

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Community Human Services Department
Community Attraction and Leisure Services – Recreation & Culture Services
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Stephanie Saunders
Curator, Chatham-Kent Museum
Date: December 18, 2017
Subject: Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee Annual Report 2017

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

The Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee's primary responsibilities are to ensure that the collection entrusted to the museum's care is adequately housed, conserved and documented. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee has prepared a report outlining its 2017 activities.

Comments

A copy of the 2017 Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee Annual Report is attached as Appendix "A".

Consultation

No other departments were consulted.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Prepared by:



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Attachment: A – Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee Annual Report 2017

c. Marlee Robinson, Chair, Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee

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Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee Annual Report Jan 15, 2018.docxx

Report to Council from Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee 2016 - 2017

It is a great pleasure to be able to report to you on behalf of the Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee. When you became Mayor and Councillors you also became Board members of the Ridge House Museum. The volunteer Ridge House Advisory Committee acts on your behalf to ensure that the purposes, policies and professional standards of the Museum are maintained.

This typical middle class home built in Ridgetown in 1875 was purchased by Ridgetown Rotary as a Centennial project and restored by volunteers from the Ridgetown & District Historical Society to the standard high enough that renowned heritage architect called it "one of the finest well-preserved examples of a Gothic Revival house build in the mid-to-late 1800's in the Province of Ontario".

Ridge House Museum is staffed by a Curator who is primarily headquartered at the Chatham Museum with approximately 20% of her time allocated to Ridge House Museum business – creating exhibitions, organising activities, dealing with archives and Museum artifacts. When the Museum is open it is staffed by part-time costumed guides including summer students.

The Museum is open daily from 1.00pm to 5.00pm from the first day of spring to the first day of autumn and from the 1st to 23rd December. We also have a Halloween evening opening – last year featured the classic horror film "Nosferatu" and this year we welcomed over 110 people for trick-or-treat.

Your team of volunteers consists not only of the Advisory Committee but also a slowly growing group of enthusiasts who help on specific Museum projects. Our aim is to supplement staff activities and, since we all live locally, to reach out to the Ridgetown area residents to ensure that the Museum remains a vital part of the community.

With this in mind, the Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee has initiated, organised and worked on the following projects:

- **Seniors' Open House** on the second Wednesday of each month. Posters for these popular days (which are open to everyone – not just seniors) are created by the Ridgetown Adult Activity Centre, printed by McKinlay Funeral Home in Ridgetown and distributed by volunteers. Tea and light refreshments are served, tours are given by staff and a guest speaker gives a short talk. Whenever possible one or two buses bring residents from nearby The Village on the Ridge retirement home.

Topics have included heritage hats, tales of Queen Elizabeth's nanny, heritage toys, heritage architecture, quilts, Canada's Heritage & Vintage Magazine, card making, tin piercing, making sculptures with found objects and heritage clothing. The Museum Curator has also given several talks on the special exhibitions. Funds for the refreshments come from a generous donation from the Canadian Heritage & Vintage Magazine.

- A June **Strawberry Social** has been held the last two years, organised by volunteers who are backed by staff on the day. Thanks to local sponsorships, the nominal entrance fee enables this afternoon of lemonade, strawberries, scones and open-face sandwiches accompanied by live music to cover all costs.
- **Tales of Greenwood**, ably organised by Tom Button and friends, continues to be a tradition which draws people from far beyond the local community to hear stories about early Ridgetown and the characters who have inhabited it over the years.
- In 2016 a **barn quilt** in the “Oak Leaf and Cherries” pattern was installed at the Museum, created by the Quilters Pallet 4-H Club members and sponsored by the Ridgetown BIA, Carter's Home Hardware and the Crazy 8 Barn.
- A volunteer has taken on the task of seasonal decorating of the Ridge House Museum porch. Testimony of her skill was the award from the Ridgetown Rejuvenation Association for best Victorian door in 2016.
- Our aim to make the Ridge House Museum **gardens** more truly reflect the time in which the house was built continues. We now have annual sponsorship from the Ridgetown Horticultural Society to help with some expenses related to this project. The Curator of the Backus-Page Museum did an authoritative presentation to the Ridgetown Horticultural Society on plants which would have been available in Ridgetown in 1875. The horticultural teacher at Ridgetown District High School is now working with his students on proposals for the layout of a Victorian-style garden. We hope this association will encourage ongoing interest by local young people in both the garden and the Museum.
- We continue the expanded December activities we started in 2015 to include holiday stories read by a local librarian, carols lead by Ridge Players, cookie decorating, popcorn and cranberry stringing – in addition to the popular open house following the Ridgetown Christmas Parade.
- In 2016 staff had a booth at the July Art in the Park – part of the annual Festival of Porches & Verandahs weekend. A welcome outreach to the community.
- Special exhibitions by Curator Lydia Burggraaf in 2016 and Kate Rosser-Davies in 2017 added interest to the regular Museum displays. Kate's monthly rotating exhibitions this summer based on the theme “Connecting with Craft in Canada 150” brought many people back to the Museum multiple times.
- As a vital tourism asset to the town, Ridge House Museum took part in the Tourism Positivity Day in September when we welcomed Captain Positive and OptiWoman. Positively great fun.
- Advisory Committee members have several other projects which are at early stages – and which we hope to fund through sponsorship rather than municipal contributions.

Your Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee continues to move forward with staff to try to make the Museum the best it can be – a vital destination in east Kent's cultural and tourism assets and a hub for Ridgetown's local community. We welcome continuing support from the Ridgetown & District Historical Society, Ridgetown Adult Activity Centre, Ridgetown Horticultural Society, the Ridgetown Rejuvenation Association, the Ridgetown Municipal Library and a range of local businesses.

In closing I would like to thank the Independent newspaper which have given us almost monthly coverage with photographs and write-ups of our activities. Heartfelt thanks to Advisory Committee members Lynn Luby-Wilson, Dan Nicol, Councillor David VanDamme, Frank Vink, Gord Williams and Bob Wilson. Thank you – and a reluctant farewell to long-time Advisory Committee member Hugh McVittie. And thanks to volunteers Sharon Alliet, Herb Bond, Sophie Bond, Bryan Ferguson, Joan Grooms, Jodie Johnson and Elaine Stephens.

Marlee Robinson
Chair, Ridge House Museum Advisory Committee 2017