2012 Spotlight: FFNHA Interpretive Grants

In 2012, Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA) began to offer small interpretive grants to partners who wished to undertake projects to better tell their freedom stories.

Our grant review committee approved twenty-one grant applications for a total of $82,354.30. With this investment in our partners, grant recipients are able to access over $90,000 in promised cash and in-kind services to complete interpretive projects.

Native Neighbors from Franklin County’s Past is one example of a successful FFNHA Interpretive Grant funded project. This event was produced by the Franklin County Historical Society and brought together representatives from various Native American tribes which once called the Ottawa, Kansas area their home. In Franklin County alone, the tribal groups relocated to the “Permanent Indian Frontier” in the 1830s-1840s included Potawatomie, Munsee, Chippewa, Shawnee, Peoria, Piankeshaw, Wea, and Sac and Fox peoples.

Occurring on October 13, 2012, the event commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Civil War Indian Brigade. The event educated attendees about the “Permanent Indian Frontier,” the immigrant Native tribes, why those tribes left Kansas and what became of them today.

Jan English, chief of the Wyandot Nation of Kansas Jan English speaks at Franklin County Historical Society’s “Native Neighbors” event, sponsored by an FFNHA Interpretive Grant.

Who We Are

FFNHA, consisting of 41 counties in western Missouri and eastern Kansas, is a grassroots effort to share the nationally significant stories about the struggle over freedom on the frontier. While this area’s history often divided citizens, today residents are integrating differing points of view into a shared story.

FFNHA became a National Heritage Area on October 12, 2006. FFNHA involves residents, and public and private organizations working together to build awareness of this area’s freedom stories. Leveraging federal, state, local and private funding, we empower communities and individuals to serve as stewards of their stories. We strive to build new alliances to support our heritage.

FFNHA is a partnership unit of the National Park Service and is administered by Destination Management, Inc.
The Freedom’s Frontier staff, board and partners have had a very busy 2012. We:

- Created and facilitated, in partnership with Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, a National Park Foundation Impact Grant funded 5-day program for 200 local Boys and Girls Clubs. Students explored the Civil War to Civil Rights theme traveling to different historic sites interacting with historic characters and hands-on experiences.

- Facilitated the completion of an American Battlefield Protection Program funded draft battlefield preservation plan. The final plan will be completed in 2013.

- Launched FFNHA Interpretive Grants, approving 21 applications for a total of $82,354.30 with promised cash and in-kind match of over $90,000.

- Started a Freedom’s Frontier Book Club using Skype for partners to join in reading and discussing fiction and nonfiction work related to the Freedom’s Frontier themes.

- Awarded Freedom’s Frontier prizes to Kansas and Missouri History Day students whose projects best interpreted a Freedom’s Frontier story.

- Conducted 6 public partnership meetings with an average attendance of 45 and a collective in-kind investment of approximately $40,000 by those attendees.

- Participated with our management organization, DMI, to hire a new executive director, Fred Conboy.

- Hosted 6 tours/events at the Carnegie Building with 225 in attendance.

- Established an ongoing series of Best Practices Conference Calls for participation by practitioners in National Heritage Areas throughout the country.

- Distributed among partner sites a Heritage Area Map, printed with sponsorship from the William T. Kemper foundation.

- Launched the Tacha Freedom Award, in recognition of Founding Chair Judge Deanell Tacha’s contributions to FFNHA.

- Facilitated a series of strategic planning sessions as technical assistance for partner sites.

- Established relationships with 10 new partner organizations.

- Presented 22 informational programs to 827 people.

- Used outreach display and distributed brochures at 18 conferences, festivals, and commemorations to reach over 12,000 people.

The story of Lecompton, Kansas’s role in pre-Civil War history and Paul Bahnauser’s work to preserve and promote that story was featured in The New York Times on November 23, 2012. Bahnauser noted in an interview with Kansas City’s Fox 4 that Lecompton is mentioned five times in Doris Kearns Goodwin’s Team of Rivals on a part of which the new movie Lincoln is based.


A Case for Baseline Funding

In times of flux and transition, nascent National Heritage Areas need to be able to rely on baseline funding from the Heritage Partnerships Program. 2012 was such a year for FFNHA as we transitioned between our founding executive director, Judy Billings, and our current executive director, Fred Conboy. During 2012, we also laid the groundwork for exciting funding opportunities and secured over $200,000 in Restricted Giving Grants, thereby allowing us to begin to build an endowment fund.

2012 Funding Sources

NPS Heritage Partnerships Program*:
$ 101,482.20
Private Contributions: $ 19,965.75
Restricted Giving Grants: $ 16,440.00
State & Local Funding: $ 6,550.00
Other (program income, interest, etc.): $ 5,392.34

* Does not include a request placed prior to the end of FY2011 but reimbursed in FY2012.

