

NEWS

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Museum of the Grand Prairie Receives Highest National Recognition Awarded Re-Accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums

MAHOMET, Illinois (March 2023) – The Museum of the Grand Prairie, a facility of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, has again achieved accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the highest national recognition afforded the nation’s museums. Accreditation signifies excellence to the museum community, governments, funders, outside agencies, and the museum-going public. The Museum of the Grand Prairie has been an accredited institution since the accreditation program began in 1972. Accredited museums are reviewed every 10 years to maintain accredited status. Our museum has successfully completed the accreditation review process five times, meaning the museum has been accredited for 50 consecutive years.

Alliance Accreditation brings national recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards and continued institutional improvement. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for 50 years, the Alliance’s museum accreditation program is the field’s primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability. It strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and remain financially and ethically accountable in order to provide the best possible service to the public.

"This accreditation acknowledges the excellence of our staff and volunteers, whose tireless efforts ensure that the museum's exhibits, programs, and collections allow us to preserve and interpret the natural and cultural history of Champaign County and East Central Illinois for all generations," said Lorrie Pearson, Executive Director of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. "We owe a special thanks to former Museum and Education Department Director Barb Oehlschlaeger-Garvey for her past stewardship of the Museum and for her dedication to the reaccreditation process."

Of the nation’s estimated 33,000 museums, over 1,100 are currently accredited. AAM recognizes 213 museums in Illinois, and 31 of those museums are accredited. The Museum of the Grand Prairie is one of only nine museums outside of the Chicagoland area to receive accreditation.

"I was very pleased to hear of the successful reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums for the Museum of the Grand Prairie, though I can’t say I am surprised. Having worked with the museum personnel over the years, I can attest to their professionalism, integrity, and attention to detail. The Museum remains a gem in the middle of the prairie. If you haven’t visited recently or at all, put it on your to-do list," stated Dave Leake, community member of the Museum Advisory Committee.

Accreditation is a very rigorous but highly rewarding process that examines all aspects of a museum's operations. To earn accreditation a museum first must conduct a year of self-study, and then undergo a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. AAM's Accreditation Commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, considers the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation.

"The Museum of the Grand Prairie is a shining example of a smaller institution that meets professional standards and serves as a model for many other mid-sized museums. Accreditation gives a museum a mark of credibility and displays how a museum achieves excellence," states Pat Miller, former Executive Director of the Illinois Heritage Association and member of the Museum Advisory Committee." states Pat Miller, former Executive Director of the Illinois Heritage Association and former member of the Museum Advisory Committee.

"Accredited museums are a community of institutions that have chosen to hold themselves publicly accountable to excellence," said Laura L. Lott, Alliance President and CEO. "Accreditation is clearly a significant achievement, of which both the institutions and the communities they serve can be extremely proud."

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District plans to host an event in late spring or early summer to celebrate this momentous achievement and the public will be invited to attend. For more info on the accreditation and to stay up to date on the celebration event, please visit www.museumofthegrandprairie.org or www.ccfpd.org.

About the Museum of the Grand Prairie

Opening originally in 1968 as the Early American Museum, the Museum of the Grand Prairie works to collect, preserve, and interpret the natural and cultural history of Champaign County and east central Illinois for all generations. Through diverse experiences, the museum seeks to inspire audiences to create connections to our natural and cultural history.

About the American Alliance of Museums

The American Alliance of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. Representing more than 35,000 individual museum professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners serving the museum field, the Alliance stands for the broad scope of the museum community. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

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