

THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THIS ALL WORK

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carol Schlegel, President
Jamie Mockry, Vice President
Linda Buck, Secretary
Sharon Bohling, Treasurer
Jerda Garey-Vickers

Laurie Sinner
Steve Lenhart
Sue Doak
Jimmy McCarville

CURATOR

Connie Discoe

VOLUNTEERS

Steve Batty
Sherry Lytle

Phil Lyons
Sue Wacker



McCook Senior High students dusted in the High Plains Museum and the Carnegie Library, and cleaned the caboose during the school's annual "Bison Days" "Day of Service". Helping at the museum Friday were these students: Andrew Pochop, Davien Hanson, Ruby Stone, Leni Henderson, Rebecca Koenig, Briley Morgan, Hannah Thompson, Sandra Hixon, Destiny McGinley, Tasha Brandt, Wyatt Meyers and Lainey Schmidt. Their teachers are Jolene Boesch, Jana Sides and Julie Carpenter.

HIGH PLAINS Historical Society



2021-2022 Annual Report

WHO WE ARE

According to our Articles of Incorporation, “The business and purpose of the High Plains Historical Society shall be to bring together those people interested in history, and especially in the history of Nebraska. Understanding the history of our community and State is basic to our democratic way of life gives us a better understanding of our State and Nation and promote a better appreciation of our American heritage.”

We are committed to the preserving and sharing the history of Red Willow County. Through the coordination of volunteers, both in the governing board and staffing of the High Plains Museum, along with a part-time curator we provide an engaging experience for our visitors.

QUICK VIEW:

Founded: 1963

Mission Statement: Engaging participants in the historical experience of Red Willow County and the High Plains

Governance:

- 9-12 Board of Directors

Annual Operation Budget: \$52,500.00

Number of Employees:

- 1 Part-time
- 2 Independent Contractors

2022-2023 ANNUAL BUDGET

	Income	Expense
Point of Sale		5.00
Wages		25,000.00
Employee Taxes		.00
Display Expenses		.00
Insurance		3,200.00
Postage		60.00
Repairs/Maintenance		2,500.00
Supplies		1,200.00
Telephone		1,100.00
Utilities		9,500.00
Advertising		500.00
Miscellaneous		1,200.00
Janitorial/Maintenance		1,200.00
Lawn Care/Snow Removal		1,500.00
Microsoft Contract		50.00
Copier Expense		720.00
Rentals	1,000.00	
Donations	2,000.00	
Membership/Donations	5,000.00	
Big Give	10,000.00	
Red Willow County	25,000.00	
Investments	3,500.00	
Dividends	250.00	
Gift Shop	1,000.00	
TOTAL	\$45,750.00	\$47,735.00

2021-2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

	Income	Expense
Point of Sale		27.83
Wages		16,595.00
Employee Taxes		4,058.07
Collection Development Wages		150.00
Display Expenses		455.56
Insurance		3,197.00
Postage		58.00
Repairs/Maintenance		15,207.39
Supplies		955.79
Telephone		1,029.24
Utilities		8,457.96
Advertising/Memberships		318.00
Miscellaneous		10,437.74
Janitorial/Maintenance		790.93
Lawn Care/Snow Removal		1,280.81
Microsoft Contract		59.76
Copier Expense		913.19
Grants	33,750.00	
Rentals	100.00	
Donations	11,000.00	
Membership/Donation Box	1,787.61	
Big Give	6,796.19	
Red Willow County	20,007.52	
Investments	3,600.00	
Dividends	270.44	
Gift Shop	432.05	
Surplus Sales	1.00	
TOTAL	\$77,744.81	\$63,992.27

WHAT WE DO

Places you can visit: The High Plains Historical Society maintains and operates the High Plains Museum and Historic Carnegie Library. Included in the complex is an outdoor exhibit with a Burlington Northern caboose and iron jail cell.

Educate: There are several areas of education related to the High Plains Historical Society and the operation of the High Plains Museum. We provide programs for all ages including Heritage Tours for school groups, scavenger hunts as well as being a resource for research.

Preserve: We have been entrusted with an extensive collection of artifacts that provide physical evidence of our past. We strive to maintain an environment that will safely keep these items for generations to come.



OUR “BIG DREAM” GOAL: TO BE A “MUST SEE” DESTINATION IN McCOOK AND SOUTHWEST NEBRASKA.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?



