

Program Summary

The Audie Murphy/American Cotton Museum, located in Greenville, Texas is proposing for your consideration a new educational project titled *Keeping History Alive* in the amount of \$8,500. With the installation of a new major exhibit on the history of early Hunt County opening in mid-January, the Museum will have a great opportunity to develop theme and grade specific tours for area schoolchildren. New tours in each of the three main theme areas will be created for grades 3-8 with hands-on components, alignment with TEKS (Texas state based curriculum) and pre and post tour lesson packets. The main focus of all of the themes will tie in to specific exhibit areas on display in the Museum which include military history, the development of cotton for this region and the history of Hunt County, Texas.

A core group of Museum staff and volunteers that will include teachers/retired teachers will be recruited who will become a part of the development phase of creating these tours. Researching and designing the details of the requisite theme areas for these tours will be a significant component in their creation. Once planned, all of the materials and supplies that will be needed will be purchased and organized into portable craft storage carts. Becoming a part of the nearby school districts in-service workshops and creating a brochure about the Museum tours will be an important step in getting the word out to teachers about the new tour programs. By the end of the first year that these new tours will have been implemented, we anticipate having 1,000 students participate and by the end of the second school year to have 1,500 students take part in the new tours. The Museum will offer a unique learning environment of which students and teachers can take advantage and learn different aspects of history, math, geography and science through the use of visual artifacts, hands-on activities, discussion and role-playing. Students will enjoy learning new things which will make them want to continue learning in the future. Teachers will have more tour options to choose from for their students which will help encourage repeat visits where the students will learn new things every time they come out for a tour.

TEXAS RURAL COMMUNITIES, INC. GRANT APPLICATION

Section I: Contact Information

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Section II: Organizational Description

- a. The Audie Murphy/American Cotton Museum is a 501c (3) non-profit organization located in Greenville, Texas. The Museum is currently celebrating its 28th year in operation. It was founded in 1987 and was called the Hunt County Museum. In the early 1990s the museum broadened its mission to include a special focus on the cotton industry in Hunt County and was renamed the American Cotton Museum. The Museum contains the engine of a cotton compress used in Greenville in the early 1900s to press over 1500 bales a day. In addition there are artifacts and photos of the days when cotton was king in Hunt County. Exhibits of settlers in the 19th century and their way of life are on display in the Museum. In 2000 the scope of the museum was again expanded to preserve the memory and achievements of Audie Leon Murphy, a Hunt County native and America's most decorated war hero during WWII.

In 2004 the Hunt County War Memorial was dedicated to honor Audie Murphy and the 271 soldiers of Hunt County who gave their lives during the 20th century to protect and defend the United States. In 2010 the museum added a new wing named the Hall of Heroes dedicated to honor and remember the life of Audie Murphy and the military personnel who fought and died for our country.

The Museum's mission is to educate the public and to preserve the history of Hunt County, Texas. Of particular emphasis is the impact of the cotton industry and the historical significance of our military heroes, especially Audie Murphy.

The Museum currently has a staff of two full-time persons, a Museum Director who has 17 years of experience in the museum field; an Assistant Director, who has 31 years of teaching experience; and one part-time person who serves as greeter and overseer of the gift shop.

The Museum hosts a number of programs and events designed to implement its mission of increasing knowledge of Hunt County and the military history of the area.

Major accomplishments of the Museum have been the move to the current location on I-30 in Greenville in 1996; moving the earliest standing house in Greenville and an 1800's Hunt County log cabin to the property; constructing the Hunt County War Memorial in 2004; and the 2010 addition of the Hall of Heroes wing to the museum building. In addition, the new early Hunt County exhibits will open to the public in mid-January. Other accomplishments include activities for community members which are designed to focus on the historical aspects of Hunt County.

Section III: Program Description

- a. One community/constituency need of the organization to be met by the program *Keeping History Alive* will be an increase in attendance at the Museum by school children and their teachers in grades 3-8. Currently, classrooms from local school districts can spend approximately one hour touring the exhibits. These tours are general in scope and do not offer any hands-on activities within the tours. While reviewing attendance records of the museum it was determined that the numbers of school classrooms were underserved by their attendance to the museum. The average number of annual class tours is approximately 20.
- b. The primary goals of the program are 1) to create new interactive educational tours and 2) to enhance the quality of the tours for school children of Hunt County in grades 3-8. As a result of the increased attendance and the revised/enhanced tours for the children we believe the history they learn will become more "alive" and meaningful to them in their studies. According to the Public School Review Hunt County has eleven independent school districts serving approximately 15,000 students with approximately 6,000 students in grades 3-8 and three private schools serving approximately 300 in the targeted grades. Last year the numbers of school children visiting the museum were approximately 786. By redesigning the tours to include small groups and hands-on activities, it is believed that the numbers of classes visiting the museum will increase substantially. Educating school children is an important aspect of fulfilling the mission of the museum and an avenue to strengthen the museum's ability to serve the public more effectively.

Groups of community volunteers including current and retired teachers and administrators will meet as a committee to design the tours and activities. Implementation of the tours will begin in the fall of 2017. Each tour will last approximately one to one and one-half hours depending on the age of the group and activities to be completed.

Museum staff/volunteers will make presentations to the area school districts describing the museum tours. These explanations will be presented during school in-service meetings in the fall of 2017. Brochures describing the tours will be provided to the school districts.

The new tours will focus on students in grades 3-8. As the largest and primary history museum in Hunt County the Museum is in a unique position to provide an educational service to the students in this area without them having to travel to the Metroplex.

