas where toads are found and released have shown an upward trend in numbers of toads encountered, which suggests we are making a difference and our work is having an impact on this imperiled species!

Beshel and a team of aquarists from partner AZA facilities travel to Albany, Wyoming annually to release and monitor the Wyoming Toad population.



With luck (and a little help from aquarists), the toads can lay more than 1,000 eggs per pair. Eggs hatch in under 48 hours, and tadpoles start swimming and eating by day two or three. The majority of tadpoles produced in captivity are released to the wild (currently managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), but a small number are often kept as future breeders, or to grow to young toads prior to their release the following year.

Our first successful breeding was in 2008. In 2022, the River Museum passed a milestone: we released our 50,000th tadpole back to Wyoming! In 2023, there are currently eight hand-selected pairs of toads preparing for their big breeding day in June. It has been incredible to see the success of the program both nationally and at our facility as we see them “hop” back from extinction!

Staff members check on the toads onsite at the River Museum. During breeding season, the toads are closely monitored and fed a nutrient-rich diet to promote breeding.



MIGHTY MUSSELS

Freshwater mussels are considered by many scientists to be the most imperiled group of animals in North America. Of the approximately 350 species found in North America, 70% are threatened, endangered, or are already presumed extinct. They have been decimated by a wide variety of threats including degraded water quality, overexploitation by the button and pearl industries, loss of host fish, and competition with exotic, invasive mussel species. One such imperiled species is the federally endangered Higgins Eye (*Lampsilis higginsii*). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other agencies have worked to propagate this species for many years, and one of the most successful propagation sites is right here on our campus in the Ice Harbor, an inlet of the Mississippi River. The River Museum, in cooperation with the Genoa National Fish Hatchery, has been raising freshwater mussels for recovery projects since 2004. Staff assist with the culture programs, survey work, and connect with local schools and universities to get students involved with direct conservation work. Since 2010, more than 60,000 juvenile mussels were recovered from the Ice Harbor through the work of River Museum staff and community volunteers.

The campaign to preserve and maintain the **National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium and Mathias Ham Historic Site**.

Learn more about the effort to preserve the wonder for the next generation at www.rivermuseum.com



THE FLORIDA REEF TRACT RESCUE PROJECT is a groundbreaking partnership among AZA facilities, state and federal agencies, universities, and non-profit organizations. Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease spreads rapidly and is characterized by a more than 90% mortality and its ability to infect at least half of the most important reef-building coral species in the region, making it the most devastating coral disease on record anywhere in the world. The River Museum is proud to have been selected as the first facility outside Florida to house some of these irreplaceable colonies. The hope is to one day return these corals to the wild after the disease runs its course, a cure is found, or new sites are identified that might be suitable for colonization.

THE RIVER ROLLS THROUGH HISTORY

The vision to reimagine an interpretative center along the Mississippi River and enhance tourism and entertainment in the Port of Dubuque was a process nearly a decade in the making. Now, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium is the leading cultural and environmental facility in the region and the largest zoo and aquarium facility in a 90-mile radius. The River Museum is a Smithsonian Affiliate and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), one of only 16 institutions nationwide to be accredited by both AZA and AAM.

2003

With the opening of the **William Woodward Mississippi River Discovery Center**, the institution officially became the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium. In the first year, more than 300,000 visitors came to experience the River Museum!

2005



The **Toadally Frogs** exhibit opened and welcomed a celebrity to campus: Kermit the Frog. Around the downtown area, large fiberglass frogs were on display, bringing the entire community together to celebrate the exhibit beyond the River Museum's doors.

2006

Peninsula Gaming, the one-time owner of the Diamond Jo Casino, donated its Portside building to the museum along with a \$3 million gift.

2007



The River Museum joined the AZA SAFE Species program for the Wyoming Toad, a critically endangered, and at one point extinct in the wild, species. Participating facilities breed toads for release to their natural habitat in Albany, Wyoming.

2008

The facility welcomed its **ONE MILLIONTH GUEST** within five years of opening!

2009

The River Museum became an AZA accredited facility for the first time and is recognized for the highest standard of husbandry care.

