



Possibilities and Growth: Writing the Next Exciting Chapter in Vesterheim's Story

2021 Impact Report



Vesterheim Mission

Building community and creating experiences inspired by Norwegian-American stories and folk art.

Vesterheim Vision

- explores connections between cultures, the historic and contemporary, and the U.S. and Norway.
- creates an environment where each individual can explore their own identity, while connecting with the history of others.
- fosters boundless learning, practice, sharing, preserving, and community.
- pursues its Mission boldly.

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.

Four Key Values:

- Integrity
- Donor Centered and Mission Focused
- Goal Oriented
- Focused on Professional Best Practice

Vesterheim endorses the Donor Bill of Rights. View the most recent Donor Bill of Rights at vesterheim.org/join-give.



Music at Vesterheim during Nordic Fest was supported by a generous gift from Dawn and Josh Svenson Holland in memory of Gary and DiAnn Svenson. From left to right: Vesterheim Gift Officer Kirsten Roverud Heine, Josh Holland, Hardanger fiddler Eden Ehm, and Dawn Svenson Holland.



Thank you to David and Cyndy Hill for generously supporting Vesterheim's annual Norwegian Christmas Celebration.



In August, we dedicated the recently completed Heritage Park with special remarks from Mr. Torleiv Opland, Deputy Chief of Mission from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Vesterheim had many partners in this project – Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Water Quality Initiative Urban Conservation Project, the Paul D. Pratt and Marguerite Olson Pratt Fund of InFaith Community Foundation, and Kate Rattenborg Scott of Decorah. Pictured here, Vesterheim Board Chair Ruth Ann Schultz and President/CEO Chris Johnson cut the ribbon for Heritage Park.



Lori Ann Reinhall, Editor-in-Chief of *The Norwegian American*, visited Vesterheim during Decorah's Nordic Fest in July. From left to right: Vesterheim Gift Officer Kirsten Roverud Heine, Walter Hanson, Vesterheim Trustee Louise Hanson, Lori, and Vesterheim Director of Development Diane Wagner.



Pictured are several members of the volunteer hospitality committee, who regularly host beautiful receptions to celebrate Vesterheim exhibits and other events.



Together in Decorah by artist Lauren Bonney – This mural was added to the west wall of Vesterheim's Main Building in 2021 and is sponsored by the John K. and Luise V. Hanson Foundation; Decorah Bank & Trust Co.; Anonymous; and the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

A Year of Possibilities and Growth

In 2021, Vesterheim grew in ways that would have been unimaginable just a few short years ago. Thanks to countless people like YOU who believe in Vesterheim's mission, we can look back at the incredible milestones that made 2021 a year filled with connections, celebrations, and momentum for the future. Thank you.

This report provides Vesterheim with the opportunity to inform you – our loyal donors, members, and friends – about how your support has made a difference throughout the past year. Each donation you give, each Folk Art School class you take, each membership you purchase, each time you shop at the Museum Store – those supportive acts add up to create meaningful impact.

As a community of people who support Vesterheim, we are joining together to care for and preserve Vesterheim's extensive collection, keeping Scandinavian folk art in the hands and minds of many and connecting a growing community of people around the world. Throughout this report, you will see how your support translates into effective and innovative programming, exhibitions, projects, and so much more.

In August, we dedicated the recently completed Vesterheim Heritage Park with a celebration for all. This exciting new space on Vesterheim's campus is a wonderful addition to the Decorah community, showcasing the historic buildings in Vesterheim's collection in an educational, interpretive, and public outdoor space.

Vesterheim's online movement continued to grow in 2021. Online events and Folk Art School programs engaged adult and youth participants in all 50 states and

18 countries. We now know the value of cultivating these online connections, and we are committed to offering online programming indefinitely. When we were able to welcome students and visitors back to on-site Folk Art School classes and events in September of 2021, we did so joyously. This was not a "return to normal" moment, but rather a significant step that embraced our ability to fully engage both in-person and online audiences into the future.

On November 30, 2021, we celebrated your generosity during a record-breaking GivingTuesday, with donations totaling over \$23,900 and matched by Vesterheim's Trustees. This report will share more about the many individuals, corporations, and foundations whose generous and heroic gifts to the Vesterheim Annual Fund supported our operations throughout the year, leading us into the next.

