

Museum collects support

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PRINCEVILLE — The Princeville Heritage Museum is gearing up for a full-fledged capital campaign to fund a major renovation project.

About \$250,000 is needed to overhaul a 5,000-square-foot room off the main building, according to museum Director Kelly Jenkins.

Though the 16-foot ceiling will remain, the industrial look will be minimized so the area can be open to the community to rent as a banquet facility.

Insulation will be added, the walls finished and heat installed so the room can be used year-round. Electrical work also is needed in that room and the main museum display area, where work to the air conditioning system also will be done. The massive garage doors will be kept so auctions can be conducted there.

The campaign also will upgrade the outdoor lighting; fund signs, a Web site and brochures; fund the research of, cataloging and display the agricultural artifacts in two other large buildings; fund the preservation and storage of other artifacts; and add a stone path between the museum and Akron Townhouse School.

"This area could be very valuable to the community and to the museum, because it could provide income," she said.

The main building also has a full kitchen that caterers could use and large meeting room equipped with presentation technology. All of it can be rented out.

The museum, started in 1998, is a project of the not-for profit Historical Association of Princeville, which also owns and operates the Akron school. It's funded by donations, membership fees and fundraisers and receives no taxpayer support. It has about 350 members.

Critical to the plan is a complete assessment of the museum's artifacts. Early efforts to catalog every donation quickly flagged as more and more items came in. As a result, even the museum staff members can't say for certain the contents and value of its collection.

"I don't have any idea. That's another thing we're working on - inventory. It's a daunting task," Jenkins said. "We go upstairs and rummage around, and we're just amazed. We found a box that had a Civil War uniform."

Already, two significant donations have been received to start the fundraising efforts. A general appeal letter outlining the plans for the museum will be sent to members and other Princeville residents in August.

Most importantly, Jenkins wants the community of Princeville to take an active part in improving the museum because it's a community asset with untapped potential. She sees it becoming a regional draw.

"We've got a 15,000 square-foot facility here, which is so amazing for such a small town," she said.

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