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On the cover: Several entries from the 2022 National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition, including (from left to right) Mountain Man by Greg Akre, Gunnar by Alfred Lompe, and Chicken Tine by Jerry Johnson.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT/CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

We look forward to sharing our Impact Report with you each year, and we are especially proud of the work that our staff carried out in 2022. This was a year of transformation for Vesterheim as we returned to a full year of on-campus programming and classes, and we also maintained a robust schedule of online offerings. Meanwhile, we managed a capital campaign and the ongoing construction of the exciting new Vesterheim Commons, designed by Snøhetta, that will open in fall 2023.

Other highlights from 2022 that you will read about include a special Vesterheim reception at the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in March; a unique animation project with students from Decorah and Norway; the return of the National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition in July; welcoming Norway’s Ambassador to the United States Anniken Krutnes for her first visit to Vesterheim; and hosting our first visitors from Viking’s new Mississippi River cruises for a day-long experience at Vesterheim.

Vesterheim is stepping into a bold future, and the possibilities that lie ahead with the unified museum campus and flourishing online programming are truly awe-inspiring. We wouldn’t be at this exciting point in the organization’s history if it were not for our strong roots. Vesterheim’s museum collection began nearly 150 years ago in 1877, and the organization has grown in countless ways in beautiful Decorah, Iowa, during that time. Today, Vesterheim is home to the most extensive collection of Norwegian-American artifacts in the world and a unique Folk Art School that connects, encourages, and inspires the next generation of folk artists.

Throughout this report, you’ll read about Vesterheim’s programming strengths, including exhibitions, events, and classes, with both online and in-person experiences to support our various audiences. You’ll also see the growth in our physical assets, like Vesterheim Heritage Park, which brought people together for celebratory events throughout the year; the newly renovated Bruening Visitor Center, which has been re-envisioned as a Folk Art School class hospitality and meeting space; and the new Vesterheim Commons that will be the welcome center for the campus, an inspiring community gathering place, and will also include a digital production studio to create classes and experiences to serve our growing online audiences.

But our greatest asset, of course, is you. The community of people that surround and support Vesterheim is incredible, and we are grateful for every single visitor, student, member, donor, volunteer, staff member, and trustee who takes part in our mission. As part of supporting the people who participate at Vesterheim, we continued important work in 2022 in the areas of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Vesterheim's staff and board are dedicated to placing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion at the center of our daily work and committed to championing policies and practices that create a welcoming environment for all.

We hope you enjoy taking a look back and seeing how your support made a difference at Vesterheim. Thank you to all of you for making 2022 an incredibly special year. Together, we look forward to great things to come in 2023!

With gratitude,

Chris Johnson  
Vesterheim President/CEO

Ruth Ann Schultz  
Vesterheim Board Chair
Vesterheim is on a mission: to build community and create experiences inspired by Norwegian-American stories and folk art.

As the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, Vesterheim continues to be the premiere place for people to discover Norwegian-American history and culture and engage in the conversation of the American immigrant journey through the Norwegian-American perspective. We're connecting people through the stories that objects and folk art traditions can tell us about the shared experience of being human.

With over 33,000 objects and 12 historic buildings, Vesterheim showcases the most comprehensive collection of Norwegian-American artifacts in the world, among which are some of the most outstanding examples of decorative and folk art to be seen in this country. The collection inspires Vesterheim’s global community of lifelong learners through exciting exhibitions, programs, and Vesterheim Folk Art School.

**Vision Statement**
Vesterheim creates an environment that fosters boundless learning, connecting, sharing, preserving, and community.

**Impact Statement**
Inspired by the everyday practice of culture expressed through stories and objects, audiences explore their identities and appreciate a shared sense of humanity across time and place.

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**OUR FOCUS AREAS**

1. Continued growth as a destination on a regional, national, and international scale.

2. Build intercultural and intergenerational community.

3. Use the collection and Folk Art School as assets and deliver sustainable and meaningful initiatives, including exhibitions, programs, publications, etc.
Your support makes a difference.

