

AAHM Sojourner

Newsletter of the
SPRINGFIELD AND CENTRAL ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM

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Crowne Plaza to host AAHM Gala 2018

The Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum will hold its 7th Annual Fundraising Gala, **Honoring Our Heritage**, on Thursday October 25 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway in Springfield. A reception and silent auction will begin at 6 pm and dinner will be served at 7 pm. Our theme this year, **200 Years of African American Progress Within the State of Illinois**, reflects the State's Bicentennial activities as well our Museum's year-long programs and exhibits commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Illinois African Americans have a long, extensive history of significant

and momentous contributions, achievements, and activism that will be showcased at the Gala. Also to be recognized are special honorees for 2018. Tickets will be available in mid-July at a cost of \$50 for one adult ticket and \$25 for one student ticket. Tickets may be purchased on-line, at the Museum office or from board members and volunteers.

Gala sponsorships and advertising in the keepsake program are also available. If you would like to discuss these opportunities or have any questions please call the Museum at 217-391-6323 or Gala Co-Chairs: Ocheng Jany 217-553-5380 and Ernestine Lawrence 217-726-5698.

AAHM a special place for children

Have you been putting-off a visit to the Museum because you are unsure if children are welcome? Maybe you thought the kids would not understand the exhibits or that they would be bored. Well, put those concerns to rest! Here at the African American History Museum we have exhibits and activities specifically for children that spark their curiosity and add to their knowledge.

Our **History Detective** exercise has young people looking throughout the Museum for images and information that answer intriguing questions. For what reasons is Mr. Fredrick Douglass remembered today? Who is Harriet Tubman? What does Preston Jackson's sculpture represent? For younger children and adults too, we have the **Kid's Corner** with coloring, puzzles, and drawing activities that depict African-Americans and their experiences, and a growing library of wonderful children's books.

Special this year is the **I Have A Dream** project. Young visitors may write down their dreams, as Dr. King spoke about years ago in his famous speech. Later this year, the dreams will be displayed to inspire others in the future.



So please bring the young ones along with you; ours is a family museum. We can promise an interesting and educational experience for people of all ages. And keep the Museum's Summer Camp in mind for 2019. review.



OUR MISSION

- * We tell authentic stories about African-American life in Central Illinois, past and present, celebrating and sharing our history and culture and planning for the future.
- * We will do this through scholarship, oral histories, exhibits, partnerships, our board, our supporters and our friends.
- * We are and will be community builders.
- * We recognize that our stories are at once unique but connected to those of other communities and we will support those interconnections.
- * We will be integral to the cultural life of our area. We will partner with like-minded organizations.
- * We will be proactive in our community.
- * We will study and apply best-practices in business, scholarship and communication.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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AAHM website: spiaahm.org
Address: 1440 Monument Ave., Springfield, IL 62702
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705
Telephone: 217-391-6323
Follow us on Facebook

Letter from the President

Hello Museum Members and Supporters:

Many of you have come along for the journey as the awesome Board of Directors and amazing volunteers diligently work to assure the success of this Museum, the first African American History Museum in Springfield, Illinois.

In our last newsletter we informed you of upcoming programs and grand openings for new exhibits and you showed up to support and view the fruits of our labor. We managed to learn, laugh, eat and linger at the Museum long enough for us to start turning the light out on you.

If you have not had an opportunity to do so, please visit our website at spiaahm.org and check out our new addition entitled the History Corner. There you will find Oral Histories and biographical information of a different African American each month.

We just finished our weeklong phenomenal summer camp and the campers, instructors, volunteers all worked together to have the best camp ever. The campers did a lot of educational activities but one of the favorite things of all the campers was the lunch. Thanks Queen B for the wonderful meals.

As we prepare for the remainder of the year and our Gala Fundraiser, please follow us on Facebook so you can keep abreast of what we are planning. Tickets for our Gala will be available by the mid-July via our website, board members and volunteers. You can also contact Doris Bailey at the Museum or the new Illinois Times website illinoistimestix.com.

I invite you to join us and volunteer. You might have an idea for an exhibit or a program. You might like to do research or have great computer skills. You might have the ability to write grants or proposals. You might want to learn about all our exhibits and give tours of the Museum. You might only have enough time to greet people at our programs. All volunteer efforts are sincerely appreciated.