2015

The traveling exhibit, *Titanic: An Artifact Exhibition*, drew nearly **100,000 visitors** to the River Museum during its **20-week run**.



2013



Celebrating its 10th year, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium welcomed its **2 millionth guest**.

2010

The Diamond Jo National River Center building opened, doubling the campus' offerings.



2017

The River Museum started outreach programs to area schools, libraries, retirement homes, and beyond. Since 2017, the program has **reached 50,000 people through 975 programs**.

2019

The addition of the conservation department expanded the River Museum's reach to groups in Dubuque County with local, regional, and national partnerships. One of those partnerships with Dimensional Brewing Company led to the creation of Conservation Cream Ale, the River Museum's own brew that gives back!



2021

River of Innovation opened its final phase: one of the few still-operational belt driven machine shops, a high-engagement activity area, and a Makerspace with multidisciplinary projects centered around science, technology, engineering, and math.



2023



Kicking off its **20TH YEAR IN OPERATION**, the River Museum opened its reimagined *Rivers to the Sea* exhibit, unveiling **12 new aquariums** highlighting conservation messaging and featuring **100 marine species**. The exhibit added a Tidepool Touch Tank and immersive Kelp Forest in addition to vibrant murals completed by local artist, Adam Eikamp.



2022

The River Museum welcomed its **3.5 millionth guest**. Visitors from every state and more than **70 countries** have come to explore the exhibits and enjoy the educational offerings over the years, equating to more than **\$210,000,000 in economic impact** for the region!





Jennifer Drayna
Director of Education

NOT YOUR AVERAGE FIELD TRIP

Educational programming, community outreach connects the River Museum's mission with learning opportunities

If you visit the Museum on a Tuesday in May, chances are high that you will be surrounded by school kids full of energy and excitement. There are several hundred young learners following educators around campus in small groups. One educator talks about the recovery of the North American River Otter while students watch our resident otters swim. Another group is sitting in front of the Backwater Marsh discussing the importance of the habitat to baby animals and migrating waterfowl. A third group stands on the historic *William M. Black* dredge boat learning how humans change the river. At the Mathias Ham Historic Site, a school group is baking biscuits and churning butter to better understand what daily life was like in the 1870s.

In an average year, about 12,000 K-12 students will tour the River Museum on a school field trip. In the past five years, the education team has worked closely with school districts to become embedded into their curriculum – a way to help teachers meet standards in fun and memorable ways. For example, every 4th grader in Waterloo has a field experience where they spend part of the day exploring the museum and part of the day on a river cruise where a museum educator chats about river life. For many students, this is the first time they have been on a boat or have seen the Mississippi River in person.

The River Museum has been able to connect with thousands of students and visitors through experiences like this during the past 20-plus years. Every day, members of the

museum's education team stand near key exhibits telling stories that combine conservation, history, and STEM to help encourage lifelong learning. While the way you interact with the education team at the Museum may vary, all of our experiences hope to connect to the learner's life and inspire stewardship in the future.

In 2017, we added an outreach program allowing us to bring the Museum into schools, libraries and community centers. We have a number of ambassador animals that travel with our educators including reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and birds. By far our most popular program is our Ocean Odyssey – a mobile touch tank program that highlights how our actions in the tri-state area can impact our oceans while giving the participants the opportunity to meet live sharks up close. Since we began traveling, we have presented nearly 975 programs and reached more than 50,000 people across the tri-state area. In 2020, we expanded this program to include online distance learning programming – educating learners from across the country.

In 2021, we opened a MakerSpace – a space where STEM problem solving shines through learner driven activities. You may see the 3D printers running or a stack of recycled materials that-- with a little creativity--can be transformed into your favorite museum animal. Visitors can try out challenges such as building the tallest tower, curating their own mini museum or folding a piece of paper into an object that will successfully fly in a wind tunnel. In this exhibit, we encourage individuals to design, create and tinker to make personal connections.