- 42 museum employees (full-time and part-time)
- 7 Gold Medals awarded during the National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition
- 431 new membership households joined our Vesterheim community
- 683 volunteer hours logged
- 2,375 art supply items sold to folk artists in the Museum Store
- 14,037 people received Vesterheim's monthly email newsletter

Impact-Driven Work

During 2022, our staff embarked on a year-and-a half long process to define and evaluate the impact we want to have on our audiences. Vesterheim worked with consultants at Kera Collective, a leading and respected consulting firm that uses research, evaluation, and strategy to help museums bring their visions to life. We looked at Vesterheim's unique strengths and thought deeply about how we want to make a positive difference. With Kera Collective's help we created an impact statement, a tool that will guide Vesterheim's programming decisions so we can achieve our desired impact.

4
Create deep, rich, and relevant digital access to collections, exhibitions, and experiences.

5
Become known as a national resource on immigration and the processes by which individuals become known as “American.”

6
Align financial planning and organization infrastructure with programming needs to connect with priority audiences and secure Vesterheim's future.
OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Vesterheim has strong roots in Decorah, Iowa, but our reach stretches across the globe. The museum hosts approximately 15,000 visitors per year, and closures experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic presented staff with new opportunities to offer online programs for all ages and skill levels, including handcraft, Norwegian language lessons, baking and cooking classes, gallery talks, collection connections, musical performances, and more.

Digital Programming

Online offerings grew our audiences to include participants from all 50 states in the U.S. and 29 countries. These programs offer more affordable access to Vesterheim and take away the barrier of needing to come to Decorah to experience the museum and Folk Art School. The positive feedback we have received about online programming led us to expand our online offerings during 2022 and invest in adding a digital production studio to the new Vesterheim Commons. The studio space will provide the technology to develop online offerings even further, including live streams, more content for Vesterheim’s YouTube channel, and instructional videos from folk art instructors.

Connections to Modern Norway

Vesterheim maintains close connections to modern Norway through programming featuring Norwegian speakers and folk artists, and also through our relationships with Norwegian dignitaries. In July, Norway’s Ambassador to the United States Anniken Krutnes made her first official visit to Vesterheim and Decorah. Ambassador Krutnes toured the construction site for Vesterheim Commons, exhibitions in the museum’s Main Building, and classroom spaces in the Folk Art School. A special reception was held in Heritage Park to honor Ambassador Krutnes as well as Iowa’s outgoing Honorary Consul Quentin Boyken.

“In September, Vesterheim welcomed the Norwegian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Local Government and Public Administration. The group visited the U.S. to connect with organizations with a focus on Norwegian-American cooperation. They toured Vesterheim’s exhibitions, Folk Art School, and collection items related to the 100th anniversary in 1925 of Norwegian immigration to the United States.” —Ambassador Anniken Krutnes

In 2022, Vesterheim Members, Folk Art School participants, program participants, and Museum Store customers came from all 50 states in the U.S. and 29 countries:

- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bermuda
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Ecuador
- England
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Mexico
- Namibia
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Saudi Arabia
- Scotland
- South Africa
- Sweden
- Turkey
VESTERHEIM COMMONS

Construction of the exciting new Vesterheim Commons kicked off in February 2022, and we can’t wait to welcome visitors into the building later in 2023! The building is the next phase after the museum’s Heritage Park renovation in a comprehensive, long-range planning process with Snøhetta, the renowned international architecture and landscape architecture firm.

With 7,600 square feet spread across three levels and almost an acre of surrounding landscaped patio, this building project physically links the past and the future, connects the museum collection to the Folk Art School, and enriches the Vesterheim visitor experience for those coming to Decorah or participating digitally through a new video and photography production studio.

Vesterheim Commons could not have progressed without the knowledge, creativity, and expertise of the architects, landscape architects, engineers, and consultants who worked on the project, including the design team of Snøhetta, BNIM, Meyer Borgman Johnson, Morrissey, and McGough Construction.

Strong Roots | Bold Future
The Campaign to Grow Vesterheim

It is only because of support from hundreds of friends that it is possible for the museum to plan for its bold and exciting future. Vesterheim is grateful to all of the donors who have contributed to this important project already! If you would like to find out more about the campaign and how to participate, visit the campaign website at strongrootsboldfuture.org.