I wish to thank Vesterheim's Board of Trustees for their vision and leadership, which have helped guide us to the next exciting chapter in Vesterheim's story. Finally, I want to say how proud I am of the Vesterheim staff for the creative and innovative ways they continue to approach their work in support of Vesterheim's mission and community of people.

We'll have even more to celebrate in 2022, and we are thankful to continue this work together with YOU!

Chris Johnson
Vesterheim President/CEO

From all of us here at Vesterheim, *tusen takk* for supporting our mission!

2021 Impact at a Glance



Over **8.5** times as many people engaged in Folk Art School programming in 2021 compared with previous years. This includes in-person programs, online programs, and Folk Art School kits that were distributed.

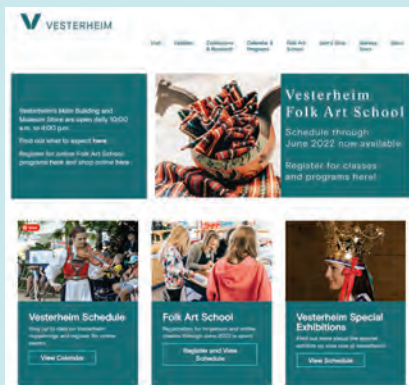
Sales at the Museum Store help support everything we do at Vesterheim. In 2021, the Museum Store shipped orders to all **50** states, Canada, China, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and the U.K.



50 educational presentations to cultural and community groups by Vesterheim staff, reaching **1,541** people in **10** states.



In August 2021, we celebrated the completion of Vesterheim Heritage Park with a public dedication ceremony. In Heritage Park, the museum's **12** unique historical buildings are showcased within an accessible, landscaped park.



28.3% increase in website visits in 2021 – a total of 978,251 website page views.



Vesterheim President/CEO Chris Johnson selected **8** Vesterheim staff members to form the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion (DEAI) Committee. The DEAI Committee – whose work is ongoing – is responsible for championing policies and practices that value diversity, foster equity, and empower an accessible and inclusive environment in order to make Vesterheim a more equitable institution. Pictured from left to right are committee members Andrew Ellingsen, Tammy Carolan, Jennifer Kovarik, Kim Toussaint, Becky Idstrom, Chris Johnson (back), and Chivonne Marlow (front). Not pictured: Martha Davis.

Over **35,000** views on Vesterheim's YouTube channel in 2021. For access to over **100** free videos visit youtube.com/VesterheimMuseum.



More than **180** free Handcraft at Home, Norwegian Family Language Adventure, Family Book Adventure, and *FamilieKlubb* kits with supporting video instruction distributed at Nordic Fest, Vesterheim's Christmas Celebration, the Decorah Public Library, local public schools, and the local Montessori school.

Everything we do happens because of YOU. Thank you!

Exhibitions on View During 2021

New Nordic Cuisine—Thank you to exhibit sponsors Jon and Mary Hart, Jim and Marge Iversen, Philip and Sarah Iversen, John and Birgitte Christianson, and Tom and Linda Brandt. The exhibit was on loan from the Museum of Danish America.

Water—This exhibit was supported by Decorah Bank & Trust, Marilyn and Julien Hansen, and Jeff and Marilyn Roverud.

An Artist's Journey: Carl Homstad, 50 Years—This exhibit was supported by William and Kathi Wild, Decorah Bank & Trust, and Anonymous with additional support from Peggy Beatty, Brenda Carlson, Mary Jo Finholt, Barb Gavle, Melinda Hanson, Elea Jourdan, Kris Kratz, Elise Mullen, Linda Quaas, Leslie Sand, and Joann Voltmer.

Socially Distanced, Creatively Connected—This exhibit was made possible by The Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs; The National Endowment for the Arts; and Decorah Bank & Trust.

Innovators & Inventors—This exhibition and lecture series was supported by the Tomson Family Foundation.



Lead sponsors Jon and Mary Hart (pictured here in the center) were recognized for their generous support by Vesterheim President/CEO Chris Johnson and Director of Development Diane Wagner at the public reception celebrating the closing of the *New Nordic Cuisine* exhibition.



Socially Distanced, Creatively Connected, a juried folk-art exhibition highlighting pandemic creativity, showcased 82 entries including disciplines like knitting, embroidery, and jewelry. Entries came from 16 different states and included work from artists ranging from 10 to 90 years old. This piece, "Tomte," was submitted by artist Benjamin Stracke, age 10, of Midland, Michigan. This figure carving is now part of Vesterheim's collection.



