

In 1936, the institution was renamed the Public Museum to better reflect its citizen ownership and operation and multidisciplinary, program-focused character. It had a professional staff and had seen a great increase in historical collections and programs as well as permanent installations. In 1938, the museum's board matched a WPA grant with a bequest and built an innovative, modern building that looked and acted more like a department store than a traditional museum. Inspired by the writings of Newark Museum director John Cotton Dana, the museum was populist in philosophy and presentation, marketing itself in 1940 when it opened as being "as convenient as your corner store, and friendly as your neighbor." By 1964, an incredible growth in service-oriented programming had necessitated building additions and the construction of the Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium along with the acquisition of the 143-acre Blandford Nature Center. The Voigt House, an unusually well-preserved, late-19th century residence, was acquired in 1974 with all of its original furnishings and archives. It is a house museum that balances the didactic historical displays developed in the main museum, especially those focused on furniture design, manufacturing and marketing.

In the late 1970s, even as it became the first museum in the Nation to be accredited by the American Association of Museums, 1971, it was evident that expansion was necessary again in order to maintain standards and better serve a growing audience. In 1982, an extraordinary public planning process was begun that resulted in the creation of a master plan for the museum's growth on a new site in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids. This culminated on the museums 140th anniversary in 1994 with the debt free opening of its 155,000-square-foot VanAndel Museum Center. In total, \$42 million was amassed from more than 25,000 public and private donors for its completion, with major support coming from the VanAndel family.

Community-based exhibition development, object conservation and program development were planned, fabricated and implemented simultaneously with the structure, resulting in multiple exhibitions exploring regional urban, social and industrial history, ethnology, regional art, and environmental education. The museum boasts numerous unique features, including a fully operational 1928 amusement park carousel and completely restored 1928 Mighty Wurlitzer theater organ.

With growth came new opportunities. Professional staff was expanded. Citizens formed a private foundation in support of museum programs that now manages assets of more than \$6 million. The city of Grand Rapids renewed its commitment to operations, while facilitating and encouraging the museum to become entrepreneurial. In response, annual institutional attendance climbed to nearly double the city's population simultaneous with the Public Museum's third award of AAM accreditation (1996). The museum staff manages a collection that now includes nearly 1 million objects in more than 350,000 record groups.

A new temporary exhibition program was initiated, which reached new heights of success with the organization of a proprietary exhibition of The Dead Sea Scrolls, organized in collaboration with the Israel Antiquities Authority. Between mid-February and June 1, 2003, the exhibition hosted a record 235,541 visitors,

having an economic impact on the region of \$9 million. It was the second-most-attended temporary antiquities exhibition worldwide in 2003.

As 2004 draws to a close, the museum is again poised to expand both with new programs and exhibitions as well as a new 140,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art Community Archives & Research Center providing excellent preservation of the permanent collection and expanded public access. The center houses not only museum collections, but also the archives of the city of Grand Rapids and the county of Kent, which collaborate in its planning and operation.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join me in congratulating the Public Museum of Grand Rapids on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. Its long history of service to the west Michigan community is laudable indeed and we look forward to its continued work in the future.

THE RECOGNITION OF MR. ROBERT BAUMANN

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in recognition of the endless accomplishments of Fire Fighter Robert Baumann who has served the Middletown Township Fire Department for 47 years. Fire Fighter Robert Baumann joined our community in 1957 as a member of the Belford Engine Fire Co. #1 and has continued to volunteer his time, intelligence, and experience to the public ever since. I am honored to acknowledge someone of Mr. Baumann's courage and strength.

During his tenure in our community, Mr. Baumann has been reliable and energetic in all his services. Mr. Baumann is a man who realizes the value of life and would give up his own to save another. Fire Fighter Robert Baumann is a true hero.

The Middletown Community is grateful to have had a man of such character with us for all these years. At the age of 75 Mr. Baumann continues to volunteer his time to the Fire Police Unit by responding to calls from all hours of the night and day, on holidays and weekends. Mr. Baumann has always been there with the unit at fires, assisting the police department when power lines are down, or during any other type of emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I feel privileged to recognize a man of Fire Fighter Robert Baumann's experience who has served our community with such dedication. Once again, I ask that you join me in congratulating Fire Fighter Robert Baumann on a life of public service, and wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

A TRIBUTE TO RAMONA WILLIAMS

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Ramona Williams for her dedication to strengthening early education for our children

and volunteer efforts to strengthen our community.

Ramona is a life-long resident of the Bedford Stuyvesant community of Brooklyn and does not plan to move. She attended Public School 297, which her two younger children attend now. She graduated from J.H.S 126 and Eli Whitney High School. She has three beautiful children: Jessica, 14, Vanessa, 9, and Jerome, 5, each of whom have a dream of greatness.

Following her high school graduation, Ramona began work as a substitute teacher at Round Table Child Care Center, eventually becoming a head teacher. She enjoys creating curriculum and cultural activities for her students and assisting parents in helping their children. After 16 years of empowering her students, her personal horizon expanded and she accepted a position as Parent Coordinator for Mark Hopkins Intermediate School 33. Ramona works closely with the principal, P.T.A. and as a liaison between the community and school.

As a single parent raising three children and working full time, Ramona finds it important to further her education and has enrolled at the College of New Rochelle pursuing a Bachelors of Social Work. She is a member of the Greater Free Gift Baptist Church Inc., where the pastor is the Rev. William Raymond Whitaker, Jr., Th.M, whom she thanks for his spiritual leadership and wisdom.

Ramona's concern for her church and community has led her to focus on fundraising and organizing outreach events for teenagers, which included finding them summer employment. She also sings in the Tabernacle Choir. Forever thankful in all areas of her life, personal and community, she is grateful for those who inspire her as she strives to make this a better place for others. Her unconditional love and thanks goes to her parents and siblings, and the sparkles in her eyes—Jessica, Vanessa, and Jerome ("Jay").

Mr. Speaker, Ramona Williams has been a leader in our community through her consistent efforts to improve the quality of education for all of our children. As such, she is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this truly remarkable person.

HONORING BARBARA COHEN

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Barbara Cohen on the occasion of her retirement from the Phoenixville Chamber of Commerce where she has served as the Executive Director since 1992.

Barbara Cohen has led an extraordinary and exciting life. Born in Philadelphia, she has always displayed energy and determination in all aspects of her life. Her childhood consisted of piano lessons, Hebrew School, Girl Scouts, National Honor Society, and international travel. Barbara was her class valedictorian at Northeast High School in 1959 and, from there, she went on to Temple University where she earned a BS in education and a minor in political science. After graduation, Barbara began teaching 4th grade while attending University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of International Relations.