

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Smithsonian experts come to west Michigan to bring US History to life**

(Muskegon MI) Teachers from Muskegon and Ottawa counties will learn new ways to bring U.S. History to life through the work of seven Smithsonian scholars, hired by the Muskegon and Ottawa Area Intermediate School Districts. The scholars will share their expertise on topics that shaped the development of the United States. The day-long workshops set for December 8, 9, and 10, 2008, have been customized for teachers of the fifth grade, middle school, and high school respectively. Local teachers will participate in hands-on learning activities, lectures, and performances in downtown Muskegon at the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Resource Center from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. each day.

The workshops are part of the national outreach programs coordinated by the Regional Programs Department of The Smithsonian Associates. They will be designing and implementing one three-day workshop per year for up to five years for teachers within the Muskegon and Ottawa Area ISDs, thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Each workshop will include renowned scholars and educators from within the Smithsonian Institution and Smithsonian-selected speakers.

Each of the full-day workshops has been customized by grade level to cover the state content standards. In the first workshop in Muskegon, Smithsonian scholars will address early America up to the Progressive Era. Topics will include Benjamin Franklin and the Constitution for elementary school teachers, Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction for middle school teachers, and Theodore Roosevelt and Progressivism for high school teachers. The Smithsonian scholars

will cover the development of American political democracy, economic experiences, and the changing character of American society and culture.

Seven presenters will participate in the December workshops. Museum educators, all from the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, include Rebecca Kasemeyer, Director of Education; Briana Zavadil White, School and Teacher Program Coordinator; and Geraldine Provost, Youth and Family Program Coordinator. Three historians are also part of the workshops: Dr. George Boudreau, Associate Professor of Humanities and History at Penn State Harrisburg, will present on Benjamin Franklin; Dr. Scott Stabler, Assistant Professor of History at Grand Valley State, will discuss Abraham Lincoln; and Dr. Robert Johnston, Associate Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, will present on Theodore Roosevelt. In addition, first-person interpreters Dick Cheatham and Mary Ann Jung will portray Thomas Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Amelia Earhart.

The Muskegon and Ottawa Area Intermediate School Districts formed the West Shore Consortium for Dynamic History Instruction in 2005 and became the recipients of the "Teaching American History" grant, made possible by the support of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). Nationwide, \$116 million was awarded via 122 grants last year. These grants were spread throughout school districts covering 40 states. USDOE's stated goal of the program is "to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of and appreciation for traditional U.S. history."

These "Teaching American History" programs are implemented in collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. The Smithsonian Associates Regional Programs Department presents educational and cultural events that highlight and complement the work of the Smithsonian Institution to audiences outside the Washington, DC area. For more information, call 202-633-8631 or visit [www.smithsonianassociates.org](http://www.smithsonianassociates.org).

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