



## THE RALPH FOSTER MUSEUM

AT COLLEGE OF THE OZARKS



THE GATES TO "HARD WORK U"

# COLLEGE OF THE OZARKS

- Mission

- To provide the advantages of a Christian education for youth of both sexes especially those found worthy, but who are without sufficient means to procure such training.

- 5 Goals

- Academic
- Vocational
- Christian
- Patriotic
- Cultural

# WHAT IS COLLEGE OF THE OZARKS?

- Started in 1906 as School of the Ozarks.
- Evolved from a high school to a four year liberal arts college.
- All students have to work to pay for their tuition.
- Graduate debt free.

# RALPH FOSTER MUSEUM

- Mission Statement
  - The Ralph Foster Museum, as an integral part of the College of the Ozarks, seeks to actively support the academic, Christian, vocational, cultural and patriotic goals of the College. The Museum strives to provide a quality educational experience for the campus family and the community at large by focusing on the dynamic culture of the Ozarks region.

# A LITTLE BIT ON “THE” MUSEUM

- Started in the basement of a boys dormitory in the 20s.
- Collection grew to the point where it took over the dormitory.
- During the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century it was referred to as the “Good” Museum.
- Formally named after Ralph Foster after he became a major supporter of the Museum and College.

# NOT AS SMALL AS IT SEEMS

- The Museum houses nearly a quarter of a million artifacts.
- It is a general collections museum with artifacts ranging from weapons, to art, to the Beverly Hillbillies car.
- Largest museum in the area bounded by Kansas City, St. Louis, Bentonville and Little Rock.



THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES CAR



# HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

- Permanent staff of four and a limited budget to operate the museum and care for the collection.
- But we have a secret weapon that most museums do not have.....

# STUDENTS!

- The Museum currently employs 27 students.
- Most basic functions of operating the museum are filled by students.....cleaning, admissions, security, etc.
- Students have to work 15 hours a week during the fall & spring semesters and one 40 hour week for each semester they attend.
- Some students work during the summer break which consists of two six week sessions of 40 hour work weeks.



## STAR SCHOOL

A STUDENT PROVIDES SECURITY

# STANDARDS FOR STUDENT WORKERS

- Based on the American Association of Museum Volunteers.
- Makes his/her special skills available to the museum.
- Respects the confidentiality of sensitive material.
- Serves as a good will ambassador for the museum and college.

# THE COLLEGE DOES NOT HAVE A MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAM, BUT.....

- Some students show an interest and an appreciation of the museum profession.
- Those that do will likely find themselves assigned to a museum staff person when the schedule permits.
- Working alongside the staff person they learn the basics of collections care, exhibit design & fabrication and how to do it on a shoestring budget!
- Most graduate and pursue a career or further their education in other fields.

## A FEW HOWEVER...

- Find that they want to stay in the museum field.
- Some of our past graduates are working at other museums and one is doing graduate work in Egyptology in Egypt.
- These are students with real hands on experience of what is possible and isn't possible with limited resources.

# IS IT ALL ROSY?

- No.
- Staff of four, limits to our knowledge, scheduling, multiple projects = wearing many hats.
- Long term planning is hard.
- Small Staff – Small Budget.
- No acquisition budget.
- A large student staff can mean that you can spend time occupied with managing them instead of working on a new collection or exhibit.

# HOW DO WE FIT INTO THE COLLEGE?

- We have been asked to do exhibits that highlight some aspect that the College wishes to focus on.
- Such as....the College's Centennial Celebration, Patriotic Education Travel Program, and past notable visitors to the College.
- More of an exhibit venue than research venue.



# IN CONCLUSION

- Working at the Ralph Foster Museum can be challenging but the rewards can be many. Among them are:
  - Knowing that in a small way I'm helping to preserve the unique history of the region and the college.
  - I really enjoy working with the students that work directly with me.
  - And if I'm really tense or worked up at the end of the day, having this view from my parking space always helps me get it all in perspective. 😊



THANKS FOR COMING!

