

November 1, 2003

Kathleen Wissing, Executive Director
Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County, Inc.
307 Foundation Square
Bloomington, IN 47404

Dear Ms. Wissing:

The Mathers Museum of World Cultures on the Indiana University campus serves a wide range of audiences, supporting formal and informal education for visitors ranging from preschool age to retirement. Dedicated to preserving and promoting knowledge of the world's cultures, the Mathers Museum stands as a unique community resource. It is the only museum in the state with an explicit, global cross-cultural perspective on the study of material culture—that is, the things that people make and use and endow with meaning. Public programs such as the annual *Discovering Archaeology* fair consistently meet with enthusiastic attendance, while the Museum's long history of collaboration with professors, University departments, and community organizations such as the Lotus World Music and Arts Festival underscores the Museum's role as an active contributor to the quality of life in Bloomington.

For many years, school field trips to the Mathers Museum have provided teachers with tools to extend the effectiveness of lesson plans and give students another "way in" to understand class work and make it more meaningful. In a survey of Monroe County Community Schools Corporation (MCCSC) teachers conducted by the Mathers Museum in 1994, 95% of respondents reported that field trips are an important activity that can enhance their curricula by providing hands-on, real-life contact with genuine artifacts or experience. Research by education scholars such as Madeleine Gregg, Gaea Leinhardt and Jan Nespor confirms that museum visits introduce students to ideas and community resources they may not encounter otherwise, and acquaint children with museums as places of learning, beauty and fun that will be open to them throughout their lifetimes. In the current economic climate, however, many school systems have been forced to slash their budgets for field trips.

Classrooms in MCCSC are currently limited to one local and one out-of-town field trip per year. MCCSC educators such as Gracia Valliant and administrators such as David Frye have expressed their concerns about this problem to the Museum, and we turn now to the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County for assistance in creating a productive solution: the Mathers Museum Field Trip Program. Your dedication to enhancing life in Bloomington and Monroe County, and your consistent support for education and the arts, make our partnership a natural fit.

The Mathers Museum Field Trip Program aims to remove financial obstacles to school field trips to the Museum, and to give teachers access to a field trip program that best meets their needs. The program will center on a field trip fund, to which teachers can apply for payment of field trip costs. This model worked well in a pilot program administered by the Museum in 2001-2002 as part of an Institute for Museum and Library Services General Operating Support grant, and has been successful for the Indiana University Art Museum and the Virginia Museum of Natural History, among others. While any teacher within driving distance of the Museum will be welcome to apply for field trip support, the program will focus on MCCSC as the Museum's most immediate school constituency. The Bloomington community benefits from out-of-town field trips as well as local ones, since such trips promote multiple attractions in the area (out-of-town classes rarely travel so far only to see one museum) and heighten awareness of Bloomington as a desirable destination.

The fund will cover two years of field trips, beginning in July 2004. As one gauge of the program's success, the Museum aims to increase school field trips by 20% each year. Current staff at the Museum, including the Curator of Education and Indiana University Practicum students, will absorb this increase in field trips. Based on current statistics, we seek support for sixty field trips in the first year and seventy-five field trips in the second year. With an average field trip cost of \$75.00, the total needed for the field trip fund comes to \$10,125.00 (135 x 75).

The field trip itself does not stand alone, however. Museum field trip are designed to integrate strongly with state academic standards, and can be tailored to any topics or issues a teacher wishes to address. Teachers may also schedule pre- and post-tour classroom visits by Museum personnel, for presentations that reinforce the Museum experience. Three half-day teacher workshops, to be held in July 2004, January 2005 and July 2005, will acquaint teachers with the program and with the full range of Museum services for teachers (including the School Loan Collection of objects available for classroom use, and the Museum's *Teaching with Objects and Photographs* curriculum of lesson plans). Materials promoting the program will be distributed each August and January to MCCSC teachers and to those outside Monroe County who have brought their classes to the Museum in the past.

We seek an additional \$750.00 to support the three teacher workshops and promotional materials, bringing the total budget of the program to \$10,875.00.

The Field Trip Program will be designed and promoted in partnership with MCCSC teachers and administrators, whose input, awareness, and networking skills will ensure maximum effectiveness. Over the course of the program, brief questionnaires after each field trip and at the workshops will allow teachers to rate their experiences and provide additional comments. The Museum will use these questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of the program,

reviewing survey results each December, May and August and making any needed adjustments.

Supporting the vital work of educators is one of my top priorities as Curator of Education at the Mathers Museum. I hope that the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County will consider funding the Mathers Museum Field Trip Program.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the program. You are also welcome to contact Mathers Museum Director Geoffrey Conrad at 855-5340 (conrad@indiana.edu), or Assistant Director Judy Kirk at 855-1696 (jakirk@indiana.edu).

Sincerely yours,

Abbie Anderson, Curator of Education
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