

President's Report for the 2016 Annual Meeting

Summary of the Year's Activities:

2016 was a challenging year for the organization and me. While we continue to promote freedom, this year there wasn't a manager for the museum due to funding. The Board along with Volunteers was the foundations of the museum's operations. This group supported the visitation of over 4,000 individuals to our museum.

Sadly, our former Visitor Liasson manager, major docent, and champion, Charlie Crowningshield, of the North Star Underground Railroad Museum passed away in February. He will be missed. Charlie was given a Congressional letter for his services to the community, which his wife, Sue, shared with us.

There is a growing popularity of our bus tours and Ausable Chasm uses the museum as a resource when outdoor activities aren't available.

The museum continues to be featured in magazines and books. Kate Messner wrote the book, *Ranger in Time Long Road to Freedom*, which tells the story of Ranger, a time-traveling golden retriever with search and rescue training. In this story Ranger goes to a Maryland plantation and helps a young girl and her little brother to freedom. Kate Messner came to the museum in May and gave a book talk. *Ranger in Time* is a series of stories that Kate Messner has put out. This book used some of the research from our museum.

Margaret McGarrahan wrote the book entitled *Adirondack Summer*, about a girl that takes a tutoring position in the Adirondacks during the spring of 1910. Her experiences changed the direction of her life. The books were donated to the museum with proceeds to be retained by the Association.

The Association put on a program entitled, *The Colour of Money* in February, which showcased confederate bills that displayed images of slaves on them. John Jones discovered the bill, when he was asked to enlarge one by a client. He noticed the image after enlarging it. John has discovered 166 bills with images of slaves on them. In his research he learned the bills were used as propaganda. The images are of slaves that are well kept and happy. These images were to convince the North that slavery was good for everyone, especially the slaves themselves.

The Exhibits Committee chaired by Don Papson has added new exhibits to the museum. They include the display of confederate bills with slaves on them, the timeline of slavery/freedom in New York, artifacts from Stephen Keese Smith farm and Rowson

home (now owned by Dr. Palmer), horseshoe displays (some as flower pot holders and over the Estes family exhibit), and the traveling exhibit (slavery in the past, present, and things we can do to eradicate it). The traveling exhibit is currently at the TD Bank in Peru.

We're seeking volunteers who may be interested in fund development, promoting education, and publicity. As with many non-profits, we are always seeking new talent and ideas. So, if you or someone you know is interested in helping us to promote our mission, please contact us.

Board meetings took place four times in 2016 and we had a couple of special meetings to plan the operations of the museum without a manager. Our next meeting will in January. In 2017, we must have 6 meetings, which will be every other month from January.

The Association participated in the Street Drive again this year and raised nearly \$800.00. Unlike in 2015, we only had enough volunteers to man 2 street corners.

This year we did an Annual Appeal. Our last one was more than 2 years ago. We were given a challenge to raise at least \$2500, which would be matched. We were able to exceed the match and raised more than \$6000.00.

Docent Recognition:

While we have many volunteers to help our cause, for us those that volunteer as Docents make up the heart of our organization. That's because they are here to guide the visitors through our museum, answer questions about activities in the surrounding area and ensure that everyone has a pleasant experience. While they make sure that the facility is presentable and that the visitors are enjoying our museum, their most important role is to listen to the stories and experiences that our visitors bring and relay, many times after viewing the exhibits. In the past to show appreciation for our docents, we've given them certificates. This year, I took a different route to express our appreciation to these dedicated volunteers, who make up the heart of our organization. I've had the names of our docents engraved on a plaque and they are displayed on the wall in this room. (Sue uncovers the display.) Visitors will see the plaque as they exit the room, which is usually the last room that visitors see in the museum.

Deck Volunteers:

If you didn't notice or it was too dark, our deck had a face lift this summer. It has been repainted brown and blue. This summer, I've had visitors tell us the colors really set off the stones of the building. It's a nice contrast. The volunteers who was responsible for rejuvenating our deck was Kathy LaVoie, her husband Jim LaVoie, and her son Jimmy LaVoie. They spent numerous hours working on our deck. I would like to thank them

for improving the outside appearance of our building and to offer Jim and Jimmy these envelopes.

Presentation of Lantern Awards:

Linda Welch – Lantern Award Winner

Our first lantern winner for 2016 is Linda Welch. She is a retired teacher and has become our Docent Chair. Linda volunteered to schedule and manage the docents, after we learned that we had no funds to hire a manager. This is a critical position in the museum, as part of our funding comes from donations and the gift shop. Of course to get this funding, we need someone here to greet the visitors, answer questions, and to tell our story of the Underground Railroad in the Lake Champlain area. Without someone setting up a schedule and following up on changes with the volunteers, this would have a negative impact on the funds we count on each season and on our image in the community. Linda took on this task without any hesitation. She is now working on the schedule for 2017 and has a new docent to add to her list. This Lantern Award is our way of showing how much she has done for the museum by becoming the Docent Chair.

Dr. Kathy LaVoie– Lantern Award Winner

Our second lantern winner for 2016 is Dr. Kathy LaVoie. She is our Secretary and a professor at SUNY Plattsburgh. Kathy is a microbiologist. She is referred to as the bat lady, as she had done considerable research with bats. Kathy has an impressive educational background, but this year we learned that Kathy has hidden skills. Kathy with her husband Jim and her son Jimmy refinished/repainted our deck, which complimented the building. In fact, I had several visitors this year that commented on it. Kathy has been our Secretary since 2004. She has also this year, stepped up and chaired the Annual Appeal, which we have not done for at least a couple of years. She raised over \$6,000.00 with the matching grant of \$2,500 from two donors. This year Kathy exceeded her role as a Board member by taking on several tasks that improved our funding and the appearance of our museum, which has earned her this award.