

ACCELERATING PROMISING PRACTICES FOR SMALL LIBRARIES (APP – FY19)

Jaquith Public Library and Marshfield Story Project, An Introduction:

Marshfield Vermont is a small town in northeastern Vermont, chartered in 1790, one year before Vermont became the 14th state to join United States of America. The Town grew and developed around industries associated with the Winooski River including water-powered grist and sawmills, while sheep and dairy farms prospered as well.

The Jaquith Public Library was established in 1895 with 117 books in the first collection. In 1899, a \$6000 grant from the Jaquith family built the first library (now a private home). Today, Jaquith Public Library is our community anchor, making information, ideas and cultural experiences free and available to all. The Jaquith Public Library is considered part of the Town of Marshfield and about 90% of the Jaquith’s budget is funded by a town appropriation voted on by the community at our annual Town Meeting Dayⁱ. Our dedicated staff is aided by a steadfast group of volunteers and led by an all-volunteer Board of Trustees. Like other rural towns in Vermont, we get things done by asking for help from our neighbors and working together to pool resources and tap the diverse talents of our residents.

In that same spirit of collaboration Jaquith Public Library is teaming with Marshfield Historical Society to plan Marshfield Story Project, a collection of video interviews of Marshfield residents. We will bring together people in our community to talk about their Marshfield memories, share photos and letters from the past, and discuss our hopes and dreams for the future. We will especially focus on Marshfield youth residents and our older generation, fostering intergenerational dialogue and understanding.

In this age of isolation and divisiveness we will find new connections or renew old friendships while listening and learning from each other. And, we can preserve our Marshfield past while making a recorded history of our life and times for future generations.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

What need, problem, challenge, or opportunity will your project address, and how was it identified?

Marshfield Story Project will address the problem of increasing isolation in our community and the loss of historical perspective as older residents pass on and younger people move away from the area to attend college and find job opportunities. In discussions between the Library Director and Marshfield Historical Society, we identified an opportunity to bring together two under-served populations, youth aged 10-17 and our older residents aged 60 and over. Through the acts of story-telling and historical preservation we want to create opportunities for community dialogue, deeper connections, and better understanding within our town.

What best practices or prior IMLS funded work will inform your approach?

We were inspired in part by interviews of Marshfield residents that are now archived at the Vermont Folklife Centerⁱⁱ (VFC) in Middlebury, Vermont. These audiotapes were recorded 20 years ago, then edited and published into a book, *Here On This Hill*. Also at VFC, we reviewed a video interview project that brought together a 3rd grade class at East Montpelier Elementary School with local business owners.

Building on these 2 project ideas, we will conduct video interviews of local residents. Adding a video element captures the emotion of the participants on a level that can’t be matched by words alone. And as we archive the interviews and make them available for search engines, a page with a video is more likely to rank higher than one with only text as content.

In addition to preserving the final edited interviews, we’ll begin to digitize related photos and other Historical Society artifacts to add context to the video interviews. Rachel Onuf, a Program Coordinator at the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, has agreed to offer a free

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workshop to our team to assure we follow best practices for digitization, archiving and safeguarding our digital collections. See *Supporting Document #1, Letter of Commitment from Vermont State Archives and Records Administration*.

Andy Kovolos at Vermont Folklife Center will provide an oral history training workshop for historical society volunteers, our interviewer and the interview participants, as well as be available for consultation throughout the course of our project. See *Supporting Document #2, Letter of Commitment from Vermont Folklife Center*.

How would you qualify your library as small and/or rural?

The Town of Marshfield Vermont comprises an area of 44 square miles with a total population of 1,588 residents (recorded in the 2010 U.S. Census). 273 residents live in Marshfield Village, with the remaining population scattered throughout the surrounding acreage of forest and farmland. The average population density is 36 people per square mile. Marshfield is predominately a community of residents who commute to employment opportunities in larger towns. Many people who live outside of the Village do not have access to high speed internet or cellular service. Public transportation is limited and the nearest commercial and cultural centers are 17 miles away in Montpelier or 21 miles in St. Johnsbury. Jaquith Public Library is an important asset for the Marshfield community as a trusted provider of information, connectivity and cultural opportunities.

Jaquith Public Library is located in Old Schoolhouse Common in the Village of Marshfield. Though our 1,700 square foot area is small compared to the 20,000 square foot average of other regional libraries, we offer many important services to the residents of Marshfield and surrounding communities of Plainfield, Cabot, West Danville, Calais and Woodbury.

