A Message from Chris Johnson, President/CEO

Dear Friends,

There are times when a thank-you is not merely enough, but please let me try.

It is with sincere appreciation and humble gratitude that we thank all our donors, members, sponsors, volunteers, teachers, students, tour participants, Museum Store customers, board of trustees, and staff who helped to make 2019 an extraordinary year. As you look through the following pages, please know that your support has made all these amazing accomplishments possible.

When I reflect on the year ahead, I know that it is a formidable time in the history of our world. No one would have anticipated the challenges we are facing in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But, as a history buff, I recognize that these challenges are not totally unprecedented, and the way people have surmounted them in the past is by pulling together.

Vesterheim’s Folk Art School will not be holding on-site classes in 2020, and safety requires that much of our other programming be limited even after we re-open. Therefore we have shifted to creating online and social media alternatives to keep bringing you the kind of things you love. This shift has necessitated a swift learning curve for our staff and a considerable financial investment at a time when revenues from visitation, folk-art classes, tours to Norway, and Museum Store sales are down. In addition, our first priority needs to be making our campus a safe place for visitors and staff when we do finally re-open. Our friends have stepped up in this regard so that we can, in turn, step up to serve you.

Though the demands are new, we are pulling together, just as those who have faced struggles in the past have done. For this, for everything you did for Vesterheim in 2019, and for everything you will do this year and every year, you have our most heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely,

Chris Johnson

VESTERHEIM MISSION

Vesterheim celebrates the living heritage of Norwegian immigrants to America and shares this cultural legacy for the inspiration and enrichment of people of all backgrounds.

VESTERHEIM VISION

As a cultural organization tied to Norwegian-American immigrant experiences, Vesterheim strives to be inclusive and accessible as it shares stories, explores identity, fosters empathy and engagement, and builds community with increasingly diverse audiences.

Vesterheim will seek to achieve this vision in four key ways:

1. Vesterheim will deliver the highest-quality facilities, staffing, programs, collections exhibitions, and outreach in a financially secure and stable way.

2. Vesterheim will actively promote discovery and sharing of knowledge to an international audience through authentic and engaging educational programs, exhibitions, collaborations, and outreach.

3. Vesterheim’s programs, exhibitions, and outreach will always be based on its collections and other well-documented sources of information.

4. Vesterheim will look at not only what it meant to be a Norwegian American in the past, but also what it means to be a Norwegian American today, and how the story of Norwegian-Americans is relevant to society as a whole.

VESTERHEIM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MISSION

We intentionally build and nurture a growing network of friends that financially support Vesterheim’s mission as the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School.

VESTERHEIM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOUR KEY VALUES:

- Integrity
- Donor-centered and mission-focused
- Goal-oriented
- Focused on professional best practice
2019 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

VISITORS
- 14,197 visitors
- 580 visitors on Free First Thursdays
- 27,555 transactions in the Vesterheim Museum Store

NEW EXHIBITIONS
- 5 new exhibitions
- 2 Traveling Exhibitions: “Rocks and Hard Places: Emigration through the Lens of Knud Knudsen” and “In Trunks, Hearts, and Hands: What Immigrants Brought to Iowa”

VOLUNTEERS
- 278 volunteers
- 1,710 hours of service
- 290 inquiries made to Vesterheim curatorial staff

MEMBERS
- 5,100 members
- 555 people attended 8 events for Vesterheim Friends

FOLK ART CLASSES
- 84 classes
- 678 students
- 109 entries in the National Folk Art Exhibition
- 6 Youth Programs – 992 students

TOURS TO NORWAY
- 2 tours
- 69 participants
- 25 outreach presentations by museum staff
- 1,240 people across the United States

PIECES IN THE COLLECTION
- 33,000 pieces
- 78 objects from the collection on loan to 7 other institutions in 4 states (Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Washington)

WEBSITE VISITS
- 183,714 visits
- 7,682 households receive Vesterheim’s E-Newsletter
- 13,373 people follow Vesterheim on social media

MEMBERS
- 1,151 people financially supported Vesterheim
- Giving a total of 1,912 gifts (46 states and the District of Columbia)

AND WITH THE ONGOING SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIP OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU, WE CAN DO EVEN MORE!
VESTERHEIM HAS DONORS AND MEMBERS IN ALL 50 STATES, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND 7 COUNTRIES
Norway, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Sweden