Vesterheim Reception at the Norwegian Embassy

On March 23, Vesterheim was honored by a reception at the residence of Norwegian Ambassador Anniken Krutnes in Washington, D.C. Vesterheim President/CEO Chris Johnson and Vesterheim Board Chair Ruth Schultz gave presentations about Vesterheim Commons and the newly renovated Heritage Park, the future of the museum, and why the mission of Vesterheim is so important. During the event, Ambassador Krutnes shared remarks regarding Vesterheim’s important connection to Norway and the role the museum plays in sharing the combined Norwegian and American histories.
Incredible exhibitions transformed Vesterheim’s galleries throughout the year, featuring silversmiths from Norway, a National Geographic Explorer, world-renowned artists, the return of the National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition, and so much more.

Vesterheim’s collections were experienced beyond the museum’s Main Building as well. Our virtual galleries showcase 500 objects that can be explored anytime and from anywhere at vesterheim.org.

Nearly 80 objects from our collection traveled as loans to nine institutions, where they were on view in California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Washington, Wisconsin, Sweden, and Norway. We were excited to participate in the exhibition Scandinavian Design and the United States, 1890–1980, which was on view in Sweden, Norway, California, and Wisconsin.

**EXHIBITIONS**

**Exhibitions on View at Vesterheim During 2022**

**An Artist’s Journey:**
Carl Homstad, 50 Years
Supported by William and Kathi Wild, Decorah Bank & Trust, and an anonymous donor, 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.

**Dolls: Playing with Identity**
Supported by Daniel and Mary Ann Thurmer and their children, Jenelle, Johanna, Hans, and families, in honor of their parents.

**Innovators and Inventors**
Supported by the Tomson Family Foundation.

**In Trunks, Hands, and Hearts:**
What Immigrants Bring to Iowa
Supported by Humanities Iowa, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Edwin R. and Joan T. Hemphill.

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

**Papirklip: A Global and Timeless Art**
Supported by Christine Tuve Burris and Jim Burris.

**Scandinavian American: Photography by National Geographic Explorer Erika Skogg**
Supported by Janet and Rob Coe and the John K. and Luise V. Hanson Foundation.

**Sylvsmidja: Superior Craftsmanship in Silver since 1940**

**Traveling Traditions:**
Nordic Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest

**Traveling Exhibitions**

**Tattoo: Identity Through Ink**
Supported by Jon and Mary Hart and shown at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa.

**Herbjørn Gausta** (1854–1924)
Shown at Livreise in Stoughton, Wisconsin.
YOUTH & MULTI-GENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

One of Vesterheim’s focus areas is to build intergenerational community. Prioritizing free and low-cost programs for youth and multi-generational audiences in 2022, we held over 35 programs, both online and in-person, for more than 1,000 total participants. From in-person after-school programs offering rosemaling, woodworking, and outdoor exploration, to online music and baking programs for the whole family, participants had a lot of fun and connected with Norwegian-American culture in new and exciting ways.

A Dream of Milk and Honey

Nine Decorah-area students worked with Vesterheim and the Decorah Home School Assistance Program along with Norwegian partners E6 Mediaverksted, Fredrikstad Kulturskolen, and Studium Actoris to create a stop-motion animated film called A Dream of Milk and Honey. The 25-minute-long film illustrates the challenges and triumphs of two generations of Norwegians who immigrated to the United States in the 1800s. The film is available for viewing on Vesterheim’s YouTube channel, or by visiting bit.ly/vesterheimmovie.

Youth & Multi-generational Programs at Vesterheim During 2022

3rd Grade Program
(Immigration Exploration)
Free, in-person program for third-grade students. Supported by JoannVoltmer in memory of her mother, Marjorie Hove.

Animation Project, A Dream of Milk and Honey
Stop-motion animated film developed with partners in Decorah and Norway. Supported by Ruth Sorenson.

Barnetimen (Children’s Hour)
Free, in-person program geared toward three-to-five-year-olds. Supported by David and Brenda Carlson and Norwegian Mutual Insurance Association.

FamilieTid
Free and low-cost online programs providing fun for the whole family. Supported by the American Scandinavian Foundation.

Friluftsiv Klubb
In-person program for grades K-2 to explore the Scandinavian concept of “open-air living,” connecting with each other and nature through walks and activities, observations, and explorations—all outside.

Norske Skole
In-person class for grades 3-5 focused on learning the Norwegian language while exploring cultural activities of Norway with games and fun activities led by Luther College Nordic Studies students.

Rosemaling Klubb
In-person rosemaling class for ages 10-18 to learn colorful painting projects.