OUR ACTION PLAN:

- 1. COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF ASSETS**
- 2. REDESIGN MUSEUM EXHIBITS**
- 3. DEVELOP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**
- 4. GROW FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**
- 5. MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT**
- 6. OPERATIONAL POLICIES**
- 7. EXPAND OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**
- 8. MARKETING AND PROMOTION**
- 9. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

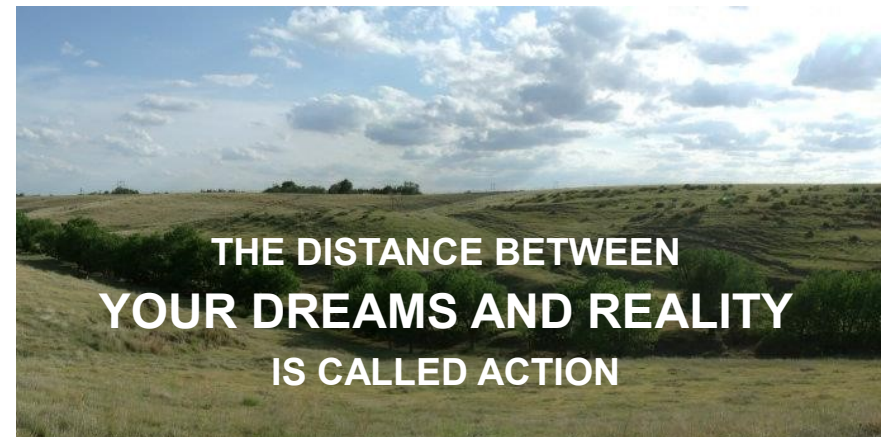
OUR FUTURE ACTION PLAN

We are excited for the future. We will be proceeding with the plans that are already in place, as well as developing new visions for the future. We are an organization that is not afraid to “Dream Big” or the ideas that come.

We will be continuing to reimagine the displays over the next few months so that we tell the story of McCook, Red Willow County and southwest Nebraska more completely. We are painfully aware that we lose the human resources that have made this more than just a building on a regular basis and we feel an obligation to preserve their storytelling for future generations.

Another issue the Board has been discussing is what would be involved in making the Carnegie Library in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) so that we are not limiting access to any segment of the population. We are in the investigatory stages of exploring options to make that a reality. We have been working with W Design and would be interested in input as to the direction those discussion have taken us.

More immediately is an upcoming event to be held at the High Plains Museum on Friday, July 29 from 3-4 p.m. in conjunction with Chautauqua. We will be hosting a Tea Party that will transport you back in time to the 1950's. Join us for an entertaining afternoon.



**THE DISTANCE BETWEEN
YOUR DREAMS AND REALITY
IS CALLED ACTION**

2021-2022 VISITATION

	In State	Out of State	
July	103	66	
August	83	52	
September	116	47	
October	59	29	
November	206	20	
December	128	39	
January	29	7	
February	57	2	
March	63	35	
April	144	41	
May	224	34	
June	298	72	
TOTAL	1,510	397	1,907

OUR ACTION PLAN COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF ASSETS



Through the generosity of the Graff Charitable Foundation through a \$5000 grant, we have been able to proceed with the massive undertaking of inventorying and cataloging the artifacts that make up the Museum's collection.

A laptop computer was purchased that is dedicated to this purpose.

After extensive research, the Board of Directors purchased PastPerfect Museum Software to aid in managing the collection.

The process is being spear-headed by board member, Linda Buck.