Floy Sauey (seated) and her family visiting the *Innovators & Inventors* exhibition, which included the story of Floy's late husband W.R. Sauey, a highly regarded businessman and entrepreneur.



Pictured here are Pat and O. Jay Tomson representing the Tomson Family Foundation. Vesterheim is grateful for the foundation's generous sponsorship of the *Innovators & Inventors* exhibition and lecture series, which uplifted the many innovative contributions of Norwegian immigrants and their descendants in America.



Vesterheim's exhibition *Herbjørn Gausta (1854-1924)* was on view at Livsreise Norwegian Heritage Center in Stoughton, Wisconsin in 2021.

Exhibit Programming

Online Conversation with *Water Artists*

Gather, A Documentary Film Screening with the Museum of Danish America

Innovators & Inventors Lecture Series

Empowering Innovation with Sonja Hoel Perkins

Historic Innovation Part I with Jamie Holmes

Historic Innovation Part II with Lucy Tuve Comly and Christine Tuve Burris

Online Preview of *An Artist's Journey: Carl Homstad, 50 Years*

Youth Programming

Barnetimen (Children's Hour)— This program was sponsored by the United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund Phase 1, an initiative of Arts Midwest and its peer United States Regional Arts Organizations made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; with additional support from local sponsors David and Brenda Carlson and Norwegian Mutual Insurance Association.

Pioneer Immersion—Supported by generous gifts from Voltmer, Inc., Ruth and Randy Schultz and Joann Voltmer.

WOW (Window on the World)—Thank you to Gundersen Health System for their generous support that helped to make this program possible through 2021.



San Francisco-based venture capitalist Sonja Hoel Perkins kicked off the *Innovators & Inventors* lecture series in September 2021. She is pictured here (on the right) with former Norwegian Ambassador Kåre Aas and her mother, Unni Hoel, who immigrated to the United States in 1951 at the age of 14. You can view full recordings of the *Innovators & Inventors* lecture series presentations on Vesterheim's YouTube channel.

“Your museum is the BEST ethnic museum in the entire USA!!!”

– Nita H., Illinois

“I cannot tell you how much I enjoy all the at-home programs I am doing through Vesterheim. I feel more connected with Vesterheim and am having fun with the classes.”

– Terry P., Arizona



Guests enjoyed a gallery talk about *New Nordic Cuisine* by Tova Brandt, the Executive Director at the Museum of Danish America and curator of this traveling exhibition.

Events

Coffee with Chris: A Members-Only Online Event

Syttende Mai

Cocktails with Chris: A Members-Only Online Event

Decorah's Nordic Fest

Vesterheim Heritage Park Dedication

Concert with Chicago Spelmanslag

New Nordic Cuisine Closing Reception

Innovators and Inventors Open House

Des Moines Friends Event

Luther Family Day

Chicago Friends Event

Vesterheim From Home: A Members-Only Online Event

Norwegian Christmas Celebration



Vesterheim's online *Syttende Mai* event reached 500 registrants from 38 states, Washington D.C., six Canadian provinces, Norway, France, the U.K., and Switzerland. During the event, Norwegian storyteller Anne Elisebeth Skogen joined Vesterheim from Ryfylkemuseet in Sand, Norway, to tell the story, *Schoolgirl and My Very First May 17th Parade in 1962*. Then, Decorah musicians Beth and Jon Rotto (pictured) offered Norwegian and Norwegian-American tunes from Bethania Church in Vesterheim's Heritage Park. Vesterheim is grateful to Jeff and Marilyn Roverud for their longtime support of this event.



Vesterheim Heritage Park came alive during our annual Norwegian Christmas Celebration. Thank you to the music groups, volunteers, and visitors for making this a special event; and special thanks to David and Cyndy Hill for their generous gift in support of this event.



The Chicago Spelmanslag presented a free online concert of Scandinavian music thanks to generous support from Martha Griesheimer and the United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund Phase 1, an initiative of Arts Midwest and its peer United States Regional Arts Organizations made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



Tusen takk to Don Hoganson (pictured to the far right with event guests) for his generous gift that helped to make the 2021 Chicago Friends of Vesterheim Event possible!



Thank you to Viking State Bank for once again supporting entertainment from the Skjaldborg Vikings during Decorah's Nordic Fest.

Folk Art School

Family Heritage Cooking Class Series—Sponsored by A&J Petersburg Agency.