People come to the library to borrow from our collection of 15,660 books and magazines, attend a weekly playgroup for children or use one of our 5 computers. We offer broadband fiber-connect internet with wireless service and patrons can access Universal Classes online, audio and e-books services and Vermont Online Library (VOL). We also feature art shows, concert series, a Fall Harvest Festival and provide the Marshfield Historical Society with space for the Hap Haywood History Center. See *Supporting Document #3, 2018 Library Report to the Town of Marshfield*.

Aside from an annual Town appropriation of approximately \$80,000, we depend on multiple fundraising efforts to sustain our programming. Raffles, silent auctions, book bag sales, and an annual donor appeal all play a crucial role in providing operational funding of around \$87,000. Other libraries in Vermont have substantially larger budgets, from \$363,000 to \$977,753, and staffing of 8-10 employees.

Our staff of 3, Library Director, Children's Librarian and Librarian (plus a maintenance person) work a total of 46 paid hours per week to keep Jaquith Public Library open and operating for 6 days a week. Twenty-five volunteers give of their time and expertise to allow us to make the most of our small budget and ensure quality programming for all.

Who will benefit from your project? How have you engaged them in your planning?

Marshfield Story Project will be a partnership between Jaquith Public Library and Marshfield Historical Society. We expect involvement and interest town-wide, but will focus on engaging our older population with younger residents. In particular, we are interested in forming intergenerational relationships that will extend well beyond the 2-year span of this project.

To that end we have identified 2 specific community partners that will help us to connect with our youth ages 10 to 18 and older adults: *Twin Valley Seniors, Inc.*, our local senior center, and *Twinfield Together Mentoring* at Twinfield Union School. We included both groups in our planning process and

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will continue to adjust our project plan with their feedback in order to best meet the expectations and needs of our Project's identified populations (youth and older residents).

Members of the Planning Committee visited *Twin Valley Senior Center* to explain the project and gauge interest level among the regular attendees. People were enthusiastic about Marshfield Story Project and offered many suggestions for memories and stories they would like to share and document. Ideas included stories about the flood of 1984, early days of Marshfield's small schoolhouses, the history of the library, our changing landscape and old homesteads, cemeteries, and stories from Town Meeting Days. We also have a smaller population of senior residents who are homebound or unable to attend events at the *Senior Center*. The Historical Society has reached out to some of them and offered on-site visits to record their stories as well.

We also met with Pam Quinn, Director of *Twinfield Together Mentoring*. Twinfield Together Mentoring supports community-based mentoring for youth at Twinfield Union School. Twinfield, with an annual enrolment of approximately 365, is the sole public school (PreK-12) serving the Towns of Marshfield and Plainfield. The *Mentoring Program* is currently pursuing projects with the *Senior Center*. Marshfield Story Project is a good fit for current mentor/mentee matches and also a way to attract more mentors from among the *Senior Center* attendees.

See *Supporting Document #4: Letters of Commitment from Twin Valley Senior Center* and *Supporting Document #5 – Letter of Commitment from Twinfield Together Mentoring*.

In addition, we have also invited interested Marshfield residents to share their ideas for the project online and through a form/box at the Library. See *Supporting Document #6, Flyer & Webpage*. We have already received interest from many residents through this initial outreach.

How will your project address the goals of APP?

IMLS Agency Level Goal: Promote Lifelong Learning; APP Goal: Strengthen the ability of small and rural libraries to serve their communities; Project Type: Community Memory

Five years ago, the Library and Historical Society partnered to increase the square footage of the library and include space for The Hap Hayward History Center, named after the Society's original founder. We now have space to accommodate more attendees for both Library and Historical Society events. Marshfield Story Project will provide another partnership opportunity and an exciting way to encourage community involvement in collecting and preserving Marshfield history. We will make Community Memory Days a part of scheduled programming. Residents will be able to bring in their photos and documents for scanning, and a historical society volunteer will help record and archive them.

In addition to offering books and other publications Jaquith Public Library provides a place for people to learn in many ways—access to high-speed internet, weekly films, discussion groups and live concert performances. Marshfield Story Project is another critical opportunity for residents to engage in lifelong learning—about both our commonalities and our diversities, about our past and about our present and how they will inform our future.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

What specific activities will you carry out?