Thank you for everything and God Bless.

Sincerely,
Nell R. Clay

AAHM MEMBERSHIP: HOW IT WORKS

The Museum offers memberships of various levels for individuals, families, businesses and organizations. Memberships are entered on the month applications are received. If you submit a one-year membership application this July, for instance, your membership will run from July 2018 to July 2019. As your membership term nears the end, you will receive a notice in the mail along with a renewal form. Most members renew at that time, however, if we do not hear from you, we follow-up with a letter, email or phone call. If members do not renew at that point, we assume they do not wish to remain as members. For anyone who has been notified but has not responded, we hope you will renew now. If we do not hear from you, we will remove your name from our membership list and discontinue sending the *Sojourner* and other communications.



is the quarterly newsletter of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.

Much credit for establishing this newsletter goes to Vicky Whitaker who, with her professional journalism background, generously shared her knowledge and skills. Thank you Vicky, from Sue and all of us at the AAHM.

2017 in Review: an event-filled year



- The Museum had a total of 1,890 visitors to view exhibits and attend its events and programs.
- 32 events and programs were held both at the Museum and off-site locations.
- Museum membership totaled nearly 200 households.
- The **Sojourner** newsletter was initiated and by year's end was being sent to more than 300 members and partners combined.
- The Museum had 1,297 Facebook followers.

Kathleen Wright (second from left) Pastor of St. Paul AME Church, wins the raffle-drawing Grand Prize: two Gala tickets and an overnight at Crowne Plaza. The church is celebrating the 175-year anniversary of its founding this summer. It is the second oldest African-American church in Springfield. Congratulations Pastor Wright and St. Paul AME.

Annual Meeting

Members, volunteers and donors gathered at the Museum on May 31 to review the status of the African American History Museum. Following a social hour, President Nell Clay welcomed the group and provided an overview of recent activities at the Museum. Newly appointed board member Carolyn Farrar discussed ideas for the future.

Elizabeth Alexander reviewed Museum exhibits and events held during 2017. Highlights included the New Philadelphia Exhibit and associated programs, 30th Commemorative Anniversary of Springfield's Aldermanic form of Government, the Illinois Authors Fair, a quilt program and exhibit, the visit by the Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden, airing of film "Rosenwald, the Remarkable Story of a Jewish Partnership with African American Communities," the summer camp for children, a Second Chance Christmas, and much more. A complete list is available from Museum Coordinator Doris Bailey.

Sue Massie reported that year-end membership totaled nearly 200 households and emphasized the value of memberships in terms of financial support and community engagement. She noted that the Museum has an investment fund for acquisition of a permanent facility. The fund is with the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln and donations are encouraged.

Doris Bailey discussed the value and potential for volunteers at the Museum and Minnie Gillespie provided a year-end overview of the Museum's finances.

A raffle drawing was followed refreshments and heavy hors d'ourves. The **Ya Bendi Tatu** band of Museum members Steve Alexander, Judy Davis and Allen Davis then captivated guests for the evening.

Partners Provide Support

The Museum is blessed with partners from Springfield, Central Illinois, and beyond. Many museums, organizations, and businesses have taken part in exhibits and programs since the Museum's founding. Support has come in many forms: artifacts and materials, research and production, donations and contributions, and participation and enthusiasm. We are thankful to all our partners and apologize in advance if we have missed anyone.

