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Illinois State Museum Wins Leader Institution of the Year Award

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Association of Museums has recognized the Illinois State Museum as the Leader Institution of the Year (2018), one of the association’s “Awards of Distinction” that recognize excellence in the museum field, the highest honor given by the IAM.

In presenting the award, an IAM review committee member hailed the Illinois State Museum for continuing “its tradition of research, conservation, exhibits and programing.”

In addition to its outstanding work maintaining, expanding and interpreting the Museum’s collections, the Illinois State Museum has furthered its mission of inspiring exploration of Illinois’ history and promoting stewardship of the state’s cultural and natural resources through a variety of programs and platforms.

In 2018, in addition to popular monthly family and youth programs and special events, the Illinois State Museum helped celebrate Illinois’ Bicentennial:

- Developed “The Story of Illinois” website, featuring objects from the collections of museums from throughout the state that help celebrate the state’s rich heritage;
- Hosted the major exhibition “Bicentennial and Beyond: The Illinois Legacy Collection” featuring rare artifacts from the Museum’s 13.5-million-object Illinois Legacy Collection to highlight the dynamic story of Illinois; the exhibition remains open through Feb. 3;
- Collaborated with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and Mid-West Family Broadcasting in production of daily “Bicentennial Minute” features on Illinois history for broadcast, podcast and online listening;
- Presented a monthly Bicentennial speaker series “The Culture and Heritage of Illinoisans” in partnership with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield.

In 2019, the Illinois State Museum will continue a wide array of dynamic exhibitions and programs to connect Illinois residents and visitors to the story of Illinois’ history and culture, including:

- “Super Saturdays” special events for children and families the first Saturday of each month;
- “Music at the Museum” monthly concerts on Thursday evenings featuring contemporary and traditional folk and acoustic music;
- "Tales from the Vault" - collaborative programs hosted by the ISM and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum featuring artifacts from the institutions' collections not normally on display, with commentary by staff members or local scholars;
- Friday evening “Museum After Hours” events connecting museum visitors to special collections and programs with food, drink and fun.
- Lectures and Learning Series programs on a variety of research and educational topics at the Museum and Museum Research and Collections Center in Springfield.

“Our programming, special events, research and curation of our collections really do aim to share the story of Illinois,” said ISM Interim Director Robert Sill. “It’s a great honor for the Illinois State Museum to receive the Illinois Association of Museums’ Leader Institution of the Year award. The re-emergence of the Museum has been a team effort by a great staff that understands and honors its legacy.”

Founded on May 25, 1877, the Illinois State Museum is a dynamic institution that has long played a leadership role in the museum community. One of its earliest directors, Dr. Alja Crook (1906-1930), was instrumental in the founding of the American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums), and he wrote extensively about best practices for museums long before the term “best practices” became common. Numerous subsequent ISM directors carried on the tradition and have played key roles with the AAM and other museum bodies across the globe.

The American Alliance of Museums has noted that “The ISM is a national leader in the way it combines its unique collections, collaborative team approach, and specialized research capabilities along with its cutting-edge technology applications in support of exhibitions, public programs, and publications.”

The Illinois State Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and Sunday from 12 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. The Museum is located at 502 South Spring Street in Springfield on the Capitol Complex. Museum admission: \$5 for adults ages 19-64; free admission for youth, seniors, and veterans.

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