

2024 Impact Report



A MESSAGE FROM VESTERHEIM'S PRESIDENT/CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of the Vesterheim Board of Trustees and staff, it is an honor to share the annual Impact Report. We hope you enjoy this look back on the accomplishments of 2024, highlighting the ways that your support and encouragement make an impact at Vesterheim.

We are especially proud of the work that Vesterheim staff accomplished in 2024 to make Vesterheim's mission come to life. It was a year filled with an energetic exhibition schedule that explored topics from the distant past to contemporary times; a robust calendar of in-person and online classes and programs for all ages; rich travel experiences; and upgrades to the physical facilities, including tuckpointing on the Museum Building and renovating the new Forging Studio. Vesterheim also hosted a variety of guests, including local school students, summer tourists, and Viking River Cruise participants. We even welcomed a special visit from the President of Norway's Storting (parliament) for his first-ever trip to Decorah.

Other highlights in 2024 include the dedication event in November officially naming Hanson Vesterheim Commons in recognition of the generosity of Mary Jo (Hanson) Boman and the Hanson Family Foundation for their transformational gift of \$2 million for the Strong Roots | Bold Future, the Campaign to Grow Vesterheim. You will also learn more about the many prestigious awards Hanson Vesterheim Commons received in 2024.

Another important milestone that Vesterheim received in 2024 was re-accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums, a mark of distinction that speaks to the overall quality of the work done here on a daily basis.

None of this would have happened without the ongoing support and commitment of every single visitor, student, member, donor, volunteer, trustee, and staff member who are part of Vesterheim's mission. We extend our sincere thanks to each and every one of you for making 2024 a great year!

Chris Johnson
Vesterheim President/CEO

Brian Rude
Vesterheim Board Chair



1,431

volunteers hours



428

new Vesterheim
memberships



1,070

Freia Melkesjokolade bars
sold in the Museum Store



16,485

people received
Vesterheim's monthly
email newsletter



262

third grade students
participated in the Immigration
Exploration Program

Mission

To build community and create experiences inspired by Norwegian-American stories and folk art.

Vision

To create an environment that fosters boundless learning, connecting, sharing, preserving, and community.

Impact

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.



**American
Alliance of
Museums**

Vesterheim has again achieved accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition afforded to the nation's museums. Vesterheim has been accredited since 1970. Of the nation's estimated 33,000 museums, only about 3% are currently accredited.

As the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, Vesterheim explores the diversity of American immigration through the lens of the Norwegian-American experience, by sharing the over 33,000 objects and 12 historic buildings in its comprehensive collection that includes some of the most outstanding examples of decorative and folk art in the United States and inspires Vesterheim's global community of lifelong learners through exciting exhibitions, programs, and classes.



105

group tours visited
Vesterheim



55,365

YouTube video views



178,648

people who visited
vesterheim.org



1,004

attendees at
28 Vesterheim Speaker
Presentations






380

people received
research assistance from
curatorial staff

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE

In 2024, Vesterheim Members, Folk Art School participants, program participants, and Museum Store customers came from all 50 states; Washington, D.C.; the territory of Puerto Rico; and 18 countries.

	Belgium		France		New Zealand
	Bermuda		Greece		Norway
	Brazil		Ireland		Romania
	Canada		Japan		Sweden
	Estonia		Luxembourg		Turkey
	Finland		Netherlands		United Kingdom

President Gharahkhani visits Vesterheim

On July 5, Vesterheim was pleased to welcome Masud Gharahkhani, Norway's President of the Storting (Parliament), for his first visit to Decorah. Vesterheim President/CEO Chris Johnson gave the delegation a tour of Vesterheim, and Chief Curator Laurann Gilbertson shared objects from the collection specifically related to Drammen, the area in Norway that President Gharahkhani comes from. Later in the year, participants in Vesterheim's Christmas Markets Tour to Norway were hosted by President Gharahkhani at the Norwegian Parliament.