Whittling Klubb
In-person class for grades 5-12 focused on learning a variety of carving techniques.
EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Events and programs are a special part of the Vesterheim visitor experience each year, and 2022 was no exception.

The annual celebration of *Syttende Mai* was marked by a children’s parade through Heritage Park and a special online presentation from Norwegian storyteller Anne Elisebeth Skogen. Decorah’s Nordic Fest in July brought Viking demonstrators, beautiful music, folk art demonstrations, and more to Vesterheim’s campus for three days of Scandinavian heritage and culture. That same month, we celebrated Ambassador Anniken Krutnes’ first visit to Vesterheim with a reception in Heritage Park. And to welcome in winter, the Norwegian Christmas celebration brought visitors young and old together for Vesterheim traditions, including singing around the tree, crafts, and making Scandinavian s’mores.

There were many more fun events throughout the year, and we’re grateful to each visitor who joined us online or in-person for these special opportunities to connect.

Free Second Saturdays

Vesterheim offers free admission the second Saturday of every month, and we invite everyone to come and enjoy the museum and have fun with various planned special activities. In 2022, activities included a gallery talk with National Geographic Explorer Erika Skogg, papercutting, children’s story time, and a show and tell in the *Dolls: Playing with Identity* exhibit gallery. Free Second Saturdays are supported in part by Kari and Pete Espinosa.

“My parents brought me to Vesterheim starting in the late 1960s for Nordic Fest. Dad and I took classes over the years and my best memories of Dad will be his Norwegian traditions passed on to me.”

—Vesterheim member

“I so enjoy the virtual events. I live in San Francisco, CA and have only been able to visit Vesterheim once a few years ago. It is truly a special museum.”

—Event participant
Special Vesterheim Events and Programs During 2022

**Book Signing with Aleta Chossek**

**Celebrating Harley Refsal: PBS Documentary Screening and Panel Discussion**
Co-sponsored by Iowa PBS.

**Chicago Friends Event**
Supported in part by Don Hoganson.

**Coffee with Chris: A Members-Only Online Event**
Supported in part by Impact Coffee.

**DALAKOPA Concert**
U.S. tour sponsored by the Scandinavian-American Foundation and Folklore Village.

**Decorah’s Nordic Fest**
Folk-art demonstrations were supported by the Decorah Sons of Norway Valdres Lodge.

**Skjaldborg Vikings** were supported by Viking State Bank & Trust.

**Music at Vesterheim** was supported by Dawn Svenson Holland and Josh Holland in memory of Gary and DiAnn Svenson.

Representatives from the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Naeseth Library were supported by Dean Gipp and family in remembrance of Cyndi Gipp.

**Vesterheim has built a partnership with Viking. Starting in summer 2022, their Mississippi River cruise guests traveled to Decorah and Vesterheim for guided tours and folk art experiences.**

**Heritage Park Reception for Ambassador Anniken Krutnes**

**Innovators & Inventors Lecture Series**
Supported by the Tomson Family Foundation.

**Norwegian Christmas**
Supported by Barbara and Dale Henning and an anonymous donor.

**Open House and Online Event for Sylvsmidja: A Global and Timeless Art**

**Syttende Mai**
Supported by Jeff and Marilyn Roverud.

**The Way Further West**
Hosted in partnership with the Slooper Society of America.

**Vesterheim from Home: A Members-Only Online Event**
Supported by Bob and Mary Lake.

**Virtual Tours and Live Q&A with Carl Homstad**
Supported by William and Kathi Wild, Decorah Bank & Trust, and an anonymous donor, 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.
FOLK ART SCHOOL

Vesterheim Folk Art School offered a full year of experiences in 2022, including 34 in-person classes, 122 online classes, and 24 youth and multi-generational programs. The class choices reflect the wide array of Scandinavian folk arts, with options to study rosemaling, woodworking, Norwegian language and culture, jewelry-making, metal working, fiber arts, Nordic cooking, and more.

“Vesterheim’s online classes have been such a joy and wonderful addition to my life. Thank you so much.”
—Folk Art School participant

Newly-renovated Duane K. and Eileen M. Bruening Visitor Center

The first floor of the Westby-Torgerson Education Center has been re-envisioned as a Folk Art School class hospitality and meeting space. It’s a great place for students to gather for informal breaks and allows students from various classes to meet up and exchange creative ideas and inspiration while sipping a cup of coffee! It’s also a flexible space to host after-school youth klubbs and pop-up folk art classes. Thank you to the Bruening family for being supportive of this renovation.

