**WASHINGTON ON THE BRAZOS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

2022 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WOB RENOVATION

Designs are nearing completion for a comprehensive remodel and upgrade of every venue at Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site. Gallagher and Associates met with WOBHF board members, WOB staff, Texas Historical Commission representatives and other stakeholders throughout the year to fine tune a plan that will incorporate state of the art technology, innovative design and accurate storytelling of the place Where Texas Became Texas. Senator Lois Kolkhorst procured $31 million in funding from the legislature and the WOBHF has taken the lead in raising the remaining $10 million necessary to bring the project to completion. A capital campaign consulting team, Dini Spheris of Houston, has been hired and is assisting WOB in reaching its goals. John Nau III has pledged $2.5 million in a matching grant. Other board members have contributed and meeting with potential underwriters are underway. So far, $2.8 million has been pledged.

EVENTS/PROGRAMS

**Educational Programming**

Ninety-nine public schools brought almost 4,600 children to Washington on the Brazos this year to tour the site. Two Homeschool programs were hosted by WOB. In the spring, TAMU assisted with a program on the Brazos River and geology. Fall brought Industry and innovation to the table, featuring Texas in the Age of Progress. Five hundred students attended those events.

**Texas Independence Day Celebration**

Bitter weather kept many away from the Texas Independence Day Celebration this year, but 2,500 brave souls ventured out to visit the Texian Army, enjoy the historic plays and shows, tap their feet to period music and observe some time honored skills of talented craftsmen. Descendants also convened at the conference center to visit with “cousins” explore their roots and raise money for WOB through silent auctions.

**Gone to Texas Camp**

Thirty students ages 8-12 participated in a 4-day camp at the historic site, visiting each of the venues. The Washington County Historical Society coordinated with the Boys and Girls club to provide transportation and food for the students, which was donated by local establishments.

**Farmers Markets**

Our Farmer’s Markets continued this year, and are scheduled to coincide with Living History Weekends, giving folks another reason to visit WOB. The Holiday Market moved back inside the Conference center with 50 vendors and attracted lots of early Christmas shoppers.

**The Judge Eddie Harrison Memorial Juneteenth Heritage Celebration**

The Juneteenth Heritage Celebration was renamed in memory of one of WOB’s staunchest supporters, Judge Eddie Harrison, who passed away this year. Judge Harrison provided invaluable guidance and support in developing the program. Live exhibits, displays, genealogical workshops and music brought about 550 visitors to the historic site.

**Tombstone Trail**

The word is out on Tombstone Trail, as 400 visitors took advantage of this spooky journey, meeting iconic Washington “ghosts” along the way. A second day was added this year with new Texas history stories told to sellout crowds.

**Christmas on the Brazos**

Candlelight Christmas and Christmas on the Brazos continue to attract visitors looking for an old fashioned, less commercial celebration of the season. Almost 200 visitors took advantage of the celebration, but icy weather forced cancellation of the second day of festivities.

**Stagecoach Days/Twilight Firelight**

Chandler Wahrmund is working hard to tell the stories of Fanthorp during Stagecoach days and Twilight/Firelight. A new program was presented during each Stagecoach weekend, and 225 folks took advantage of Twilight Firelight offerings.

**Beef on the Brazos**

Beef on the Brazos continues to be a popular fundraiser for WOB, and an excellent way to present the historic site to a new audience. A herd of 20 F1 Braford heifers were raffled off. A raffle ticket only costs $50, and just 2000 were sold. More than 900 people purchased tickets, with the winning ticket going to Warren Botard of Sheridan, Texas. Botard won the cattle on his wife’s birthday. He improved his herd with some of the cattle and paid off some bills with the remainder. Tickets sold out about two weeks early, and WOB netted just under $65,000 on the fundraiser. Tickets will go on sale again in April, 2023.

**Pineywoods Cattle Breeding Program**

The Heritage Livestock Program is gaining traction with the help of interested donors and some major gifts. A gooseneck stock trailer is now part of the farm equipment, thanks to a large donation by Mike and Cindy Brannon. Former board members helped underwrite the purchase of a bull and four young Pineywoods heifers to round out the herd. Nathan Giles and Jon Wellmann have developed a pasture grazing management plan. Additionally, funds were donated to purchase pipe fencing material and a squeeze chute. The contemporary equipment is set up in a non-public area of Barrington for safety and convenience. The Heritage pig breeding program is also growing.

**New Oxen**

A new team of oxen were purchased and were working out famously. Unfortunately, one died suddenly of an apparent aneurysm, so the hunt continues for a replacement.

FUNDING

**HOT Funds**

HOT fund grants totaling $24,343 were secured from Washington County and Navasota to assist in marketing expenses for WOB.

**Rural Grant**

Secured $1,777 for WOB programming through application to the Brazos Valley Arts Council.

**Membership**

Membership to the Washington on the Brazos Historical Foundation earned $23,875 in 2022.

**Blinn Advisory Committee**

The Blinn College Board of Trustees officially approved the creation of the Star of the Republic Museum Advisory Committee (SAC) at its March 2021 meeting. This committee was established to give guidance to Blinn in their efforts to financially support educational efforts for WOB/Star of the Republic. Jon Failor has submitted several programs that he would like to implement which are under review by the committee.

**Brazos Valley Gives**

Participated in Brazos Valley Gives which raised $1,485 for WOB.

**Visitation**

Total visitation for Washington on the Brazos for 2022 was 82, 250.

MARKETING

Through social media efforts, we reached 603,273 people on Facebook, an 88% increase from 2021 and on Instagram we reached 2,310, a 15% increase from 2021. We increased followers to 14,024 on Facebook and to 1,414 on Instagram. We ran 7 ads on Facebook for 4 different events. The ads alone reached 267,030 with 3,769 event responses.

Our website averages about 230 users a day with 90% of users being new to the website. We continue to utilize the website to promote upcoming events, share history of our site and sell tickets for events & fundraisers.

On the PR & Advertising side, we sent out press releases for all major events to local news outlets and those around Texas. Several stories were picked up and received great coverage for TIDC, Juneteenth, Beef on the Brazos and Candlelight Christmas.