Viking Visits Vesterheim

For the third year in a row, Vesterheim welcomed visitors from Viking Mississippi River Cruises during the Privileged Access® day-trip from the port of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Viking guests experienced a special museum tour, had the opportunity to take a Vesterheim Folk Art School class, and spent time enjoying Decorah.

9 Viking visit days July - October

29 Viking buses traveling from the Port of La Crosse

1,160 Viking guests explored Vesterheim and Decorah

Tours

Vesterheim continued the long tradition of offering unique travel opportunities in Norway and at home. In 2024 Vesterheim hosted 118 travelers on four exciting and educational tours to Norway:

- *Explore a Thousand Years of Norway*
- *Norway Christmas Markets*
- *Two tours of Skål! Norwegian Beer Brewing Old and New*

Vesterheim also took 90 guests on three day-trips, visiting sites in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin to explore the life and art of Herbjørn Gausta.

HANSON VESTERHEIM COMMONS

Vesterheim was pleased to announce in 2024, 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. Vesterheim honored the Hanson family during a naming ceremony in celebration in November 2024.

Thank you for supporting the Strong Roots | Bold Future Campaign

Hanson Vesterheim Commons is Vesterheim's new front door, providing a beautiful, functional space for museum celebrations, meetings, exhibit opening receptions, school groups, and Folk Art School activities. We are grateful to all the generous donors who contributed to the Strong Roots | Bold Future campaign. Your support of this project and Vesterheim's mission have made it possible for Vesterheim to plan for and live into its bold and exciting future.

Awards Received

Hanson Vesterheim Commons continues to receive accolades from near and far.

In 2024 several awards were announced, including:

- Shortlisted for the prestigious Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize
- 2024 Wood in Architecture Award from the Wood Products Council
- Excellence in Energy Efficient Design Award from Alliant Energy and MidAmerican Energy
- Excellence in Design and Construction Award from the Decorah Area Chamber of Commerce



YOUR GIFTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your generous support of Vesterheim helps to create the exhibitions, programs, classes, and special events that you love at Vesterheim. We thank YOU for partnering in our mission to build community and create experiences inspired by Norwegian-American stories and folk art.

Benefit Auction

The 10th annual online Benefit Auction raised over \$28,000 to benefit the Vesterheim Annual Fund in support of Folk Art education! 146 bidders purchased 74 incredible folk art pieces from talented artists, as well as an eight-day European river voyage from Viking.

Vennskap: The Vesterheim Annual Giving Society

Vennskap, Norwegian for “friendship,” recognizes donors whose unrestricted gifts of cash or securities to the Vesterheim Annual Fund totaled \$1,000 or more throughout the year. In 2024, there were 151 generous donors who are recognized as Vennskap donors. To view a list of Vennskap donors for 2024 giving, visit vesterheim.org/join-give/#vennskap.

Vesterheim Magazine

A favorite member benefit is *Vesterheim* magazine, published twice a year. Issues in 2024 shared stories about journeys and the 200th anniversary of the *Restauration* sailing. Thank you to the Rydell-Mortenson Charitable Foundation for supporting the 2024 summer issue of *Vesterheim* with a generous gift to the Vesterheim Annual Fund. A special thank you to Norwegian Ambassador Anniken Huitfeldt for her article contribution in the 2024 winter issue.

Endowments Established in 2024

Susan D. Woodhall Endowment

for maintaining the historic buildings and grounds of Heritage Park

Harlan and Connie Sanderson Endowment

to support Vesterheim’s library of on-demand classes

John W. Kurtich Foundation Endowment

for folk artist international study opportunities



Annual Fund Matching Gift Challenges in 2024

Syttende Mai 1814 Challenge

Donations on May 17, including TWO matching gifts of \$1,814 from Jeff and Marilyn Roverud, raised over \$8,200 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

GivingTuesday

Vesterheim’s community came together to raise over \$35,000 for the Vesterheim Annual Fund, which became \$95,000 thanks to generous matching gifts from Sons of Norway Noreg Lodge 3-466 of New Jersey, and Vesterheim’s current trustees.

End of Year

The generous gifts received from friends like you combined with the matching gifts from Vesterheim’s current Trustees and Decorah Bank and Trust resulted in over \$200,000 raised for the Vesterheim Annual Fund.