American Assn. of Retired Persons, Abraham Lincoln Assn., Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, Butler Funeral Homes, Calvary Baptist Church, City of Springfield, Community Care Systems, Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, Inc., Document Management Inc., Dominican Sisters of Springfield, IL, Elijah Iles House Foundation, Faith Coalition for the Common Good, First Bankers & Trust Co., Fox Channel 55, George Alarm, GM Services, LLC, Green Nissan, HSHS St. John's Hospital, Hanson Professional Services, The Horace Mann Companies, The Illinois Times, IL Assn. of Community Action, IL Executive Mansion Foundation, IL Historic Preservation Agency, IL Petroleum Marketers Assn., IL State Museum, Isringhausen Imports, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Lincoln Monument Assn., Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, LRS, Marine Bank, Mary Michelle Winery & Vineyard, Massie Massie + Associates, Memorial Health System, New Salem State Historic Site, Ann Rutledge Quilters, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation, Pere Marquette Lodge, PJP Auto Enterprises Inc., PNC Bank, Sangamon County Historical Society, Security Bank, Springfield Area Arts Council, Springfield Art Assn., Springfield Electric Co., Springfield Housing Authority, Springfield Public Library, Staab Funeral Home, State Journal Register, The Tracy Fund, Springfield Urban League, State Farm Insurance, State Journal Register, Union Baptist Church, United Way of Central IL, U.S. Bank, WICS Channel 20, WUIS TV.

Spring Highlights

DID YOU MISS A PROGRAM? CATCH UP HERE!

FEBRUARY 17: RACE AND RECONCILIATION

The importance of reconciliation between races and cultures was the subject of this program. UIS assistant-professor Devin Hunter described the subject then introduced Dominican Sister Mary Jean Traegar who has been addressing this subject for many years. Sister Mary Jean works with the Faith Coalition for the Common Good and the Crossroads Anti-Racism organizing to make people aware of the problems and guide them through a process of understanding and working to eliminate racism. Although true reconciliation takes diligent effort and much time, Sister Mary Jean concluded that it must be done.

MARCH 2 THROUGH 11: THEATER PRODUCTION "ALL THE WAY"

The Hoogland Center presented this Tony Award winning play, "All the Way," depicting events in 1963 following President Kennedy's assassination and LBJ's appointment as President of the United States. The intense debates and politicking to finally secure the Voting Rights Act were rivetingly portrayed by local players including Museum board member Douglas Holt.

MARCH 10: CIVIL RIGHTS LEGENDS

Eight women were honored as Civil Rights Legends on the 10th of March to celebrate National Women's History Month. They are: Bettie J. Allen, Velma Louise Carey, Theresa Faith Cummings, Barbara "Babs" Drake Dickerson, Vesta Meek Nichols, Sister Marie Clare Sheible, OSF, and Ruth A. Warden Waller. As Minnie Gillespie explained, "These outstanding women sacrificed, contributed, fought for social justice, stood for injustice, and spoke out for those who could not speak out, and for those who are sometimes called the voiceless."

MARCH 25: REENACTMENT OF SELMA TO MONTGOMERY MARCH

A reenactment of the epic Selma to Montgomery (Alabama) Marches was held on Sunday afternoon March 25. Organized by the University of Illinois Sangamon County 4-H Metro Club and club leader Erica Austin, the event commemorated the 1965 march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to highlight the difficulty faced by Blacks trying to vote and to push for a voting rights act.

The Springfield March began at Chamberlain Park and continued to the Old State Capitol. Once there, Mistress of Ceremonies Jaelyn Logan began the program. The University of Illinois (UIS) Voices of Praise Gospel Choir rendered two selections. The 4-H dancers danced to the song "Glory." Kortez Drew recited his Dr. King rap. Darion Miller recited Dr. King's speech, "Our God is Marching On (How Long, Not Long)."

This program was held in cooperation with the Museum's commemorative activities of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.



APRIL 7, 10: READING OF DR. KING'S WORDS

In the fifty years since Dr. King's assassination, his words ring louder than ever. On both April 7 and 10, fourteen local readers ranging from third graders to great-grandparents gathered to proclaim Dr. King's words, reminding us of the eternal truths he preached and declared, and the poignant words he spoke.



*Above: Reenactors, Springfield, March 25, 2018
Below: Marchers, Selma to Montgomery, 1965*

During Dr. King's 39 years of life, he spoke eloquently about the need for world peace, the scourge of poverty, the doctrine of non-violence and, so importantly, what it means to be human. Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech is his most quoted, but there is much to be gleaned from his lesser known speeches including the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and his 1967 speech at New York's Riverside Church where he called for an end to the Vietnam War.



APRIL 14 SECOND CHANCE CHRISTMAS

Museum members and friends gathered to celebrate Christmases around the world with ethnic foods, costumes and decorations. For the second year, Ernestine and Archie Lawrence organized and hosted the event, awarding ribbons to those who were voted best in each category.