In 2023, we partnered with the Heritage Center in Dubuque for a STEAM experience as a way to combine art and science. Schools can connect two field trips into one by attending a play or performance in the morning and touring the River Museum in the afternoon. This is a great example of how we can join together with local partners to provide great educational opportunities.

Mike Burley

The River Museum offers day camp programming throughout the year, providing a hands-on experience for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, and a conservation program for teens.

Mike Burley

It's all about hands-on and interactive learning in the Makerspace! Activities change throughout the year but any of the favorites, like the water table, are available year round!



Mike Burley

Director of Education Jennifer Drayna leads a raptor program with the American Barn Owl, CeCe.



On a typical day, you may see educators running a Belt Driven Machine Shop demonstration while talking about early industries of our community or helping a nervous 4-year-old touch a live anemone in the *Rivers to the Sea* exhibit. The education team strives to provide fun experiences for learners of all ages: we want to build connections and talk about ways we can make a difference.

It has been amazing to watch several of our youth participants enjoy their experience and get inspired by our mission so much that they became volunteers for our organization. We've come full circle in our last 20 years, engaging former youth participants as educators and supporting the next generation.

As someone who has been with the organization for six years, the best thing for me is watching our young learners develop into young adults that want to share their passion and make a difference. It is one of the biggest signs that our educators and programs are making an impact.



Dee Weber holds a Corn Snake for a special Creature Feature with Game of Thrones author and former Dubuque resident, George R. R. Martin on his visit in April 2023.

Meet Dee Weber, a volunteer turned educator who is one of the smiling faces leading tour groups, Creature Features and programs at the River Museum. Dee has been with the River Museum since 2004 and is regularly recognized by visitors as a staff member who helped them have a memorable experience!

DEE WEBER
Education Lead

"After a year of volunteering with the River Museum, they were looking for educators and a friend of mine urged me to apply. I'm a river rat—I fished commercially with my dad—and my undergrad degree is in history, so this was a perfect fit for me. I was a nurse before becoming a teacher, and am passionate about the environment, which also makes this place the best place in the world to me—history, science, the Mississippi all together! And we have the nicest, smartest, kindest people to work with!"



OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

The River Museum has more than 150 volunteers supporting the organization year-round as greeters, assisting at special events, and so much more. We could not do what we do without you!

Interested in becoming a volunteer during the day or for special events?
Contact Melissa Wersinger, mwersinger@rivermuseum.com for more information!



PAT UDZIELAK

Volunteer since 2008

Q: What volunteer roles have you held?

A: I've been a greeter, I had a wonderful couple of years in the library, I've been a receptionist up here, and all the special events I try to participate in.

Q: What has been your favorite thing you've seen evolve over the years?

A: What I've enjoyed most is the constant movement of the caring and sharing by the staff for these buildings and all the creatures that live in them. This museum is so unique, and the fact they keep renewing and going forward and not laying stagnant makes it exciting every time I come here.

Q: Why do you love volunteering at the River Museum?

A: The staff are wonderful. I couldn't be more supportive of a better team of people that are here and downstairs. It's so well put together and it keeps improving!

Q: What would you tell someone who is interested in volunteering at the River Museum?

A: If you don't come down and try it out you don't know what you're missing. Everyone is excited to be here—whether that's a visitor or a staff member. How could you not be part of it?



PAT MAURITZ

Volunteer since 2008

Q: What volunteer roles have you done?

A: I have done multiple roles—greeter, Ham House, special events, deli help, cooking for events, sewing costumes, and office and administrative help.

Q: What has been one of your favorite volunteer moments?

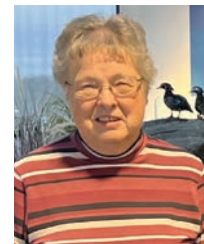
A: There's a team atmosphere here. Everyone works to help each other. I really enjoy working special events.

Q: What do you love most about volunteering at the River Museum?

A: What I love most is the variety day to day and knowing I am appreciated for my contributions. *(Editors note: Pat bakes some of the best cakes and always makes sure the staff and volunteers are well-fed!)*

Q: What would you tell others who are thinking about volunteering at the River Museum?