We will spark increased communication and intergenerational dialogue by videoing and sharing oral history interviews. We will add context to the stories by digitally preserving related photos and mementos from our current Historical Society collection and from contributions from interview participants. The interviews will become Marshfield Story Project and form part of a new digital archive. The archive will be openly available online through a link on the Library website.

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Key activities include:

- **Project Start Up**—Hire key staff: videographer, interviewer and Project Director. Notify partners, review project schedule and schedule initial outreach events to begin recruitment.
- **Community outreach and interviewee recruitment**—includes postcards, Facebook and web forum announcements, display at Fall Foliage Day and at the Library, Visits to Twinfield Union School and Twin Valley Senior Center. Town Meeting Day Outreach (March 2020).
- **Training & Preparation**—Complete training with Vermont Folklife Center and VT State Archives and Records Administration. Purchase digitizing equipment. Train volunteers to use the equipment, finalize archive plan and set-up access point from the library web site.
- **Interview planning**—Scheduling, test video sites, solidify interview process and explore themes and topics, gather signed release forms.
- **Collect, digitize and archive**—Schedule at least 2 Community Memory Days to scan and record data, establish a procedure for drop-off digitizing at the Library and with the Historical Society. Ongoing volunteer training, as needed.
- **Conduct and edit interviews**—plan multiple sessions at both the Library and the Senior Center. Include sessions with *Twinfield Together Mentoring* at Twinfield Union School. Edit and archive individual interviews as well as create a composite video documenting the Project process and Community Memory Days.
- **Showcase our new videos** throughout the community, at Fall Foliage Day, Historical Society events, Town Meeting Day. Promote at least 2 future Community Memory Days to continue collecting, digitizing and archiving.
- **Understand impact and results**—create and complete surveys of participants and wider community. Report to the stakeholders, partners and funders.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project? Will partners be engaged and, if so, for what purpose?

See attached *List of Key Project Staff, Project Director Job Description and Resumes*. See *Supporting Document #7, a Letter of Commitment from Janet Nielsen (Participant)*.

Planning/Project Committee Includes the Library Director, Susan Green, and 3 Historical Society volunteers, Tracey Hambleton, Janet Nielsen and Michael Trupin. The videographer, Paul Haskell has been an active advisor with respect to technical considerations. Committee advisor, Sarah Phillips, provides grant writing and administration support. This group has been meeting regularly since early January to complete the grant proposal and will continue to take the lead in implementing the project. A *Project Director* (new hire) and *Interviewer* Jean Haskell will round out the team.

Project Director The Project Director will begin on September 1, 2019. The Director will report to the Library Director and facilitate all planning and scheduling, oversee all key activities and handle interactions and reporting with partners, mentors, town staff and funding stakeholders. The Project Director will play an instrumental role in community outreach, a major project activity.

Twinfield Together Mentoring, Twin Valley Seniors, Inc. will help recruit and prepare interviewees and advise on selecting topics of interest to the mentor/mentee pairs.

Historical Society volunteers will research and compile collection materials for digitization, set-up and maintain equipment, continue training and digitizing with wider group of community participants.

What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

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The Schedule of Completion details our timeline for key activities. We'll depend on additional expert direction from our mentor organization and the training we receive from Vermont State Archives and Records Administration and Vermont Folklife Center. The Library, School and Senior Center will provide the necessary facilities. In addition to supervising the Project Director, the Library Director will monitor the general participation of library staff and volunteers and liaison with the Marshfield Town Clerk and Treasurer as needed.

What are the risks to the project and how will mitigate them?

Support and commitment levels are high but Marshfield Story Project still faces these risks to completion — reliance on a small library staff and trustees who may be overwhelmed with the requirements of daily library functions; dependence on a volunteer Historical Society; managing the large group of people necessary to perform many diverse functions; delay in hiring a project director or trouble recruiting youth and/or senior participants. But by defining clear roles and responsibilities, establishing a clear decision-making structure and being ready to recruit a Project Director immediately upon award notice we feel confident we can mitigate these risks to meet our project goals. In the past, the people of Marshfield have demonstrated a strong willingness to give time and energy towards keeping our community strong and self-reliant. We have engaged key trusted partners in recruiting and supporting interview participants (*TTM* and *TSC*) and will depend on a strong Project Director so library staff can focus on daily work. See *Supporting Document #8, Signed Partnership Agreement between the Jaquith Public Library and Marshfield Historical Society*.

