

# **Charting a Course for the Future**

## **New York State Historical Association**

**Mission** (Adopted 2006)

### **New York State Historical Association** **Preserving • Engaging • Educating**

Welcoming and connecting people to our shared cultural heritage through exhibitions and programs that provoke, delight, and inspire.

### **Vision**

Through our exhibitions, programs, publications, and research library we will make the history and culture of New York and America more accessible and meaningful to greater numbers of people. In the coming years, we envision that:

- The New York State Historical Association will be a national leader in professional training and statewide educational programs.
- Fenimore Art Museum will be one of the nation's premier small art museums.

To fulfill our mission, the Association combines its talents and strengths with those of The Farmers' Museum and the Cooperstown Graduate Program, forming a unique collaboration that enhances our organization and its effectiveness.

### **Values**

The staff members of the New York State Historical Association and The Farmers' Museum combine their talents and energies in a friendly, engaging manner to achieve our missions. These core values guide and inspire how we define our relationships with each other and our stakeholders.

#### **Enriching**

Nourishing mind, heart, and spirit.

#### **Enjoyable**

Creating delightful and memorable experiences.

#### **Honest**

Interacting with openness, respect, and authenticity.

#### **Audience-focused**

Connecting ideas and actions to those we serve.

#### **Inclusive**

Embracing different perspectives and reflecting the many cultures of New York.

#### **Innovative**

Performing with creativity, resourcefulness, and leadership.

## **Institutional Strategic Directions**

NYSHA will continue to improve and strengthen our programs, operations, and financial position; further develop our marketing effectiveness and fund raising capacity, improve and expand our museum and library collections facilities; and develop a consolidated Native American interpretive area. We must position ourselves to tackle these capital needs and educational initiatives by building a strong foundation, and developing the case for support.

For 2010-2012, we will focus on the following strategies:

**1. Maximize resources and develop a strong base of support**

*Capitalize on existing collections, staffing, technology, and facilities.*

- Move forward incrementally, developing programs and capacity without increases in staffing and proceeding with major capital priorities as funding is secured.
- Focus on building a strong foundation for the future by improving our fund raising efforts, exercising budgetary discipline, planning for capital needs, and creating the case for public and private support.
- Manage the institution in a way that allows the endowment to remain strong.
- Maximize the collaborations with The Farmers' Museum and the Cooperstown Graduate Program.

**2. Extend reach and increase impact of historical and educational programs**

*Provide more content and programming to a wider audience.*

Revitalize NYSHA as an educational membership organization that provides services and programs statewide. In three to five years, our success in this effort will be reflected in results such as:

- a broader geographic spread among the Association's membership
- programs and services offered in locations other than Cooperstown
- partnerships and collaborations with other museums, historical associations, educators, and cultural entities working together to make New York history and culture more accessible for the public
- a stronger History Day program, and enhanced programming for teachers and students
- a research library that is a model regional history center for students, educators, genealogists, academics, and the public
- delivery of content via alternative media, in new formats, and in partnership with others

**3. Impart excellence, relevance and good value**

*Enrich the quality of the experience and maximize what we offer to the public.*

- Continue to present appealing exhibitions and public programs that are a good fit with mission, marketable, and capable of providing steady admission growth at a good value.
- Make improvements in orientation and signage at Fenimore Art Museum to better serve the needs of the public.

- Seize opportunities to add more layers of interpretation where possible throughout the museum.
- Capitalize effectively on the Thaw Collection traveling exhibition and strengthen the presentation of Native American programming.
- Expand traveling exhibitions program to extend audience reach nation-wide.

#### **4. Strengthen infrastructure and improve organizational effectiveness**

*Build capacity for a more ambitious future.*

- Make selective infrastructure improvements and increase efficiency to function as a more nimble, effective operation.
- Address the need for salary and wage improvements.
- Establish goals, maintain staff focus, and strengthen delegation and accountability.
- Increase inter-departmental communications and collaborations.
- Improve and expand museum and library collections facilities; recover public program space in the library; and develop Native American interpretive area.

## Positioning Strategy

The positioning strategy for developing our audiences at NYSHA and FAM is to:

- Emphasize audience growth for niche markets, while continuing to service our current 55-65 year-old demographic.
- Identify strategies to attract families and younger audiences.
- Emphasize what makes NYSHA and Cooperstown unique and relevant.
- Emphasize the high quality of our exhibitions and programming (e.g. highlight the national stature of various parts of the collection)
- Support the marketing of Cooperstown as a cultural tourism destination
- Improve messaging and cross promotion with The Farmers' Museum and other major local attractions
- Heighten museum awareness and support within the Otsego County tourism community.
- Focus marketing primarily on the Albany-Binghamton-Utica region
- Develop programs responsive to constituents' needs

In positioning the Fenimore Art Museum we will emphasize that the museum is easily accessible to a broad audience. In the coming years, we also will:

- Maintain a leadership role in regional tourism promotions through continued participation at board level in the Cooperstown Area Chamber of Commerce, working on the Advisory Committee of the Otsego County Chamber and level one partnership with the County Tourism Program.
- Form partnerships and collaborations with others (such as lodging establishments, attractions and media) in support of our marketing.
- Leverage internet marketing and social media communications.
- Cultivate new, younger, and niche/special interest audiences such as enthusiasts of folk art, nineteenth-century American painting, Native American art, clothing and textiles.

## **NYSHA Strategic Planning Goals 2010-2012**

### **Programmatic Goals**

1. To impart excellence, consistently, in the audience experience and public programming at Fenimore Art Museum.
2. To extend our audience reach well beyond Cooperstown through institutional partnerships, traveling exhibitions, programs, digital technology, and publishing.
3. To develop the library into a model regional history center for staff, students, educators, genealogists, scholars, and the public.
4. To increase integration between the graduate program and the museum to strengthen each entity and enhance the learning experience of the students

### **Infrastructure and Capital Goals**

5. To meet the standards of stewardship in the field by improving the protection and preservation of the collections.
6. To expand accessibility and enhance the visitor experience by making carefully selected facilities improvements at our museum.
7. To increase visitor use and more effectively link Native American interpretive sites to the museum experience.
8. To enrich our museum collections with periodic additions of significant works, by gift or purchase from a strengthened acquisition fund.

### **Financial and Resources Development Goals**

9. To strengthen the fiscal health of NYSHA by enhancing the long-term purchasing power of the endowment and preserving the useful life of our physical assets in perpetuity.
10. To ensure that staff members and volunteers have the skills, resources and compensation necessary to move the organization forward.

## **2010 Program and Operating Priorities**

1. Continually strengthen the excellence and consistency of the visitor experience at Fenimore Art Museum.
2. Increase the reach and impact of our services and accessibility to our resources for offsite audiences.
3. Address stewardship issues for museum and library collection.
4. Strengthen NYSHA's long-term financial position.