



JACKSON HOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Final Report: CWAM Grant, June 2019

Grant Title: Interactive Exhibit Programs, Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum

As a local museum in Jackson Hole, the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum (JHSM) serves a variety of patrons of all ages and interests. The CWAM funding allowed the JHSM to expand and enrich programming for young children, families, and visitors interested in a more interactive experience. We see many visitors throughout the summer and winter months that are looking for a fun way for their families to engage with local history—especially when the weather is snowy or rainy. Since many of our permanent exhibits are set up in “scenes” displaying homesteading, cattle ranching and dude ranching, we decided to use these surroundings as inspiration for our children’s activities.

We used the grant money to get Legos, stamps, postcards and a photo booth banner. The Legos encourages young visitors and students to create their own homestead and consider the challenges the original settlers had in “proving up their land”. *Where would your water sources be? How would you grow food? What structures would you need?* Research shows that using play to learn, allows students to internalize and apply their learnings. After observing and learning about a typical homestead cabin in the exhibit, visitors have a chance to design and construct their own homestead.

Additionally, we set up stamps and postcards to allow students to write home about their visit in Jackson Hole. Not only does this encourage literacy skills but is grounded in historical context as many dudes/dudines of the dude ranching era wrote letters home. This portion of the grant grew and expanded to provide content for other program areas. In our after school programming, we saw students excited to learn calligraphy skills so we also have a calligraphy station set up in the museum gallery space now. Lastly, our photo booth banner encouraged young visitors to play and have fun while engaging with history. In addition to putting up a banner, we also put out some of our previously acquired historic costumes for children. We saw children of all ages in fuzzy chaps and jean vest taking pictures and posing as cowboys and ranchers. We purchased a Polaroid camera and encouraged guests to take pictures to take home. (The Polaroid camera encouraged as many adults as children to have fun taking pictures in historic costumes!)

The CWAM grant allowed the museum to give patrons a chance to engage with history in a fun and unique experience. We saw children and adults alike taking pictures,



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playing with Legos and writing home on postcards. And as a result, they asked more questions about what it was like to be a cowboy or rancher at that time and thought creatively about past lifeways in Jackson Hole! Overall, through these visual and interactive additions to the exhibits, we achieved our goal of making the museum gallery more accessible for children and second-language learners.