EXHIBITIONS



2024 Exhibitions on View at Vesterheim

What's New?

Supported by Christine Tuve Burris and Jim Burris.

Seven Summers

Supported by Barbara and Dale Henning.

The Art and Crafts of Ancient Scandinavia

Supported by Vesterheim's friends and members.

National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition

Supported by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Exploring the Natural World through Printmaking: Olive Jensen Nordby

Supported by the Eugene and Olive Nordby Charitable Foundation and Rob and Evy Alsaker.

Boreal Ornament V

Supported by Tina Keune in memory of Russell Kuene.

A Dying Norway - In a Living America?

Supported by William and Kathi Wild.

Leading with our Hearts: Nordic, Sami, and Ojibwe Designs From Nature

Supported in loving memory of Floy Anderson Sauey by her daughters.

Hand Me Down the Fiddle:

Norwegian Fiddlers, Fiddles, and Fiddle Tunes in the Upper Midwest

Supported by a Scandinavian Folk Arts & Cultural Traditions in the Upper Midwest grant from the American Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) and a generous gift to the Vesterheim Annual Fund from Carol Birkland and Tom Woxland, and Peter Dahlen and Mary S. Carlsen.

200 Years of Norwegians in America

Supported by the Vesterheim Board of Trustees.

Thanks to continued support from the Edwin E. and Janet L. Bryant Foundation in 2024, work to expand and improve Vesterheim's virtual galleries continued. The virtual galleries now include enhanced images, showcasing 837 objects, artifacts, artworks, and historical images to explore anytime and from anywhere at collections.vesterheim.org.

During 2024, 45 objects from the collection were displayed at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the National Nordic Museum in Seattle, Washington. In addition, Vesterheim's traveling exhibition *Innovators and Inventors*, supported by the Tomson Family Foundation was on display at Livsreise Norwegian Heritage Center in Stoughton, Wisconsin.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Vesterheim hosted a wide range of community events in 2024, including the celebration of *Syttende Mai*, Decorah's Nordic Fest, and a traditional Norwegian Christmas.

Free Second Saturday

Vesterheim invites everyone to enjoy the museum for free on the second Saturday of each month, supported in 2024 by Kari and Pete Espinosa.

Museums For All

Vesterheim participates in the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) program, administered by the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) that supports those receiving food assistance (SNAP) benefits by offering free admission to Vesterheim for up to four people.

Blue Star Museums

Vesterheim is pleased to be a part of the Blue Star Museums program, offering free museum admission to all active-duty military and their families. Blue Star Museums is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in collaboration with Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums nationwide.





Barneløpet

Supported by Jon and Mary Hart of Decorah in memory of Kjell Arne Berntsen and by three Sons of Norway Lodges – Valdres #503 in Decorah, Iowa; Heimbygda #376 in Lanesboro, Minnesota; and Valheim #364 in Spring Grove, Minnesota.

Koselig Event

Through a collaborative partnership with Vesterheim, world renowned Toppling Goliath Brewery in Decorah hosted the event, Koselig: A Day of Cozy Joy, featuring Norwegian-inspired food, live music, and folk art demonstrations.

Coffee with Chris: A Members-Only Online Event

Supported by Impact Coffee and Vesterheim members.

Syttende Mai

Supported by Jeff and Marilyn Roverud.

Concert by Northern Resonance and Tall Poppy String Band

Night at the Museum

Vesterheim Corporate and Organization Members and their staff enjoyed a night at the museum with ice cream provided by Culver's of Decorah, demonstrators, crafts, and live music by the Decorah Nordic Dancers Orchestra.



Decorah's Nordic Fest

Nordic Fest activities at Vesterheim supported by Decorah Bank & Trust.

Folk art demonstrations supported by Jon and Mary Hart.

Skjaldborg Vikings supported by Viking State Bank & Trust.

Music at Vesterheim 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 supported by Dean Gipp and family in remembrance of Cyndi Gipp.

Concert by My Favorite Folk

Supported by Bob and Mary Jane Lake.