A: I often encourage others to volunteer. It is a great way, especially for retired people, to give back to the community and have a reason to get out.



JANE WORM

Volunteer since 2003

Q: How did you become a volunteer?

A: I began volunteering in April 2003 before the museum ever opened. There had been an article in the Telegraph Herald about the river museum asking for volunteers. I had retired from teaching in 2001 and I told my husband I thought this was something I wanted to do. I filled out the application at the Old Jail, and within a few days, I was asked if I would be willing to start right away. I said yes!

Q: What roles have you had as a volunteer?

A: They put me to work right away. They were getting ready for the Opening Day Festivities and I was given the task of going over lists of members of various organizations. I would look for duplicate names and cross them off so a person would not get two invitations to the grand opening. Later, I helped setup the gift shop I remember one day, another woman and I folded all the shirts so they would be neatly folded for display. The next time I was there, all the neatly folded shirts were hanging on racks!

Q: What do you love most about being a volunteer at the River Museum?

A: Being a greeter I enjoy explaining the campus map to our visitors. We have people coming in from all over the world. Sometimes, I have some of my former students coming in also. Lots of interesting conversations I have had.

Q: What would you tell someone who wants to volunteer at the River Museum?

A: I think of the museum staff as a second family for me. They really are such enjoyable people. I have actually gotten my husband to be a volunteer also. He comes in as a greeter on Sundays and he has really enjoyed the conversations he has had with visitors!



Jane's husband Dick won the 2023 Volunteer of the Year award on April 20, 2023.



FRANK DUEHR

Volunteer since 2010

Q: What is your current role at the River Museum?

A: I am a greeter and a floater.

Q: What is one of your favorite memories?

A: My favorite exhibit was Titanic. We had so many guests visiting the Museum to come see it and they loved sharing their experience with us afterwards!

Q: What is one of the things you have been excited to see change over the years?

A: One of my favorite changes at the River Museum was when they moved the otters to their new exhibit. It was a huge hit with the kids and it still is today! I also loved when we recently renovated Rivers to the Sea. The exhibit is so bright and it adds awareness of the environmental and biological effects it has on our oceans.

Q: What do you love about volunteering at the River Museum?

A: I love volunteering at the River Museum because of all the different people I get to meet being a greeter. I am fortunate to say I have met people from all over the world like Australia, Germany, and France!

Q: What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering at the River Museum?

A: The River Museum is a great place to volunteer. We have an amazing volunteer coordinator who works with you to pick the hours that fit in your schedule and they are very accommodating.



Kristen Leffler
Staff Resource & Engagement Manager
and Internship Coordinator

A MUSEUM FOR ALL

How the River Museum is increasing access to dynamic experiences and exhibits for individuals of all backgrounds

One of Dubuque County Historical Society's (DCHS) core values is inclusivity, which is detailed as valuing the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure diverse voices participate in all aspects of the organization. These words are carefully crafted but like any statement, are only as good as the actions that accompany them. What has DCHS done to not only say we value inclusivity, but most importantly, show it? Since the establishment of the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) committee in 2020, the team has fostered institutional growth towards organization-wide implementation of DEAI best practices into DCHS procedures, programs, and culture. Perhaps it's best explained by highlighting some initiatives over the years.

Diversity from an organizational standpoint means ensuring that multiple people and perspectives are represented. This encourages growth, challenges stereotypes, and ensures we meet the needs of those we interact with. In an effort toward becoming a more diverse organization, DCHS has strengthened our partnership with community organizations such as Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, Area Residential Care, and Goodwill to hire staff and volunteers for our team. We have a consistent presence at community events like job fairs, the annual Pride Picnic, and Community Foundation trainings. We also are continually exploring less traditional ways of finding job candidates to join us. We also established community partnerships by tapping into the generous and knowledgeable minds from places such as Hills & Dales, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, and Loras College to help us conduct trainings for our staff to learn how to best treat our guests and each other in an equitable way.



