



LancasterHistory

For Immediate Release

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National Endowment for the Humanities awards LancasterHistory \$499K for exhibit installation, museum educator position at the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy

LANCASTER, PA — LancasterHistory is proud to announce that it has been awarded \$499,956 from the **National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)**. The NEH announced yesterday, April 16, 2024, that it has awarded \$26.3 Million for 238 Humanities-related projects nationwide, one of which went to LancasterHistory. The grant funds will be used for the **Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy**, to install permanent exhibitions and provide funding for a museum educator position for the Center.

“We’re honored and thrilled to receive this award,” said **Thomas R. Ryan**, President & CEO at LancasterHistory. “The National Endowment for the Humanities is perhaps the most prestigious and competitive granting agencies in the museum field. To receive one of the highest awards from among the 283 very worthy public history and humanities projects is a tremendous affirmation that will further propel the Stevens and Smith Center into reality.”

The NEH award is one of many grants LancasterHistory is seeking as part of its ongoing fundraising efforts for the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy, expected to open in 2025. Those interested in learning more about the project or contributing to the development of the Center can visit stevensandsmithcenter.org, a new website dedicated to the site.

Designed by Lancaster-based marketing and design company **Infantree**, the website gives visitors information about the future Stevens & Smith Center, including conceptual renderings by **Ralph Appelbaum & Associates**, the world-renowned exhibition design team hired by LancasterHistory in 2021. It also allows viewers to follow the project through newsroom updates, sign up for email updates, and link to Facebook and Instagram accounts for the Center. It is also a way for people to support the development of the Center through financial contributions.

“Our goal is to raise \$24 Million; \$19 Million of which is for design, construction, and exhibition costs,” said **Robin Sarratt**, LancasterHistory Vice President. “The additional \$5 Million will create an endowment to support the ongoing operations of the Center ensuring it is financially sustainable long past the ribbon cutting.”

To date, LancasterHistory has successfully raised \$15.7 M towards both goals.

“With the public phase of the capital campaign having just begun, we’re excited to share the vision for the Stevens & Smith Center with the community and enlist its support for building a world-class museum here in Lancaster,” said Sarratt. Events will be held throughout 2024 to share plans with the community and seek additional support, according to Sarratt.

To kick off the next phase of work at the Stevens and Smith Center, LancasterHistory will host a **ceremonial groundbreaking** on Monday, May 13. This public event will begin with coffee and pastries in the Lancaster County Convention Center’s Commons on Vine lobby at 9am, followed by remarks from LancasterHistory’s leadership and local dignitaries, including **Mayor Danene Sorace, Representative Ismail “Izzy” Smith-Wade-EI, and Representative Mike Sturla**, at 9:30am. After the remarks, the Center will be open for brief, public tours in accessible areas.

Visit the website, stevensandsmithcenter.org, beginning Friday, April 19, 2024, to register online to attend the ceremonial groundbreaking. The event is free and open to the public, but registration is required and space is limited. An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter will be available to any attendees needing ASL for remarks or during a tour of the site.

Also present at the groundbreaking will be representatives from Benchmark Construction (Brownstown, PA), the contractor for the project, and Centerbrook Architects (Centerbrook, CT)—the same two partners responsible for LancasterHistory’s sustainable headquarters on North President Avenue.

LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the homes of 15th US President James Buchanan and home and law office of Congressman Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith.

About The Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy

The Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy is an interpretive museum and education center being developed by LancasterHistory in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Opening in 2025, the Center will examine the life and career of Congressman Stevens and his associate Lydia Hamilton Smith, as well as the long, arduous struggle for freedom and equality in America, through state-of-the-art exhibits, immersive media experiences, and educational programs.

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