

History Comes Alive in the Media Center: Winona Middle School and Winona County Historical Society Collaborative Project

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Exhibits, historical photographs, and guest speakers are helping make local history come alive to students at Winona Middle School. Last spring the media center and the Winona County Historical Society received over \$8,000 from SELS (The Southeast Library System) to provide collaborative programming. The collaborative project was an outgrowth of previous collaborative projects and ongoing activities the Historical Society sponsors for students.

Society staff and I wrote the grant application, a relatively easy process and a reminder that local grants may often be the easiest to write. As identified in our application, the primary focus of the project is to bring rotating displays of artifacts to the Winona Middle School Media Center. These resources are used to heighten awareness of the resources at WCHS, introduce students to primary resources, and help students as they study Winona history in their middle school curriculum. Other goals supported by the grant are to:

- (1) Better organize/archive/preserve local history resources in the media center.
- (2) Purchase more copies of the books published in celebration of Winona's 150th anniversary.
- (3) Provide staff development for Winona County teachers to help them become more familiar with using primary resources and more familiar with existing web sites about local history
- (4) Offer educational programs conducted by the Society's educator at the middle school
- (5) Promote Historical Society resources and programs to educators

The money is used for:

- Counter top display cases (built by a local carpenter)

- A printer and supplies for printing large size reproductions of historical photos (This work is done by a historical society archivist)
- Additional copies of new publications about Winona's history
- Archival supplies (boxes for multiple copies and large plastic sheets for individual pages) to store bi-centennial issues of the local newspaper
- Media center secretarial time to organize resources
- A small honorarium for teachers who attended a "Local history on the web" staff development class
- Historical Society staff time needed to (1) Prepare, deliver, and set up the exhibits (2) Present programs to students and (3) Reproduce, frame, and mount historical photos in the "Winona Corner" of the Media Center

Exhibits are planned to support curricular and interest needs of students. A display of a rifle, medals, uniform and other civil war artifacts supports the 6th grade unit based on Gary Paulsen's "A Soldier's Heart." Charley Goddard, the novel's main character was from one of early Winona's prominent families. (Note: the novel is fictionalized; family information and letters are accessible the Historical Society Archives and on the Historical Society's Web Site. Students also access the Brady Civil War photographs on the American Memory Web Site when they read the novel)

A toy stove and sink from the 1950's are attention-getting items in the old toys display. Other artifacts include a doll, a wooden hutch from the 1920's, a toy gun, a buggy, a wind-up elephant, and more! Students enjoy peaking in the display case.

"Going to School in the early 1900's," our "back to school display" was placed in the media center display cases that face the school commons. It captured the attention of parents and others visiting the school at the start of the school year.

A clothing exhibit will help support the Citizenship grad standard. For this project students interview a family member and then create a timeline, which overlaps the family member's life with historical events. The Society educator will present a program at Winona Middle School in conjunction with the project.

Our first photo exhibit depicts scenes of early Winona and has stimulated a lot of "I remember that!" discussion among the adults. The photos chosen represent places associated with well-known Winonans and help stimulate ideas for a famous Minnesotan research project. The Historical Society Educator shared information about photos prior to the start of the project. A "Then and now" photo exhibit of buildings is planned for spring.

We used *FileMaker Pro* to create a searchable database of the contents in historical newspapers published during Winona's 150th anniversary in 2001. We purchased archival storage boxes to store class sets of the newspapers. We also bought plastic sleeves so that one copy of each individual page could be used for display and student browsing.

This is a collaborative project that works! Our planning and implementation meetings have gone smoothly and financial record keeping has not been complex. The school district is the fiscal agent for the project; I submit bills to the business office, which in turn bills SELS. We spent sixty percent of our funds this year. The remaining money will be used throughout 2003 and 2004 to pay for the time involved in creating new artifact and photographic displays and pay for school programs put on by the society educator.

Come visit us – or take a virtual tour on the web!

Web sites

Local History Project Web Site

<http://www.rschooltoday.com/winonamiddle/mediacenter> (Select the local history button)

Winona's Changing Demographics (A Middle School project about Winona's ethnic groups)

www.rschooltoday.com/demograpics/index.html

Winona County Historical Society (Of special interest: "Company K at Gettysburg" and "Wabasha's Prairie to Winona")

<http://www.winona.msus.edu/historicalsociety/>

American Memory Brady photos

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

"Local history on the web" staff development class links:

<http://www.rschooltoday.com/district861/staffdevelopment>

"Using Jump Back in Time Photos to Complement Family History Timelines"

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/educators/newsletter/november01/ti5_8.html