APRIL 19: NON-VIOLENT ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM PROGRAM

Compelling images and poignant protest music brought the 1960s Civil Rights Movement to life at the Museum's "Non-Violent Advocacy and Activism Program." Keynote speaker Dr. Christi Griffin, shared her legal and ethical insights as Director of the Ethics Project in St. Louis, MO, and author of *Incarcerations in Black and White: The Subjugation of Black America*.

A panel discussed the role of advocacy today and the Saving Black Lives movement. Participating were Ron Johnson, Missouri Highway Patrol; Brenda Andrews, Nobles Vice President; and Teresa Haley, NAACP President of Springfield and State of Illinois. The video "Know Your Rights: Training Citizens When Stopped by the Police" was presented by retired U.S. Marshall Robert Moore. The video is being used for training at Illinois police agencies and School District 186 drivers' education classes.

The Museum recognized three organizations for their advocacy work in the Springfield community and presented Certifications of Appreciation to The Springfield Urban League, Springfield Branch of NAACP, and the Springfield Frontier's Club. *The program was organized by Robert Moore and Minnie Gillespie as part of the continuing commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.*

MAY 6: GRAND OPENING OF THE "EARLY AFRICAN AMERICAN PIONEERS" EXHIBIT

The Grand Opening of the exhibit "Early African American Pioneers" was held at the Museum on May 6, 2018 with a packed house. More than 140 attended, many of them descendants of the featured families. Family members shared their memories and ancestral stories during the evening.

Seven early Springfield families had been exhaustively researched by Elizabeth Alexander and Patricia Davis and panels were produced tracing their history. The families are: Donnegan, Ford, Houston, Murrell, Walker, Yokem, and the Wilson/Scott family. The exhibit will be on display at the Museum through May 2019.

Author Linda Allen Bryant and her husband traveled from San Diego to attend the opening. Bryant is the author of the book, *I Cannot Tell a Lie: The True Story of George Washington's African American Descendants*. The book is available for purchase at the Museum store.

It is anticipated that research of other pioneer families will be undertaken in the future and that those family histories can added to the exhibit. Anyone interested in participating should call Elizabeth Alexander at the Museum.



This exhibit was funded by a grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society.

Summer Camp Highlights

The third year of the Museum's Summer Day Camp, was not even history when Camp Director Pamela King was called upon for a report. True to form, King got her story in on time. Here it is.

We had a wonderful 2018 AAHM Summer Camp filled with fun, crafts, and a host of activities.

Our theme was: Learn from the Past - Create Your Own Future. The camp dates were June 4-8, 2018, from 9 am to 3 pm. We served 25 campers 3rd through 5th grades two snacks and a full lunch each day.

Monday- Thursday, we focused on iconic heroes in the "Journey to Greatness" series presented by Brycen Turnbull, NPS-Lincoln Home Historic Site Ranger. This engaging interactive presentation shows Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman as children. It tells of the obstacles and challenges they faced. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, they became GREAT. It demonstrated to the campers that they have the choice to allow their problems to defeat them or to find ways to overcome them and, hence, to propel them to better lives for themselves and others.



We were visited by talented people who shared their skills with the campers. The Troubadours serenaded with songs from the mid-1800s. Betsy Dollar, from the Springfield Art Association, helped them to produce beautiful art on fabric. Robert Davis and Kathryn Harris brought Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Tubman "alive" with their portrayal of these amazing historical personalities.



Jenni Dahl and her grandson, Cameron VanMetre, brought us the Sangamon-Menard. Regional Office of Education's **Star Lab**. Campers were able to crawl into it and explore the planetarium-like presentation of the galaxy of stars. It highlighted the Big Dipper and the North Star that illuminated the path for enslaved people on the Underground Railroad to freedom.



The University of Illinois Extension Sangamon County Metro 4-H Club, under the leadership of Erica Austin partnered with the camp to provide a myriad of experi-

ences for the campers. It provided teen helpers to assist the campers with their projects. The teen teachers from the 4-H Dancing Clovers dance team were absolutely outstanding. They taught campers a dance that impressed, astounded, and electrified the audience of parents and friends during the camp's finale.