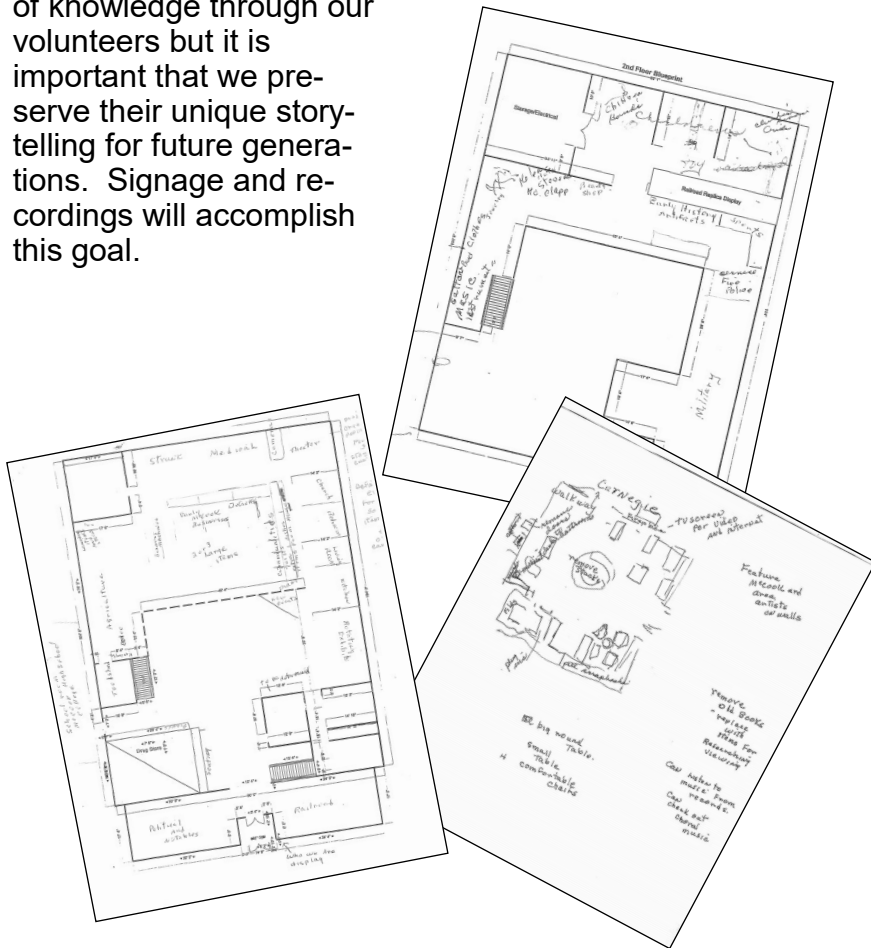
OUR ACTION PLAN

REDESIGN MUSEUM EXHIBITS

• INTERPRETATIVE SIGNAGE

One of the priorities of the High Plains Historical Society is to make the Museum a more engaging experience for visitors. Towards that goal, many hours of discussion have been held and floor plans have been arranged and rearranged. Progress is being made and the next few months will bring many exciting changes.

Part of the redesign will be to incorporate interpretative signage to better tell the story of Red Willow County and southwest Nebraska. We have been blessed with a wealth of knowledge through our volunteers but it is important that we preserve their unique story-telling for future generations. Signage and recordings will accomplish this goal.



OUR PLAN IN ACTION

IMPROVEMENTS

The past year has brought many changes to the High Plains Museum, some more visible than others.

There has been extensive work done to the “behind the scenes” areas of the buildings. Sorting, organizing and, only in cases where it was necessary, disposing of items that had been damaged beyond repair.

The most visible improvement that has been made is the installation of LED lights throughout the buildings. This has resulted in savings in the electric bill as well as rebates from NPPD due to the upgrade.

Other improvements include:

- Bench Painted by Flag Pole
- Carnegie Library Window Repair
- Digitizing Films
- New Flooring
- Purchase of Table and Chairs for Events
- Building of Racks in Storage Areas



OUR ACTION PLAN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Board of Directors recognizes the value and necessity of learning from those that have more expertise in all the aspects that go into maintaining and operating the Museum and contents that have been entrusted to us.

To that end we have availed ourselves of resources including the following:

- Conducted a Mission, Vision and Goal Setting Session facilitated by Denise Garey, NCF Staff.
- Have begun the process of working through the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS) supported by AASLH
- Joined three professional associations:
 - Nebraska Museum Association (NMA)
 - Mountain-Plains Museum Association (MPMA)
 - American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)
- Spring NMA Conference in Holdrege attended by Connie Discoe, Linda Buck, Sharon Bohling, Jamie Mockry, Jerda Garey-Vickers and Carol Schlegel



OUR ACTION PLAN

DEVELOP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

It would be impossible to operate the High Plains Museum without volunteers. We wouldn't even want to try!

From board members that spend their time and talents painting benches (Steve Lenhart), caulking windows (Sue Doak) and building storage shelves (Jimmy McCarville). To volunteers welcoming visitors and answering questions about displays. From high school students cleaning the Ca-boose. To local businesses volunteering their services. We would be remiss if we didn't mention the small army of volunteers that transformed the Museum and Carnegie for the Christmas season. Those willing to give of themselves are the lifeblood of this organization.