To enhance our guest experience for all our visitors, we eliminated a financial barrier to visiting the River Museum through participation in *Museums For All*, a national program that welcomes individuals receiving food or housing assistance to visit for free or reduced admission. *Museums For All* brought an increased awareness that



many of our guests qualify for assistance. Those numbers, coupled with the thousands of student visitors we see each year, led DCHS to become a partner with the Red Basket Project, which provides access to period products for those who lack the funds to purchase them.

Part of an equitable experience is providing an accessible experience, which can be broadly defined as making space for the uniqueness of each individual. The DCHS team has provided modified Behind the Scenes tours for visually impaired guests, hosted Sensory Mornings for guests with autism or other sensory sensitivity, and increased wheelchair accessibility to our exhibits and at the Mathias Ham Historic Site. In 2023, we opened a comfort room located between the Makerspace and Boat Shop, which provides a private space for nursing or pumping parents or someone needing a sensory break. This space is open to staff and guests, and is a nod to acknowledging that we are, at a foundational level, a family institution.

Diversity, equity, and accessibility comes full circle with inclusion: the intentional effort toward all individuals participating in the work, including decision-making. Many of our efforts in this arena have focused on increasing the opportunity for all staff to have a voice, rather than speaking on their behalf. We've provided increased opportunities for staff to weigh in via surveys, comment cards, and exit interviews, encouraged diversifying committee participation, and amplified ways that we recognize and appreciate staff



Emily Adlfinger

Unveiled in February of 2023, the Comfort Room is among the first of its kind in Dubuque. The room is equipped with a comfortable recliner, sink, and sensory toys.

efforts. On the guest services side, we partnered with Great Plains ADA to conduct an accessibility audit of the River Museum campus, during which we were sure to have a variety of advocates with self-identified disabilities such as autism, deafness, and mobility differences weigh in on their visitor experience so we can make changes to become more accessible and inclusive. This feedback will inform further initiatives for years to come.

As a cultural and educational institution, DCHS has a responsibility to pave the way and set precedent for DEAI initiatives. By embracing DEAI values and celebrating people from all walks of life and experience, we can further cement our place as a hallmark of the Dubuque community and create a more global, knowledgeable, and engaged world.

WE DON'T LIKE TO BRAG BUT OUR MEMBERS SURE DO!

The River Museum has more than 8,000 wonderful members, and those numbers are growing by the day.

Interested in becoming a member? Contact Danelle Schroeder, dschroeder@rivermuseum.com for more information!

LARRY AND LYNN PAPE

Grandparent Members since August 2003



As volunteers and supporters of the River Museum, the Pape’s have enjoyed visiting with their grandchildren and now great-grandchildren for the past 20 years. They are still amazed at how the visitors react with joy to seeing fish and animals up close. Some of their favorite activities include the 4D movies and

special programs with Jared McGovern, which are not only educational but engaging!

What Larry and Lynn have to say: **“We believe the River Museum & Aquarium helps educate visitors and local people about the environment and encourage involvement. This is a great place to invest money and provide education and entertainment for young and old! We now buy memberships at Christmas for the grandchildren.”**

KAREN KUHLE

Individual Member since July 2003



Being a member since the River Museum opened in 2003, Karen renews every year so she can visit the Museum anytime. Her visits have been a part of her family for 20 years.

Karen also enjoyed events like the annual Ice Fest, Native American & Trappers, Fur Trader Days and special exhibits like *Toadally Frogs*,

Lizards on the Loose and *Turtles-Secrets of the Shell*.

Karen has collected 11 binders full of pictures from memories at the museum and looks forward to adding more!

What Karen has to say: **“I enjoyed taking my dad (pictured) to see the River Museum in 2003, four years before he passed. He had a cottage and would run trotlines and catch catfish, and we would have a fish fry every Sunday. He really enjoyed when I took him to the Museum to see the giant catfish in the aquarium.”**

DAN BICKEL

Individual Member since November 2000

Eclipsing more than 20 years of membership, Dan Bickel is a founding member of the River Museum. His uncle, John P. Bickel, waited for Dan to write a check back in 2000 for a membership, and he has been a devoted member ever since.

