

The Smithsonian of the Illinois Valley

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IVN Contributing Writer

The Kerbyville Museum and History Center is proud to announce their newest exhibit, “The Laundry Porch on the Naucke House.”

“A lot of the equipment had been donated years ago. We did some fundraising and got the Plexiglas put up here so we could set this up as an exhibit so people could see all of this [laundry] equipment. The equipment itself is an inspiration ... really unique to see!” described Kerbyville Museum Board President Linda Butler. “Many different styles and types of laundry equipment from washboards to the earliest forms of washing machines fill this now highly-accessible back porch area. It’s beyond your imagination what they had to go through. We gripe cause we have to wash a window, but they had to take the rugs out and beat them!”

“Josephine County owned the museum for a long time and then they gave it to the Women’s Club of the Illinois Valley and now it’s strictly run by a board of directors and we’re all volunteers. We don’t have any paid staff at all,” explained volunteer Suzie

Wood. “It’s just kind of a labor of love for all of us! It’s so important that we remember our history, especially for the young kids, because they have no idea; they have no ideal!”

Wood tells a story of one such child who came to tour the museum with his dad. A child “was looking at the old switch board and some of the old phones in the museum. He said, ‘what are those?’ His dad says, ‘It’s one of these,’ and held up his cellphone. “He had no concept of what the old phones were like.” Keeping the memory alive is why dedicated volunteers like Butler, Wood and Dennis Strayer do what they do.

When asked why people should be encouraged to come to the museum, Suzie Wood describes a unique visit and quote from a visitor: “She was getting ready to leave, when she turned to us and said, ‘I’d like to sit down and talk to you guys for a little bit.’ We said, ‘Oh sure!’ She then said to us, “I wanted to tell you this is the best museum I have ever been in.” She said, ‘Everything is neat, tidy, labeled, and you can wander through it and read what’s happening.’ Finally she added, ‘I’ve been to the Smithsonian, and this museum is

better!’”

Every year the museum staff “try to pick something that really needs to be done,” Butler explained. “You really need to come every year because we’re changing, and people donate new things; like we got a player piano last year. Many times exhibits are set up based on donations that have been given that they really want to stress and get people to come out and see. So we’d like to encourage people to come on a regular basis.”

Wood expounded, “We are constantly changing and upgrading our exhibits. The Wall of Honor was started this last year, then in the spring we got the Rock and Crystal Exhibit going, and now this [the Laundry Porch Exhibit]. We’ve worked hard at trying to make it feel welcoming. Dennis knows the history of the area inside and out! He is more than willing to take people through the museum and explain it all to them so they can really learn their history!”

Volunteers are needed to do a myriad jobs from mowing and weeding to just being there on an afternoon so Dennis can take an afternoon off. “Anyone that is willing is encouraged to come chip in and



Photo by Sharissa Smith, Illinois Valley News

Equipment available to view at The Laundry Porch.

help! There’s always something that can be done,” exclaimed Butler. “People have been very supportive, but aside from their money, we need their presence as a support. Volunteers are hard to come by these days!”

Admission prices are \$6 for an adult, \$10 for a family of four and veterans and senior citizens are \$4. The hours of operation are Tuesday – Saturday 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Sunday 12 – 4 p.m. The Museum opens April 1 for the year and is closed throughout the winter months.

Butler summed up the relevancy of the Kerbyville Museum when she stated, “It’s important that we all remember what our ancestors went through to make it easy for us.”

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(Photos courtesy of Nellie Barrera for the Illinois Valley News)





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