



Museum of Ceramics to be handicap accessible

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EAST LIVERPOOL - The Museum of Ceramics is closer to acquiring handicap accessibility thanks to a \$10,000 donation from the Home Savings Charitable Foundation.

Sarah Webster Vodrey, museum director and president of the Museum of Ceramics Foundation, said handicap accessibility has been needed for quite some time, and that the financial donation from Home Savings has kicked the museum's "Access? All right!" Campaign into high gear.

The donation is the start of a fund set aside for the changes, which include installing an elevator, a wheelchair ramp, and an accessible restroom.

Vodrey said the museum has been exploring accessibility options for years but finally decided last year it was time to "just take a deep breath and move forward."

Vodrey has been an advocate for the needed changes during her entire employment, which began in 2004, she said. Plans were somewhat halted in 2008 after the museum lost most of its state funding, however.

She pointed out not being accessible has disappointed some visitors.

"Visitors have shown up and found us inaccessible compared to what they are used to. It's not only people in wheelchairs, it is people who are not comfortable going up and down stairs," she said.

The museum touts itself as a national attraction and is home to one of the nation's largest public displays of award-winning 19th century porcelain Lotus Ware. It is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

A press release issued by the museum July 23 indicated the museum has hosted visitors from 43 states and 40 nations.

Having accessibility will attract even more tourists to the area and impact economic development, Vodrey believes.

"Doing this will make the museum even more enticing and appealing to visitors from all over the nation. More tourists to the museum also means more tourist dollars being spent in our area. These changes can be nothing but beneficial for the Tri-State area as well," she said.

Vodrey explained the handicap accessibility campaign is called "Access? All right!" because accessibility has been a question for many people, "and now we will answer that question with this campaign," she said.

She hopes the community will rally behind the campaign, and is optimistic that it will.

Already, the museum has support from its members across the country.

"We are extremely blessed to have support of people all around the country. This is not just a local or regional museum," she said.

The museum is continuing to look into cost estimates for the changes and gather information.

Vodrey said some "rough estimates" have already been gathered, but final decisions have not been made.

She wished to express her gratitude to the Home Savings Charitable Foundation.

"We are extremely grateful for its generous donation...it is a wonderful door opening and just a fabulous beginning (to the campaign)," she said.

The museum is located at 400 East Fifth St. and can be reached at 1-800-600-7180. Hours of operation are Tuesday-Saturday, 9:30a.m.-3:30p.m. More information can also be found online at www.TheMuseumofCeramics.org.