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## Vesterheim Commons Becomes Hanson Vesterheim Commons with Major Additional Gift

DECORAH, Iowa — Vesterheim, the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, is pleased to announce that with an additional generous new gift, Mary Jo (Hanson) Boman and the Hanson Family Foundation have now contributed a total of \$2 million for Strong Roots | Bold Future, the Campaign to Grow Vesterheim. In recognition of this transformational gift commitment to the museum and for the family's ongoing support and belief in Vesterheim's mission and future, the new Vesterheim Commons building is now named Hanson Vesterheim Commons.

The Hanson Family Foundation was established in 1971 by Mary Jo Boman's parents, John K. and Luise V. Hanson, founders of Winnebago Industries in Forest City, Iowa. The foundation was created as a way to give back to their community and to enhance the quality of life in North Iowa through activities involving youth, parks, recreation, and other programs affecting the greater community. Nearly five decades later, their family vision has touched tens of thousands of lives through more than 700 organizations in 104 communities.

Chris Johnson, Vesterheim President/CEO, said, "We are extremely grateful for this significant and important gift. This is an exciting moment for Vesterheim. With this gift, we are celebrating a bold new era of Vesterheim's ability to welcome visitors, host events, display collection objects, provide folk art education and experiences, and reach a worldwide audience. Hanson Vesterheim Commons is a tangible way that the Hanson Family's beautiful legacy of service to Vesterheim will forever be part of Vesterheim's story."

The Hanson family can trace their heritage to the Numedal, Gudbrandsdalen, Hardanger, and Telemark regions of Norway. These immigrants' descendants, John K. Hanson and his wife Luise, used creativity and hard work to build Winnebago Industries. Today, Winnebago is one of the most recognized brands across the globe in recreational travel motor coaches. As the company grew in its success, the family intentionally invested in the community they called home. In 1971, the family formalized this commitment to community and cultural investment by founding the Hanson Family Foundation.

The connection between Vesterheim and the Hanson family has strong roots. During the 1970s, John K. Hanson's sister Barbara Bulman served on the Vesterheim Board of Trustees. That legacy of leadership, service, and commitment to Vesterheim continues as John K. Hanson's grandson Greg Boman now serves as a Vesterheim Trustee. The Hanson Family Foundation has given generously over many years to Vesterheim,

funding issues of “Vesterheim” magazine, exhibitions, and classroom spaces, as well as providing ongoing support to the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

Hanson Vesterheim Commons, built to unify Vesterheim's campus, is the first building in Iowa designed by Snøhetta, the renowned international architecture and landscape architecture firm. The design was driven by programming that inspires community engagement and experiences.

The Hanson Vesterheim Commons, with three levels and 7,600 sq. ft., provides the museum with a spectacular front Water Street entry, easy access into Heritage Park, and a welcoming community gathering space. There is a multi-use space on the ground floor that seats 100 people for lectures, meetings, concerts, receptions, and classes; a catering kitchen; an intimate gallery; an artifact collection study room, a digital production studio; and an outdoor patio with seating options for events and receptions.

“The Hanson Vesterheim Commons is economically significant for the museum, Decorah, and Iowa,” Johnson said. “The building project points to current and future audiences and impacts local economic development and tourism through expanded in-person folk art classes, specialized programs, exhibitions, and digital outreach across the United States and the world,” he explained.

Strong Root | Bold Future, the Campaign to Grow Vesterheim focuses on creating a unified campus that promotes innovative programming and learning while building a strong sense of community. Find out more about the campaign and how to be a part of it at [vesterheim.org](http://vesterheim.org).

Vesterheim, the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in the conversation of the American immigrant journey through the lens of the Norwegian-American experience. Vesterheim offers innovative and interactive exhibits, classes, and programs, both at the dynamic campus and park in scenic Decorah, Iowa, and online at [vesterheim.org](http://vesterheim.org) and Vesterheim social media. For more information on exhibits, classes, programs, tours, membership opportunities, and ways to donate and volunteer, connect at [vesterheim.org](http://vesterheim.org), (563) 382-9681, and Vesterheim, 502 W. Water St., P.O. Box 379, Decorah, IA, 52101-0379.