

Winchester Herald Chronicle, front page, Tuesday December 20, 2011

Educators Encourage Attendance At Exhibit

By Ian Skotte | Posted on Monday, December 19, 2011 at 4:18 pm

Smithsonian

By Deidre Ortiz

Earlier this month, Mark Ledbetter, a representative of the Cowan Railroad Museum, spoke to the Franklin County School Board regarding the Smithsonian Exhibit that will be on display in Cowan starting in Spring 2012.

"I don't know how many of you are aware that we'll have, coming up in March and April, a Smithsonian Exhibit in Cowan," Ledbetter said. "As far as I know, this is probably the first time a Smithsonian Exhibit has ever been set up in Franklin County."

According to Ledbetter, the exhibit that is being set up is not one as elaborate and well known as some of the Smithsonian's other displays, but the theme will certainly interest many individuals locally.

"I don't want to mislead you...this won't be a big King Tut exhibit, but it is a Smithsonian quality production and anything that has the Smithsonian name associated with it is going to be good," he said. "The theme of the exhibit to be set up at the Cowan Center for the Arts is 'The Way We Worked.'"

Ledbetter further mentioned that "The Way We Worked" was adapted from an original exhibition developed by the National Archives and explores how work became a central element in American culture by tracing the many changes that affected the workforce and work environments over the past 150 years.

Chosen amongst several other cities and towns, Ledbetter explained Cowan was lucky to receive the chance to host a Smithsonian exhibit.

"We are one of only six cities in nation that will have this exhibit. The Smithsonian accepts different towns, especially in rural areas, to host in order to let those who normally wouldn't be able to see a Smithsonian Exhibit have that opportunity. We also have opportunity here to impact the national archive."

Ledbetter then noted that there are lesson plans and materials for teachers to use in order to turn the information from the exhibit into a lesson for students.

"I think this is an excellent educational opportunity," he said. "The Cowan Railroad Museum, as an organization, would like to be able to give the Franklin County School System some information that could be distributed through the schools so that the families would take their children and teachers know that this is exhibit would be okay for taking their students on a field trip."

"We will make it open to the school system at any point and time that they want to see the exhibit. If teachers will let us know when they want to come, we will make it available. The facility can hold up to 300 people at one time."

All board members were in support of encouraging teachers and students to attend the exhibit, and Chairman Chris Guess said he thinks it'd be a great educational outing for, not only students, but also people of all ages.

"I don't see how you'd be able to look at this and not see that it'd be educational and beneficial for the students and our community," Guess said.

Director of Schools Dr. Rebecca Sharber mentioned it'd be an opportunity of a lifetime for some students who may never get a chance to actually see the actual Smithsonian Museum located in Washington, D.C.

"I think this is great and is probably the closest to the Smithsonian that many of our students will ever get," Sharber said. "I plan to have meetings with administrators and faculty and will bring it up then. I'm sure several teachers will want to take their students."

Guess agreed that the school system would do whatever it can to encourage as much participation as possible. The Smithsonian Exhibit "The Way We Worked" is scheduled to begin March 10 and run until April 21 at the Cowan Center for the Arts. For more information about the exhibit visit www.Smithsonian.CowanRailroadMuseum.org.