How will you measure your progress and evaluate project performance?

The Project Committee will meet monthly as a full group to track overall project activities against the Schedule of Completion and Budget. The Project Director will schedule smaller team meetings as needed for work related to specific tasks. Quarterly team reviews will allow us to gauge our progress against key benchmarks then re-assess our timeframe as necessary. The entire project team will make use of Drop Box to share files. We may use a free online project management tool like Asana or ProjectManager.com to keep work focused and keep staff/partners accountable to project objectives.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

What are the intended outcomes (results) and outputs of your project? How do they address the need articulated in your Project Justification?

We will build on existing efforts within the Library, Historical Society and *Twinfield Together Mentoring* to extend relationships among Marshfield residents, enable residents to share their memories, and provide places and occasions for people to connect with each other and with their town's history. We will create a collection of individual narratives and a composite history of major events and shared stories about Marshfield that is accessible and ongoing — a living resource for community members to share and learn about Marshfield history. As a result of our project:

- People will feel more connected and part of the greater Marshfield community,
- People will form new relationships,
- People will increase their understanding of Marshfield and increase their interest in Marshfield history/community and their participation in community events, and
- *Twinfield Together Mentoring* will have more adult mentors.

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We will also track and report on the number of people who attend a community memory day, view one or more videos in person at an event or online, attend training with the State of Vermont or Vermont Folklife Center, and/or participate in an interview.

How do you define success for your project?

A prime demonstration of project success will lie within the stories that are generated. Some will trace the life of an individual or family. Others will fit together recollections of various residents, about notable events, persons or other subjects. A review of the project will pay special attention to these joint stories, noting the various people who added to the narrative, and our documentation of the process of building the narrative.

Another focus will be on the quality of the archiving system we create. That is, we will look to understand: How well is it able to present the stories and artifacts? Does it engage visitors from both Marshfield and beyond? Does it elicit comments, additions, corrections for items displayed? Does it enable volunteers with limited computer skills to participate in building the archive?

What is your plan for collecting and reporting data on your performance goals and outcome?

We will monitor web statistics to assess traffic, view counts and comments. To track the number of attendees and develop a strong contact list for Project participants, we will use sign-in sheets and maintain an email list. Our survey plan is below. See *Supporting Document #9, Survey*, for questions referenced.

Ask Survey Question 3 only to people who participate in the archive and/or oral history trainings.

Ask Survey Questions 1, 2, 4, 5 to:

- All people who attend a Community Memory Days (at event),
- All people who attend an in-person viewing (screening) of one or more videos (at event),
- All people who participated in the interviews – by mail, phone or email in Summer/Fall 2020, using Community Connectedness Scale for Youth,
- All people who identify as having participated in the Marshfield Story Project – by email (to list) and at Spring 2021 Town Meeting Day.

We'll share these survey results with the Marshfield community on the Library website and with handouts at the Library and Town Meeting Day.

How will you sustain the benefits of your project beyond the funding period?

The Historical Society will provide the volunteers needed to support the archive past the project period. We anticipate minimal financial costs to sustain the project (<\$500 annually). We will pull funds from the current Historical Society account to pay the initial fee for up to 2 years of an online archiving system, estimated at \$150 per year. As residents learn about and participate in Marshfield Story Project we foresee interest in a sponsorship program that would allow for an individual or family to support the program for a select time period. Other future fundraising ideas include production and sale of an annual calendar, a historic mug series and a silent auction with goods and services donated by community businesses. In the past, these types of fundraising events have raised upwards of \$500 per event.

ⁱ *Town Meeting* is a form of direct democratic rule, used principally in New England (since the 17th century), in which most or all the member of a community gather to legislate policy and budgets for local government. Town Meeting Day is held the first Tuesday of March in Vermont. We meet at Twinfield Union School to vote from the floor on the school budget and all town appropriations. It's a day to participate in government and lively debate, catch up with neighbors and enjoy a potluck lunch.

ⁱⁱ Founded in 1984, the *Vermont Folklife Center* is a nationally-known folklife education organization that uses ethnography—study of cultural experience through interviewing, participation and observation—to strengthen the understanding of the cultural and social fabric of Vermont's diverse communities.