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PEOPLE RECEIVED TATTOOS IN THE GALLERY AS PART OF THE TATTOO: IDENTITY THROUGH INK EXHIBIT
On drop-in tattoo days

VESTERHEIM HAS AN ONLINE DATABASE CONTAINING INFORMATION ON THE LIVES AND SERVICE OF 11,027 CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS WHO WERE NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN
This data was compiled from research conducted between 1997 and 2003 by Jerry Rosholt, a journalist and later producer for NBC Nightly News. To view this extensive database, go to collections.vesterheim.org/civil-war-database/

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OBJECTS FROM THE VESTERHEIM COLLECTION ARE FEATURED IN THE VIRTUAL GALLERY ON OUR WEBSITE
Check it out at collections.vesterheim.org/vesterheim-archives/virtual-galleries/

VESTERHEIM’S ONLINE GOLD MEDALIST PORTFOLIO HONORS ARTISTS WHO EARNED GOLD MEDALS IN VESTERHEIM’S ANNUAL NATIONAL NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN FOLK ART EXHIBITION.
Check it out at collections.vesterheim.org/gold-medalist-portfolios

VESTERHEIM MUSEUM STORE CUSTOMERS LIVE IN 48 STATES AND CANADA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM
The proceeds of all sales in the Museum Store support Vesterheim

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Mike Voltmer, Decorah, IA
William K. Wangelsteen, Minneapolis, MN
Jeanne and David Wright, Jr., Decorah, IA
Signe Wrolstad-Forbes, Chagrin Falls, OH
The Viking re-enactment group Skjaldborg returned to Nordic Fest thanks to a sponsorship from Viking State Bank & Trust.

Erik Anundsen and Chris Johnson at the Tusen Takk event. On behalf of his parents, Jack and Ellie Anundsen, Erik accepted their Bronze Kroneskubben certificate, which was awarded posthumously for their generous lifetime giving to Vesterheim.

Marilyn and Jeff Roverud in their beloved Norway. The Roveruds have sponsored Vesterheim's Syttende Mai celebrations for the past 20 years!
EXCITING EXHIBITIONS IN 2019

The Museum Lab
Sponsored by David and Brenda Carlson, Decorah, Iowa.

Rocks and Hard Places: Emigration Through the Lens of Knud Knudsen
This traveling exhibit is sponsored by Lars and Martha Alsaker on behalf of Dan Alsaker and his sister Pam (Alsaker) Hemingway; Alsaker Corporation; John K. and Luise V. Hanson Foundation; Mary Jo Hanson Boman; Rob and Janet Coe; and Greg Boman.

Tattoo: Identity Through Ink
Sponsored by Nick and Courtney Rowley with community partners Toppling Goliath Brewing Co. and Brock’s Valhalla Tattoo.

National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition
Sponsored by Decorah Bank & Trust and supported in part by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Favorite Things—A Community Curated Exhibit of Vesterheim’s Collections
In Memory of Alison Dwyer with gifts from Philip Freeman, Cathy MacLeod, Connor Freeman, Caroline Freeman, Mackenzie Freeman, Stuart Dwyer, and Julie Dwyer.

Courtney and Nick Rowley, sponsors of Tattoo: Identity Through Ink, tour the exhibition.

The 2019 National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition was sponsored by Decorah Bank & Trust. This was the fifth year that Decorah Bank & Trust supported this annual exhibition.

Dan Alsaker at the opening of Vesterheim’s exhibition Rocks and Hard Places: Emigration Through the Lens of Knud Knudsen. Dan is one of the sponsors for the traveling version of this exhibit, which went on view at Livsreise in Stoughton, WI, in 2019 and is scheduled to be shown at the German American Heritage Center later this year.

Brenda Carlson strikes the pose of a thoughtful researcher at the opening of Vesterheim’s Museum Lab exhibit. The exhibit was sponsored by Brenda and her husband David.
John Thompson of Madison’s Thompson Investment Management, Inc. enjoying the Madison Friends event. The firm that John founded has sponsored this issue of Vesterheim magazine.

Kate Martinson chatting with Sherry Trudo at the La Crosse Friends event.

Walter and Louise Hanson graciously hosted a Vesterheim event in their beautiful home in Rochester, Minnesota.

Unni Hoel, Ambassador Kåre Aas, and Sonja Perkins at the Vesterheim Embassy event hosted by the Ambassador at the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, DC, on May 2, 2019.

