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Traveling Smithsonian exhibit to incorporate Utah history

October 3, 2014



WEST VALLEY CITY — The Smithsonian exhibit "Journey Stories" is making five stops in Utah, giving local museums the opportunity to incorporate their own personal history.

"Journey Stories" focuses on how transportation and migration shaped the U.S. and its citizens. It also shows how the mobile lifestyle might have looked to travelers along the way.

The exhibit is part of the Museum on Main Street, or MoMS. It is an initiative of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service to involve small-town audiences.

"(MoMS) was designed specifically to tour exhibitions throughout the United States in smaller, especially rural museums that don't have the infrastructure or the capacity to host large exhibitions that need to be curated at a high level," said Deena Pyle, spokeswoman for the Utah Humanities Council.

MoMS partners with groups such as the Utah Humanities Council to bring the traveling exhibits to small towns.

"The Smithsonian wants to get these out throughout the United States," Pyle said.

"Journey Stories," which has stopped in Moab and Vernal, will be at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center until Oct. 24.

Pyle said it is important to bring such exhibitions to Utah and the state's smaller museums.

"They're just so proud ... to be able to have that as an accompanying exhibition and story of their own creating alongside the Smithsonian exhibition," she said.

It also gives local museums hands-on experience in the curation of exhibits.

"(It elevates) their own expertise in museum work," Pyle said. "It gives them a lot of experience that they wouldn't otherwise probably have."

As "Journey Stories" moves from city to city, each museum has the opportunity to incorporate its own history, she said.

"They also create a local portion that is very specific to their own local communities and how historical stories that are related to the theme we take into the museum through this exhibition," Pyle said.

The Utah Cultural Celebration Center, 1355 W. 3100 South, will host the "Nation of Immigrants" exhibition, curated by Namon Bills.

It will feature the work of 25 local artists, with each piece reflecting or responding to the story of an immigrant.

Megan van Frank, history and museums program officer for the Utah Humanities Council, coordinated the exhibit. Van Frank said she hopes visitors will enjoy learning about American history with the unique viewpoint of mobility.

"The concept of mobility is broader than simply getting from point A to point B," she said. "It often speaks to life-changing decisions that affect generations and transform communities."

The museum is also "an unparalleled opportunity for Utahns to tell their own journey stories," van Frank said.

"Journey Stories" also will stop in Ephraim from Nov. 1 to Jan. 9 at the Granary Art Center, 86 N. Main. It's final stop will be Jan. 17 to March 18 at the Brigham City Museum of Art and History, 24 N. 300 West.