Future plans are to develop a more formal volunteer program that will focus on recruitment, training and recognition.



OUR ACTION PLAN

GROW FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The past year has been successful in raising funds through several avenues. Much of the success has been due to the impressive efforts of board member Jerda Garey-Vickers. Jamie Mockry and Sue Doak, who make up the Finance Committee, have also been instrumental in securing funding to move us forward in our mission.

Grants

Kimmel Foundation (Lighting)	\$ 20,000.00
McCook Community Foundation (Lighting)	5,000.00
Humanities Nebraska/ARP (Personnel)	3,750.00
Graff Charitable Foundation (Collection Management Effort)	<u>5,000.00</u>
	\$ 33,750.00

Fundraising

Big Give	\$ 6,000.00
J.T. Harris	<u>500.00</u>
	\$ 6,500.00

Memorials

Gene Morris	\$ 700.00
Mary Poore	1,790.00
Janet McCarville	175.00
Veldron Hall	<u>10,000.00</u>
	\$ 12,665.00

Other

- Development of a Building Rental Policy providing the community with a valuable resource as well as an income source for the Historical Society.
- Through a donation in memory of Gene Morris, bookshelves were purchased as display area for books written by local authors that are another revenue source. These shelves have been combined with a vintage display case for other merchandise. Future plans are to redecorate the area into an attractive retail location.

OUR ACTION PLAN

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Print marketing activities in the past year have included ads in the Southwest Nebraska Playbook and the McCook Business Directory.

By far the most effective promotions which have resulted in a tremendous amount of outreach to the community and beyond are regular posts on Facebook that have been carried out by curator Connie Discoe. The posts have increased our visibility on a scale that would not have been possible in the past, giving viewers a glimpse into what awaits them when they visit. It also alerts people to new exhibits and events.



OUR ACTION PLAN

EXPAND OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

• QUARTERLY EVENTS

In furthering our goal of being more engaged with the community, we have expanded our role as a meeting facility. Events that have been held in the Museum in the past year are as follows:

- Antique Appraisal Fair with Bob Jones
- NCF Training and “Night on the Bricks”
- Santa at the High Plains Museum
- Buffalo Commons Storytelling and Music Festival

We also, for the first time, had a float in the Heritage Days parade. Thank you to Laurie Sinner for championing that effort.

In the future we plan to have evening events scheduled on a quarterly basis.



OUR ACTION PLAN

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Changes have been made in the last year to our annual dues structure, increasing from \$5 to \$20.

While the Board of Directors understands the need to increase our membership to support the ongoing mission of the organization and maintenance of the High Plains Museum, we also want to provide value and benefits for those that chose to join.

We will continue to develop our programs to provide those enhancements.



OPERATIONAL POLICIES

We believe that having a strong foundation is vital for the success of the organization. Over the past few months policies have been adopted concerning Deaccessioning, selling Merchandise, Deed of Gift, Facility Rental and Conflict of Interest. Sharon Bohling and Linda Buck have been instrumental in developing these essential policies.

OUR ACTION PLAN

EXPAND OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

- **EXPAND YOUTH PROGRAMS**

Participating in “Field Trip Across McCook” for 4th-6th grade students. This is a cooperative effort with the Senator George Norris State Historical Site, McCook Art Guild and City of McCook Library. The driving force behind this new program is Laurie Sinner, board member and Norris Home Site Manager.

Serve as a site for the annual 7th Grade Heritage Day Tours. Hosting approximately 130 students and introducing them to the treasures of the Museum. Steve Lenhart, board member, serves as our ambassador to the Junior High students.



Scavenger Hunts are always available at the Museum to help families navigate their way through the exhibits.

Future plans are to continue to develop programs that will

encourage young people to have positive experiences and encourage them to not only visit but to volunteer as well.



OUR ACTION PLAN

EXPAND OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

- **ROTATING EXHIBITS CALENDAR**



Another of our efforts to give visitors a reason to come back to the Museum numerous times is to have rotating temporary displays in a designated area.

In the past year one of the displays commemorated the Red Willow County Fair Centennial. This was a passion project created by board member Jerda Garey Vickers with the help of curator Connie Discoe.

A recent display organized by curator Connie Discoe featured “Barn Art”. The presentation featured area artists as well as showing a number of historic barns from the region.