Jon and Mary Hart receive their Silver Krones Award from President/CEO Chris Johnson at the Decorah Tusen Takk event.

Dennis Barnaal delights the children as the julenisse during the juletrefest at Vesterheim’s Norwegian Christmas celebration, sponsored by Duane Bruening, children and family, in memory of Eileen.

**EVENTS**

Madison Friends Event
Twin Cities Friends Events
Chicago Friends Event
La Crosse Friends Event
Rochester House Party

Embassy Event
Decorah Tusen Takk Event
Syttende Mai
Nordic Fest
Norwegian Christmas
PROGRAMMING

Barnetimen (Children’s Hour)

Fourth Grade Pioneer Immersion Program

Third Grade WOW
(Window on the World) Program
Sponsored by Gundersen Health System.

Barneløpet
Sponsored by Jon and Mary Hart of Decorah in memory of Kjell Arne Berntsen, and three Sons of Norway Lodges—Valdres #503, Decorah, IA, Heimbygda #376 in Lanesboro, MN, and Valheim #364 in Spring Grove, MN.


Shelling corn during the Third Grade Window on the World (WOW) program, sponsored by Gundersen Health System.

Barneløpet, sponsored by Jon and Mary Hart of Decorah in memory of Kjell Arne Berntsen, and three Sons of Norway Lodges—Valdres #503 in Decorah, Iowa, Heimbygda #376 in Lanesboro, Minnesota, and Valheim #364 in Spring Grove, Minnesota.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Pulpit Rock
Pulpit Rock partnered with Vesterheim both with a beer release and an event in conjunction with the exhibition *Rocks and Hard Places*.

Toppling Goliath
Toppling Goliath created a special edition beer, *Valkyrie Strike*, in conjunction with Vesterheim’s exhibition *Tattoo: Identity Through Ink*.

FreedomBank
Helped beautify our campus by sponsoring the outdoor flowers.

Brock’s Valhalla Tattoo
Much of the dynamic quality of our *Tattoo* exhibit is thanks to Brock’s Valhalla Tattoo, who gave live tattoo demonstrations in the exhibition, allowed Vesterheim to use their tattoo art to promote the exhibit, and created the dramatic label for Valkyrie Stout, the special beer Toppling Goliath created in conjunction with the exhibit.

Luther College
Luther College students enjoyed J-term class visits to Vesterheim and Harley Refsal’s “Scandinavian Fine Handcraft” class hosted an evening of folk-art demonstrations in the museum.

Magpie Coffeehouse
This popular Decorah destination conducted a “12 Days of Christmas” fundraiser for various nonprofits groups, one of which was Vesterheim.

The flowers that grace Vesterheim’s planters are thanks to Decorah’s Town and Country Garden Club through the generous support of FreedomBank of Decorah, formerly Farmers and Merchants Bank. Pictured here, seated left to right: Roger Buhr and LaVonne Monson, volunteers of the Decorah Town and Country Garden Club. Standing left to right: Chris Johnson, Vesterheim CEO, Maureen Duncklee, FreedomBank VP and Branch Manager, Diane Brondyke, Vesterheim Director of Development, Karen Henning and Rachel Gannon FreedomBank Decorah Branch staff.

Brock Swenson, of Brock’s Valhalla Tattoo, demonstrates the art of tattooing during the exhibition *Tattoo: Identity Through Ink*.

Luther College students from Harley Refsal’s “Scandinavian Fine Handcraft” class hosted an evening of folk-art demonstrations in the museum.

Pulpit Rock used artwork from a Vesterheim artifact for the label of its special Scandinavian brew, *Taerteøl*.

Toppling Goliath created a special edition beer, *Valkyrie Strike*, in conjunction with Vesterheim’s exhibition *Tattoo: Identity Through Ink*.

Magpie Coffeehouse, Decorah, IA, conducted a “12 Days of Christmas” fundraiser for various nonprofits groups, one of which was Vesterheim. Here Kelsey Vanney, center, presents a check to Vesterheim President/CEO Chris Johnson, left, and Development Director Diane Brondyke, right.
PHILANTHROPY is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To assure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the not-for-profit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights:

I
To be informed of the organization’s mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.

II
To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization’s governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.

III
To have access to the organization’s most recent financial statements.

IV
To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.

V
To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition.

VI
To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.

VII
To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.

VIII
To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.

IX
To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.

X
To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.