Vesterheim from Home: A Members-Only Online Event

Supported by Bob and Mary Jane Lake.

Norwegian Christmas Celebration

Supported by Bill and Kathi Wild.

Music during Norwegian Christmas supported by Muriel Stone.

Youth Free Admission supported by Dr. James Bullard.

Children's books provided by Oneota Valley Literary Foundation.

FOLK ART SCHOOL

In 2024, Vesterheim Folk Art School offered a full year of experiences including 57 in-person classes, 105 online classes and programs, and 21 youth and multigenerational programs in a wide array of Scandinavian folk arts, including rosemaling, woodworking, Norwegian language and culture, jewelry making, metal working, fiber arts, Nordic cooking, and more.

The [Folk Art Apprentice Program](#) selected five aspiring folk art instructors to learn from Vesterheim Gold Medalists and experienced instructors to help ensure continuity of Norwegian and Norwegian-American folk art traditions.

The [Artist in Residence Program](#) provided three practicing folk art instructors the opportunity to explore Vesterheim's collection for object inspiration and future teaching ideas.

Both programs were supported by the Dennis and Ruth Green Endowment for Folk Art Instructor Professional Development.

Additionally, two folk artists were selected to [Study in Norway](#) to learn, gain inspiration, and develop ideas for future teaching. Folk artist international study opportunities are supported by the John W. Kurtich Foundation Endowment. Vesterheim also welcomed two Norwegian instructors to campus with support from the Sigmund Aarseth Norwegian Instructor Endowment.

National Norwegian-American Folk Art Exhibition Gold Medal Winners



Congratulations to the 2024 Vesterheim Gold Medalists (left to right.)

Front row: Carol Culbertson (weaving), Lisa Anderson (rosemaling), Tonya Mandy (rosemaling), and Lise Lorentzen (rosemaling).

Back row: David Susag (woodworking), Jeffrey J. Ward (knifemaking), and Roger Abrahamson (woodworking).

The exhibition was made possible thanks to generous support of the Iowa Arts Council, which exists within the Iowa Economic Development Authority.



776

participants in 57
in-person folk art
classes



2,499

participants in 105
online folk art classes
and programs



3,822

folk art supplies
sold in the
Museum Store



24

free folk art
classes and
programs offered



15

students participated in the
Luther College Scandinavian
Fine Handcraft January Term
course at Vesterheim

YOUTH & MULTI-GENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Vesterheim hosted 397 youth and families for 21 in-person and online programs in 2024.

In-person Programs

Barnetimen Children's Hour

Free program for three-to five-year-olds. Supported by David and Brenda Carlson and Norwegian Mutual Insurance Association.

Immigration Exploration Program

Free program for third-grade students. Supported by Brenda and David Carlson.

Friluftsliv Klubb

Program for grades K-2 to explore the Scandinavian concept of “open-air living.” Supported by Dan Alsaker.

Norsk Skole

Class for grades 3-5 to learn the Norwegian language and explore cultural activities of Norway. Supported by Craig Trygstad and Lynne Coleman.

Rosemaling Klubb

Rosemaling class for ages 10-18 to learn colorful painting projects.

Whittling Klubb

Woodcarving class for ages 10+ to learn a variety of carving techniques.

Online Programs

FamilieTid

Free programs providing fun for the whole family. Supported by Ruth Christenson Sorenson.

- *Family Cook Along Taco Night*. Supported by Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant.
- *Nordic Songs Through the Years*. Supported by Ruth Christenson Sorenson in tribute to her parents.
- *Norwegian Folk Stories*
- *Enchanted Echoes – Tales of Nyckelharpa and Nacken*. Supported by Sons of Norway – Noreg Lodge 3-466.

Family Language Adventure: Life North of the Arctic Circle

Opportunity to learn and practice Norwegian language skills as a family. Supported by Jane Kemp in memory of Don Kemp.



Thank you for your loyal and generous support of Vesterheim.
You make a difference at Vesterheim.



VESTERHEIM

The National Norwegian-American
Museum and Folk Art School

vesterheim.org

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