Leveraging Funds

For many of our partners, a small investment goes a long way. Our new Interpretive Grants program has proven that all many of our partners need is a bit of capital to free up both cash and in-kind donations needed to complete innovative projects. While small grants require no matching funds and large grants only require a half-match, our partners will bring to the table more than double the amount of funds they received in cash and in-kind contributions.

Freedom’s Frontier operates with the same mindset at our partners, working to stretch a small investment over 41 counties and putting that money to work to assist with preserving and interpreting our shared history.

2011 Expenditures

Administrative Expenses: $ 42,790.46
Program Expenses: $ 138,030.02
2012 Donors

Freedom’s Frontier appreciates the support of its donors. The following list reflects donations made in 2012.

**Freedom’s Frontier Circle** $30,000+
- City of Lawrence KS

**Santa Fe Trail Circle** $10,000 - $19,999
- Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust, Overland Park KS
- National Park Foundation

**Pony Express Circle** $5,000 - $9,999
- Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, Overland Park Convention & Visitors Bureau

**California Road Circle** $1,000 - $4,999
- James and Connie Banwart, Fort Scott, KS
- The Breidenthal Foundation, Kansas City KS
- Charles Clark, Prairie Village KS
- John A. Dillingham, Kansas City MO
- Eileen Robertson, Humboldt KS
- Kala Stroup, Lawrence KS
- Bill Waggon, Topeka KS

**Missouri River Steamboat Circle** $500 - $999
- Fred Conboy, Lawrence KS

**Friends of Freedom Under $500**
- David Ambler, Lawrence KS
- Paul Bahnmaier, Lecompton KS
- Deborah Barker, Ottawa KS
- Barbara Carswell, Topeka KS
- Nancy Clary, Reno NV
- Mary Cohen, Leawood KS
- Joanne Collins, Kansas City MO
- Jody Craig, Leawood KS
- William Crowe, Lawrence KS
- David Dunfield, Lawrence KS
- Bill Fischer, Fort Scott KS
- Bob Ford, St. Joseph MO
- Mike Gibson, Paola KS
- Kent Glasscock, Manhattan KS
- Charles Jones, Lawrence KS
- Cathy Kruzic, Denver Co
- Sheila Lampe, Iola KS
- Jim Maag, Topeka KS
- Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm, Olathe KS
- Julie McPike, Oakview MO
- John Myers, Topeka KS
- Emanuel Northern, Kansas City KS
- Kathy and Jeff Quigley, Gardner KS
- Marcia Rozell, Manhattan KS
- Roger and Sandy Slusher, Lexington MO
- Luther Smith, Kansas City KS
- Sonia Smith, Gardner KS
- St. Joseph Convention & Visitors Bureau; Bill & Davoren Tempel, Lexington MO

Future Goals

In 2013, Freedom’s Frontier and its partners will:

- Raise awareness of the heritage area and partners through expanded outreach and media relations.
- Create a comprehensive signage plan to incorporate gateway, wayfinding and interpretive signage.
- Disburse interpretive grants to fund partner projects that tell connect to FFNHA themes.
- Commemorate cross-border sesquicentennial with events in Kansas and Missouri.
- Continue to develop partnerships within the heritage area.
- Travel throughout the heritage area on listening tours to gather information for strategic planning and the needs of partners.
- Finalize a preservation plan for the Lone Jack Civil War Battlefield.
- Establish an awards program to encourage creative and interactive programming at museums and historic sites, including the Billings MVP award to recognize FFNHA “most valuable partners” in honor of founding director, Judy Billings.
- Conduct week-long Civil War to Civil Rights educational curriculum.
- Create an updated video and smart phone app about FFNHA and its partners.
- Continue to support partners as they bring FFNHA stories to the public.

New Executive Director

Fred Conboy assumed the role of Executive Director of Freedom’s Frontier in June of 2012.

For over 30 years, Fred has supported efforts for the preservation and protection of regional heritage areas in Kansas, Nevada and California. A native of Lawrence, Kansas, Fred served the KU Endowment Association for many years as Director of The Chancellor Club before helping lead fundraising campaigns with Arizona State University, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the University of California, Irvine.

To help achieve goals for heritage tourism, Fred also coordinates the activities of the Lawrence Convention & Visitors Bureau in partnership with regional cultural and historic organizations, including Watkins Museum/Douglas County Historical Society, Historic Lecompton, Wakarusa Valley Museum, Santa Fe Historical Society, and the Eudora Historical Society.

Fred Conboy, Executive Director, Freedom’s Frontier at the Carnegie Building in Lawrence.