Family Book Adventures, *Bokprat*, and Family Handcraft at Home—Supported through June 2021 by the United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund Phase 1, an initiative of Arts Midwest and its peer United States Regional Arts Organizations made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Folk Art Apprentice Program and Retreat

Friluftsliv Klubb

Online *FamilieTid* (Family Time) and *FamilieKlubb* (Family Club) Programs—These inter-generational activities are funded by the Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Public Program Grant from the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

Norske Skole

Whittling Klubb

In 2021, Vesterheim Folk Art School offered 177 programs and classes, with 26 programs designated for youth and family audiences.

More than 5,000 adults and youth engaged in Folk Art School programming during 2021! This includes in-person programs, online programs, and Folk Art School kits that were distributed. Participants came from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the following 18 countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

After an 18-month-long pause brought on by the pandemic, we were able to welcome Folk Art School students back to in-person classes on Vesterheim's campus in September 2021.

“Vesterheim is where I learned to paint rosemaling. I started at 32 years old not knowing how to paint or mix colors but over the last 40 years or so I finally got it. Now I am 80 and love every moment of painting rosemaling. Thank you Vesterheim for being my mentor.”

– Linda M., Connecticut



Vesterheim Folk Art Apprentices came together for a week-long retreat to complete the pilot apprentice program. Thank you to the John W. Kurtich Foundation for supporting two Vesterheim Folk Art Education Travel Fellowships, which will allow two apprentices to travel to Norway and connect with Scandinavian folk-art education. Pictured from left to right are apprentices Stacey Ann Tilton, James Miller, and Jill Willems; Folk Art School instructors Phil Odden and Else Bigton; and apprentices Paul Nyborg, Shawn Sersland, and Marit Nelson.



Celebrated food writer and author Nevada Berg led several online Folk Art School programs in 2021, including the popular *FamilieTid: Family Cook-Along with Nevada Berg!* You can view full recordings of Nevada's classes on Vesterheim's YouTube channel.



Whittling Klubb teaches the fundamentals of wood carving to youth in grades 6-12.

The Vesterheim Annual Fund

The Vesterheim Annual Fund is vital – it is the lifeblood of Vesterheim and the work that takes place here each and every day. When you support Vesterheim with a gift to the Vesterheim Annual Fund, we put those dollars to work where they are needed most.

Thanks to YOU, Vesterheim's story will continue to reach people in our local community and around the world. The future at Vesterheim is full of possibilities and growth, and your support of the Vesterheim Annual Fund makes those possibilities a reality.

Annual Fund Giving Challenges in 2021

Syttende Mai 1814 Matching Gift Challenge

GivingTuesday Matching Gift Challenge

End of Year Matching Gift Challenge



The 1814 Matching Gift Challenge held on Syttende Mai raised over \$7,200 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund, including the generous matching gift of \$1,814 from Jeff and Marilyn Roverud.



We had our most successful GivingTuesday ever in 2021! Vesterheim's community came together on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving to raise over \$23,900 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund. This includes generous matching gifts from the Dahl Family Foundation and an anonymous matching gift donor. This amount was matched by Vesterheim's Trustees! Special thanks to Jansen, Harry, Tyler, and Andrew Dahl from the Dahl Family Foundation for their support of this event. They are pictured here in front of the Painter-Bernatz Mill in Heritage Park.



A record \$34,886 was raised during the Vesterheim Benefit Auction, with 169 people bidding on 61 items. Pictured here is a bowl with Vest-Agder rosemaling, painted and donated to the auction by Naoko Seto. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated items and placed bids in support of Vesterheim Folk Art School, with special thanks to Viking for their donation of a European River Cruise!

A heartfelt thank you to friends like YOU who supported the Vesterheim Annual Fund in 2021, helping the museum exceed our annual fundraising goal. Your gifts provide critical operating support to the museum's programs throughout the year!



During our End of Year Matching Gift Challenge, the generous gifts we received combined with the matching gifts from Vesterheim's Trustees and Decorah Bank & Trust resulted in over \$154,000 raised for the Vesterheim Annual Fund! Pictured from left to right are Ben Grimstad, Linnea Rahlf, John Schroeder, and Justin Gullekson from Decorah Bank & Trust.

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*Founders Council members who passed away in 2021. We wish to express our gratitude for the generous support, deep friendship, and committed leadership they shared with Vesterheim.

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