

Raven Hill

DISCOVERY CENTER

WHERE SCIENCE HISTORY AND ART CONNECT

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We are currently open noon to 4pm Saturdays and 2-4pm Sundays. Open holidays and other times by appointment.
Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Raven Hill supporters and friends

From: Cheri

Date: May 6, 2023

Re: **Youth Innovation in Rural America**

Last fall, Raven Hill Discovery Center was selected to participate as one of two organizations nationwide in the Smithsonian's **Youth Innovation in Rural America (YIRA)** initiative. An open house on Saturday, May 6 showcased students' projects. The program was a collaboration between the Smithsonian, local teachers, youth, Raven Hill, and Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District. Participants used the innovation design process in their local communities. Through this project, youth engaged in thoughtful conversations with their communities, drew from their own history and local culture, worked to identify opportunities, and proposed positive change within their communities. Nine participating teachers received in-person training from Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum staff last February.



Exciting and inspirational conversations happened multiple times between the communities' leaders, students, teachers, administrators and Smithsonian staff.



Smithsonian staff member, Kim Robledo-Diga interacts with Kylie Reeves, East Jordan 6th grade STEM pupil "one on one"! What an experience this was for participating students.

Using their design literacy training, teachers engaged students to use the Smithsonian design method to complete and document their projects. Support for **Youth Innovation in Rural America** was provided by internal Smithsonian Institution funds from the Youth Access Grants.

Saturday, May 6th, the community came together at Raven Hill to meet Smithsonian staff and see a display showcasing the students' innovative design solutions at an Open House. Over 100 community members turned out to honor the **YIRA** student participants and listen to them share their ideas.

An African proverb states that “It takes a village to raise a child”. That means an entire community of people must interact with children for those children to grow in a safe and healthy environment. Thank you to all who gave of their time and talents to make **Youth Innovation in Rural America** a successful happening in northern Michigan. First and most important are the student participants and their families, who eagerly took on a community challenge and followed it through to an innovative solution. Second, nine teachers from local schools within Char-Em Intermediate School District with support from their school administration were trained by Smithsonian staff and then guided their students through the innovation design process. Third, community experts, including Kecia Freed, Sherrel Bergman, Mary Faculak, Dave Emmel, Carlin Smith and John Clements helped within their areas of expertise, as requested by teachers and students. Michigan Humanities was represented by Ashley Ross, and helped with the logistics of the project. Finally, Sydney Thatcher from the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street program and Kim Robledo-Diga from the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum created the **YIRA** project and solicited the funding for it. Our community has now expanded to include them! Raven Hill Discovery Center extends the utmost gratitude to everyone involved in making the **Youth Innovation in Rural America** happen right here in northern Michigan.



Alanson's Agri-Science class provided floral arrangements for Saturday's YIRA Open House at Raven Hill, illustrating that innovative design can appear anywhere and anytime.

Following are comments from some of the participants involved in **YIRA**.

- Ashley Ross from Michigan Humanities stated that “seeing what the students have created by collaborating with each other, listening to community needs, and using design strategies was exciting. They have created thoughtful, practical, and useful solutions to improve the lives of others. I encourage us all to continue to uplift the voices of our youth and encourage their civic participation which in turn helps communities thrive.”
- Mary Faculak of the East Jordan Chamber acted as a Community Advisor. She responded, “I will say without a doubt that YIRA was a tremendous success on so many levels. So many people were involved, inspired and motivated by this opportunity. I see many of these projects being taken to the next level and I believe many will become a reality. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this most memorable experience. I too, was a student and it felt invigorating!”
- Kecia Freed, graphic designer, said, “Wow, what an incredible opportunity for all of us! I believe we just witnessed a new door opening for our students and for our community. Thank you to Raven Hill and Smithsonian!”
- **YIRA** evaluator, Sherrel Bergman, made these observations. “The high level of engagement in the learning process during this project speaks volumes about the creativity of our students today and the excellence of the teachers who taught them the Designing for Change process.”
- Sarah Roche, STEM teacher from East Jordan Schools shared this, “Watching Kim (from the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum) interact with the students was my favorite part! I got teary...as I was thanking the students for their dedication. It’s been an incredible experience. Being new here, I feel as though I have found my people. Thank you! Your passion is contagious. Looking around that room today was POWERFUL! We did it!!”

Reflection

What did you learn by doing this DESIGN project?

<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned to think about the users when you are designing something new!"</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-6th Grade Student</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned that I have more ideas than I ever knew!"</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-5th Grade Student</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned the difference between innovation and invention."</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-5th Grade Student</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned that I like DESIGN!"</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-4th Grade Student</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned that I can be creative and curious at the same time!"</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-6th Grade Student</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">"I learned that it's okay to take risks when exploring design."</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">-5th Grade Student</p>

"I learned that my students are incredible and are always up for any challenge! Innovation is exciting and our future is bright" - Elementary STEM Teacher

- East Jordan High School junior, Lila Kelly, shared her thoughts. “This project has been an incredible opportunity for me and my peers to step into the role of the problem solvers that we hope to be when we graduate. Not only has it connected our community, it has also allowed us to see ourselves as stakeholders in the future of our community and motivated us to take an active role in building the world around us. I think that students who worked on this project will have new skills to take part in innovation that betters the world we share, as we move into new phases of our lives.”



Not only were the challenges chosen by each student group unique, but the displays ran the gamut from poster to banner to accordion books.

The **YIRA** exhibit will remain open through October 7 and be on display along with the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition, **Spark! Places of Innovation** that Raven Hill will host from August 26 to October 7 of 2023.

Hope to see you here soon! Cheri



The end—of a great day!!



Guests enjoyed food provided by East Jordan's Yum & Yummer and students from Boyne City Hospitality class, who showed off their culinary arts skills. The two groups collaborated on a wide range of sweet and savory for the open house.

This community-based youth design challenge was provided by The Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street in collaboration with the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, Michigan Humanities and Raven Hill Discovery Center.