Vesterheim’s Nordic Cooking classes are supported in part by the Oneota Community Food Co-op.

1,500 kits of tools and materials to aid student learning were packaged and sent for Folk Art School classes and programs in 2022.

“Excited to learn about traditions and arts, as well as history about Norway. Feel as though I missed my calling for the arts, but am grateful to experience them now through the museum.”
—Folk Art School participant
In 2022, Vesterheim invested in more professional development opportunities for current and aspiring folk art instructors.

**Folk Art Apprentice Program**
Four aspiring folk art teachers were selected in 2022 to learn from Vesterheim Gold Medalists and experienced teachers, explore Vesterheim’s specialized and extensive folk art collection, identify a personal teaching style, connect with a cohort of aspiring folk art instructors, and join a community passionate about moving folk art forward. Each apprentice will create a Vesterheim class proposal inspired by the collection, which can be used for an online or in-person learning experience.

**Artist in Residence Program**
Six practicing folk art instructors were selected in 2022 for this professional development opportunity to explore Vesterheim’s collection for object inspiration and future teaching ideas. At the end of the program, the awarded artists will each create and teach a class based on their study of the collection.

The *National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition* returned in 2022! New Gold Medalists in 2022, from left to right: Mary Hanson, Nancy Odalen, Charlene Lynum, Wendy Stevens (represented by Jim Stevens), Sandra Somdahl, and Cecil Parker. Not pictured: Charles Banks.

The Acanthus-Carved Carousel Horse by Vesterheim Gold Medalist Todd Pasche was awarded Best in Show and People’s Choice in Woodworking in the *National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition.*

Vesterheim Gold Medalist Andrea Herkert adds the names of our newest rosemaling Gold Medalists to the plaque in the Westby-Torgerson Education Center’s Gold Medalist classroom.
THE VESTERHEIM ANNUAL FUND

The Vesterheim Annual Fund is the lifeblood of Vesterheim and the work that takes place each and every day to fulfill our mission. It is with deep appreciation that we thank everyone who supported the Vesterheim Annual Fund during 2022.

Vennskap: The Vesterheim Annual Giving Society

Vennskap, Norwegian for “friendship,” is a new society at Vesterheim that recognizes donors whose gifts to the Vesterheim Annual Fund totaled $1,000 or more throughout the year. To view a list of Vennskap donors for 2022 giving, visit vesterheim.org/join-give/#vennskap.

Vesterheim Magazine

Vesterheim is published twice a year as a benefit of Vesterheim’s membership program. Filled with stories inspired by the museum’s programs and collections, issues in 2022 explored the themes of music and the sea. Thank you to Viking and the designers of Vesterheim Commons – Snøhetta, BNIM, McGough Construction, Meyer Borgman Johnson, and Morrissey – for supporting the issues of Vesterheim magazine in 2022 with generous gifts to the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

Benefit Auction

The 2022 online auction was full of amazing pieces from fantastic artists, an eight-day European river voyage from Viking, and a Colorado getaway! There was a tremendous selection of rosemaling, weavings, traditional needlework, Norwegian clothing, and creative woodworking. This was our most successful Benefit Auction yet, bringing in $40,959, to benefit the Vesterheim Annual Fund in support of Vesterheim Folk Art School.

Vesterheim Annual Fund Giving Challenges in 2022

Syttende Mai 1814 Matching Gift Challenge
Donations on Syttende Mai, including two matching gifts of $1,814 from Jeff and Marilyn Roverud, raised over $12,700 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

GivingTuesday Matching Gift Challenge
Vesterheim’s community came together to raise over $20,600 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund, which became $60,600 thanks to generous matching gifts from the Dahl Family Foundation, an anonymous donor, and Vesterheim’s current and former trustees.

End of Year Matching Gift Challenge
The generous gifts we received combined with the matching gifts from Vesterheim’s current and former trustees and Decorah Bank and Trust resulted in over $181,000 raised for the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

Marius Man flat-plane carving crafted and donated for the Benefit Auction by Vesterheim Gold Medalist Charles Banks.
2022 STAFF AND BOARD

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