



# HUMANITIES TENNESSEE

## Public Humanities Matters

The newsletter of Humanities Tennessee's Partnership for Public Humanities

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### Community History Development Fund Gets New Name, Focus

Humanities Tennessee is pleased to announce the [Partnership for Public Humanities \(PPH\)](#), formerly the Community History Development Fund (CHDF). The new name signals a new approach--opening the program to any nonprofit regardless of mission, and focusing our support on public humanities projects.

We know the value of the humanities in our everyday lives, and we want to increase awareness of that value by broadening our reach across the state through a wide range of organizations.

The PPH functions much the same as the CHDF, with partners requesting support to accomplish goals. In fact, active and current CHDF partners are automatically partners of the PPH. But we've replaced the organizational assessment with a public program plan--your road map for projects that serve the public. These projects are what the PPH supports.

Read on to learn more, and visit the Partnership for Public Humanities [web page](#) for more details. And, of course, [contact us](#) to get started!

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### PPH Extends to Existing Partners--Here's How

*by Paul McCoy*

If you are an existing partner with a current organizational assessment, any public project recommendation in the assessment remains eligible for PPH funding. For

example, if your assessment recommends--and it's a safe bet it does--creating interpretive temporary exhibits or updating the interpretation of an existing exhibit, then you may request funding from the PPH to accomplish this goal. Both the **Bemis Historical Society** and the **Clay County Museum** are undertaking such projects.

**Bemis** is a company town created for the workers of an industrial cotton mill. The mill has been closed for years, but the community maintains close ties to its past, and local volunteers have worked hard to establish a town museum. They have a great space (an old theater), interesting artifacts, an active board, and a story to tell ...they just need help telling it. Their assessment recommended starting with one section of their museum and giving it a thorough update. Beginning in March, they will work with a scholar to create an interpretive plan and script for an exhibit on "Cotton Technology."



Bemis Mill Village

**The Clay County Museum in Celina** is one of the state's hidden treasures, as is the woman who has kept the doors open for years: Mary Loyd Reneau. And if those doors happen to be closed, just ask anyone in town to call Mary; she'll open the place up, walk you through the museum, then drive you all over the upper Cumberland to traipse through Civil War cemeteries. The museum has amassed quite a collection of artifacts, but has long wished for someone to help them organize these artifacts in a way that tells the whole story of Clay County. With that recommendation written in their assessment, the museum plans to work with a scholar to help organize a new layout for the museum's exhibits. Then they, like Bemis, will begin updating those exhibits, one by one.

**We all got into this business to share our stories and learn from each other. The Partnership for Public Humanities, just as the Community History Development Fund before it, will continue to help you do just that. Welcome aboard.**

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## Partnership Begins with Free Public Program

New and returning partners will be provided with a public program plan so they may get support from the PPH. **But first, we ask potential partners to host a public humanities program to help determine if the PPH is a suitable fit for their organizations.**

Humanities Tennessee offers several options for simple, quality programs



"Life on the Fence" conversation at Casa Azafran, Nashville

that audiences value greatly. While small in scale, these options don't require a great deal of preparation, publicity, or even audience turnout. They do, however, result in truly meaningful experiences for members of your community.

For example, [The Morton Museum](#) in Collierville and [Casa Azafran](#) in Nashville each hosted a selection from our [Conversations Bureau](#). Twenty-three people in Collierville discussed "**From Plessy to Brown: Resolving the Promise of Equal Protection under the Law**," which included excerpts from the 14th Amendment, and Court decisions from *Plessy V. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board*, cases that

bookend the doctrine of "separate, but equal."

**Casa Azafran** hosted "**Life on the Fence: A Long View of Guest Worker Programs**," a conversation based on excerpts from research about Mexican guest workers in the US in the mid-20th century, a crucial time period in the US relations with Mexico and immigrant

workers.

Both hosts saw brand new visitors turn up for these events, and received positive feedback for these lively, insightful discussions. These are just two of our many options for Humanities Tennessee supported programs you may host to initiate partnership in the PPH—find links to many more on our [PPH web page](#) . Or, let us in on your own ideas!

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## Technical Assistance Still Available

For those partners out there still eager to examine the overall goals of their institutions, we recommend the [Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations \(StEPs\)](#), a program of the [American Association of State and Local History \(AASLH\)](#). **StEPs** is a self-guided assessment tool that provides a set of standards by which to measure your own practices from mission to management to collections care—and everything in between—enabling you to zero in on areas that need attention.

Our partners enrolled in **StEPs** may be able to request support for workshops or consultation for the standards related to audience and interpretation. Visit the [StEPs](#) web page for program details.

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## Join Our Cause

Help spread the word. Take a minute to forward this newsletter to your board, volunteers, or members who are interested in interpreting and strengthening community life in our state.

**The smallest gift from an individual can make a big difference to community life in Tennessee. Please consider including the Partnership for Public Humanities in your giving by making a secure donation to Humanities Tennessee.**



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