A major goal of the project is to create three themed and grade specific tour programs that align with the state-based curriculum. There will be tours for grades 3-4; 5-6; and 7-8 in each of the Museums' three exhibit areas. Tours will include age appropriate hands-on activities designed to demonstrate the theme being explored and correlate with school curriculum. Tour activities will be modified according to grade level of the students. Materials and activities for each level of tour will be prepared beforehand and kept on rolling carts to be used as needed. Teachers will reserve a date ahead of time and choose which themed tour they wish their class to visit.

The themes will include:

- Living in Early Hunt County. An example of a typical tour is described below.*
- King Cotton, How It Was Grown and Manufactured and Its Importance in Hunt County. Examples of this tour and materials to be used will be developed based on information provided by the committee of volunteers.
- Hunt County Military Heroes. A primary focus will be on our military history and its heroes with particular focus on Audie Murphy and WWII. Examples of this tour and materials to be used will be developed based on information provided by the committee of volunteers.

This is an example of the Living in Early Hunt County tour. Contents and activities are for grades 3-4. Before beginning a tour, students will be divided into small groups led by Museum staff/volunteers. Topics to be included could be:

- *Hunt County before the Settlers Arrived*
- *Way of Life of the Early Settlers (includes visiting the structures on the property and exhibits inside the structures which pertain to early Hunt County.)*
- *1920s Main Street Exhibit*
- *People from Hunt County who have gone on to have regional or national relevance like Monty Stratton and Ambassador Fletcher Warren*

The students will view and listen to explanations of various artifacts about early Hunt County including those of Native Americans living here before settlers arrived. Tours of the early log cabin and Ende house located on the museum property and the newly completed 1920 main street exhibit with explanations of the artifacts found in the businesses will increase student knowledge of this era. Hands on activities could include making a clay pot like those used by the Native Americans; making butter like the settlers did; or making a toy used by settler children.

During the tours, volunteers and staff will lead discussions about the displays and provide guidance with the hands on activities.

- c. The primary persons to be served by this program will be Hunt County school students in Grades 3-8. In the beginning the program is projected to accommodate 40 classes of students with approximately 25 students per class for a total of 1000 students the first year. By the second year, the plan is to increase the number of classes to 60.
- d. The Audie Murphy/American Cotton Museum itself is the innovative aspect of this program and because the contents and designs of the displays in themselves are special. In addition, having the rotating theme tours chosen by the teachers, the in-depth presentations and the interactive, hands-on activities for the students to complete will give students the opportunity to learn in small group settings where they will be able to actively participate in the tour. The program could be a model for other communities who have a museum. Articles about the tours will be presented in local newspapers and in school district communications.

e. Budget for the program

Funds for the proposed program would be used to purchase materials and supplies to expand the educational tours and to print brochures to explain the new tours.

Materials & Supplies for Three Tour Areas	Cost	Number	TOTAL
Storage carts and tubs for materials	\$400.00	3	\$1,200.00
Activity materials for grade appropriate tours	\$1,500.00	3	\$4,500.00
Historical reproductions for interactive projects	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00
Miscellaneous Expenses			
Printing of Tour Brochures	\$800.00	7,000	\$800.00
Total for the project: \$8,500			

If TRC were unable to fund the total amount, a smaller amount would be accepted.

- f. The expected outcomes for the expanded educational tours are: 1).An increase in the numbers of students visiting the museum and 2). Increased knowledge of historical events in Hunt County. This information will be presented in a way that excites the students' imagination and desire to learn and enhances the study of history taking place in their classrooms. The small group concept allows for artifacts to be presented in a way which encourages an appreciation for history and allows interactive participation by the students. Teachers will appreciate how the TEKS objectives will be met in a way that cannot be achieved in the classroom. In addition to correlating the tours with the state curriculum, the way students will learn during the tour will help make history become alive for them. Students will arrive for the tour with basic information about the area to be visited. Post

tour activities provided by the teachers will further enhance learning. Teachers will be asked to evaluate their impression of the tours by completing a brief questionnaire and returning it to the museum.

Feedback, both verbally and written, will be obtained from the teachers who visit the museum. Pre & post information packets will be used as learning extensions of tour activities. Feedback will be requested from campus administrators on campuses where teachers who visited the museum are located. Records will be kept on the children who took a tour and then returned with family to visit the museum. Comparison of the numbers of students visiting the museum since the new tours began will be compared to those visiting before the new tour format was implemented. An increase in the number of tours requested will be indicative of their positive outcomes. Information from these sources of feedback will be presented to the Museum's Board of Directors.

As the tours are implemented, the committee and museum staff will reevaluate their success and revise the tours accordingly. By the end of the 2017 school year, the staff and committee will have better insight and experience into what appeals most to the teachers and students. Tours for the next year will be re-vamped to incorporate this information. Support for future tours will be provided by the increase in the admission the museum would receive from the greater number of students attending the newly designed tours.

- g. The timeline for this project would begin during the summer of 2016. A planning committee of volunteers and active and retired teachers would be formed to research the major elements and design the focus of the new tours. Samples of hands-on materials would be ordered, pre & post tour packets and brochures developed, supplies for selected projects ordered, and additional docents for tours recruited. Trial runs of the new tours would be made during the remainder of 2016. At the beginning of the 2017 school year, museum staff and volunteers would make presentations describing the tours to the school district staff during their in-service programs. Tour brochures would be distributed to the schools.

Attachments

1. List of Board of Directors
2. Current fiscal year budget, balance sheet, 1 page profit/loss statement
3. 2 Letters of Recommendation