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September 26, 2016

Kathryn K. Matthew
Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20024-2135

Dear Ms. Matthew,

I am grateful for the opportunity to offer a few words in support of the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum's nomination for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This extraordinary institution's impact is evidence of the capacity for small, county history museums to play a vital role in not only preserving local cultural heritage, but also to inform current, and future, public policies, and cultural practices.

My first exposure to the museum was in 2000, when I was hired by a volunteer group of community leaders in Little Falls, to staff a comprehensive community initiative, aimed at initiating a variety of community development projects. Being from out of town, I visited the museum twice during my first week on the job. I felt it was important to get a sense of where the community had been, before imagining where it might go. I found that the museum staff had a similar orientation toward their own operation. They saw history as shedding light on the present, as well as the past. I realized that the museum was just as much in the community development business as I was!

That vision extends into all of the museum's programming. The impact of its many educational programs is felt far beyond its walls. It is learning that is meant to be *applied*. They are also leaders in leveraging the use of appropriate, emerging technologies to serve their mission. I have never seen another small county historical society as dedicated to making resources available digitally.

Perhaps most importantly, the museum's staff is constantly encouraging, and amplifying community voice through their efforts. Exhibits and programs do not simply commemorate people of influence and affluence. They find stories at the margins, and celebrate diversity, past and present. This is not just a 'come and view our collection' kind of museum. It exists as a place that encourages necessary conversations, both easy, and difficult. This is a place dedicated to constant learning. In that regard, it is truly a gift to the people of Morrison County.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



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