We also traveled to Lincoln's New Salem. There we made candles and yarn dolls and learned how to play games of the 1830s.



Camp Sponsors and Partners

University of Illinois Extension Sangamon Co. Metro 4-H
 NPS- Lincoln Home Historic Site
 Lincoln's New Salem Historic Site
 Lincoln Monument Association
 HSHS St. John's Hospital
 Springfield Art Association
 Boys and Girls Club of Springfield
 Springfield Tracy Family Fund
 Barbara Malany
 Eric Volkel-Barno
 The Sangamon-Menard Regional Office of Education

**THANK YOU
 FROM ALL OF US
 AT THE AAHM !!**

Calendar of Events

MUSEUM HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, NOON TO 4 P.M.; SATURDAYS 10A.M. TO 5 P.M.

Several more events are scheduled during the remainder of 2018 as part of the year-long commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although time is growing shorter, we will be happy to assist with or co-sponsor additional activities focusing on civil rights and race relations.

All events will be held at the Museum unless otherwise noted.

JUNE 15 to July 31

- **New Philadelphia Exhibit** on display at the US Bank at 205 S. 5th St. in downtown Springfield. Bank hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The bank is closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

JULY 14, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

- **U.S. Grant and U.S. Colored Soldier**, A First Person Program by Larry Werline as General Grant and Robert Davis as Sgt. Andrew Lewis of the 29th USCT

The use of colored troops in the American Civil War at first was not a sure thing though it was a personal fight for freedom and the full rights of citizenship for freemen and slaves. The stance of the government and its military officers continuously evolved as emancipation became, at first, a means to win the war, but later a moral imperative and a war aim.

JULY 26, 5 p.m.

- Book Launch and Signing: **New Philadelphia** by authors Gerald McWhirter and Kate-Williams McWhirter. Authors are decedents of Frank McWhirter who establish the town of New Philadelphia in the western Illinois (Pike County) in 1869.

AUGUST 4, 5:30 p.m.

- Grand Opening of the **1908 Race Riot Exhibit**. Panels are being provided by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

AUGUST 14, 6 p.m.

- Screening of film "**Springfield Had No Shame**" followed by a discussion. The film is currently the only documentary currently available about the Springfield Race Riots of 1908. Location: Lincoln Library, the Public Library of Springfield.

SEPTEMBER

- The new **Middle Passage Exhibit** and opening. Date and time to be announced.

OCTOBER 7

- **Springfield Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** hosts a reading and program focusing on the speech Dr. King made in Springfield on October 7, 1965. Time and place to be announced.

OCTOBER 25, 6 p.m. reception and auction, 7 p.m. dinner and program

- The AAHM holds its **7th Annual Gala** at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. Beginning in mid-July, tickets will be available on-line, at the Museum office and from board members and volunteers. See page 1 for more information.

Museum now available for private events



Did you know that the Museum can be rented for private events including receptions, reunions, conferences, or other functions? Except for times that the Museum is open to the public, the space is available to groups or individuals. Rental fees for Museum members are \$50 for one to two hours and \$25 for each additional hour with a non-refundable \$25 deposit. Rental fees for non-members are \$100 for one to two hours and \$50 for each additional hour with a non-refundable \$50 deposit. Some restrictions apply. To learn more and to apply contact Museum Coordinator Doris Bailey at 217.391.6323.

African American History Museum
Springfield and Central Illinois
P.O. Box 301
Springfield, IL 62705-0301



MEMBERSHIP

Members receive membership cards, the *Sojourner* newsletter and museum communications. Members at the Sustaining level and above also receive invitations to previews, grand openings and special VIP events.

Membership Categories

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$ 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$ 100-\$ 199 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$ 200-\$ 499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth/student \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing \$ 500-\$ 999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1,000 |
- Business Member \$500-\$999 (includes business listing at museum events)
- I would like to pay now for three years of membership . AMOUNT enclosed \$ _____
- Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip _____

Telephone number _____

Email address _____

Your check should be made payable and sent to the African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois (AAHM) , P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705-0301