Through the years, Dan has two favorite events: the first being the Valentines dinner where he surprised his wife with a lovely evening, and second, the induction ceremony for his great, great grandfather, William Harry Clarence Elwell, into the National Rivers Hall of Fame.

What Dan has to say: **“I keep renewing my membership because it is such a great place and I enjoy it. I love walking through the exhibits and observing the fish and turtles. If you are really interested in the river and history, you can’t beat the River Museum. It makes downtown Dubuque.”**

DICK AND CAROL MCGRANE

Grandparent Members since July 2003



Dick and Carol have enjoyed being members since 2003 and find the River Museum a perfect place for grandparents to enjoy the fun, educational and memory making activities with their grandchildren. Dick spent a lot of time with his granddaughter, Sky, at the museum, or as she called it “the Fishy Store.”

He remembers the grizzly bear display which stood behind a dark glass exhibit. At first, this display would scare Sky (pictured), but after a few visits, it was Sky telling other guests “not to be afraid.”

They renew every year which allows them to visit whenever they want as the museum is interesting, unique, and always changing. Some of their favorite events include Ice Fest and Taste of Summer. They enjoyed the Titanic and Mangelsen exhibits, and they never miss the opportunity to enjoy the food at the Harbor Grill!

What Dick and Carol have to say: **“The River Museum is the best entertainment value package you can get. It sounds like it is for kids, but it is for all ages. It is hard to get everything done in a day.”**

"Fly-By-Night Productions' partnership with the River Museum and the Dubuque County Historical Society goes back to 1987, prior to the current museum. Throughout the years, there have been many opportunities to tell stories and highlight exhibits. My favorite memory is that the River Museum continues to evolve, shedding a new perspective on how we share history and connect with the community. Fly-By-Night is grateful to have been a part of these opportunities!"

– Lenore Howard, Artistic Director of Fly-By-Night Productions

THANK YOU FOR **20** **AMAZING** **YEARS** OF MEMORIES!

FOLLOW US    

"I love to visit the museum and take any out-of-town visitors there! It is always a pleasure to see the history exhibits and stingrays, in particular!"

– Kari McDowell

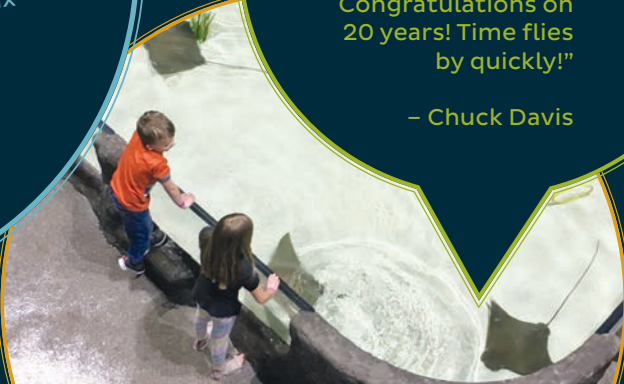


"My husband and I were married at the River Museum on 10/7/2017!"

– Kelsey Miroux

"Jennifer Devlin and I were leaders of the architect team at EHDD architects who designed the Museum! Congratulations on 20 years! Time flies by quickly!"

– Chuck Davis



"One of my favorite experiences was getting a birds-eye view of my kinds enjoying spring break!"

– Leah Neuendorf

"One of the favorite things to do when my grandchildren would come to visit would be to spend the day at the River Museum!"

– Mary Lou Johnson



"In spring of 2015, my daughter and I took all five grandchildren to the River Museum. We all had a blast, and the grand kids loved it!"

– Rhonda Schildgen

"I remember the frog exhibit in the early to mid-2000s! Especially all of the frog statues all over towns that were placed in front of businesses, those were always fun to see!"

– Amelia Seutter

"I loved the work our team did. The diversity of the animals we were able to bring in to show our guests was incredible. We have a facility that provides our guests an experience to explore and learn about animals and conservation beyond the Mississippi River. It's been beneficial to our repeat visitors and members to have something new when they visit, and being able to see what we were able to accomplish in 20 years— from where we were to where we are now—is extremely satisfying!"

– Abby Urban, Former Curator of Living Collections