

NEWS from SAUGATUCK/DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Information Contacts:

Jim Schmiechen
(269) 857-5605 / 414-9199

Wendy Colsen
(269) 857-2139

John Peters
(269) 857-2967

james.schmiechen@cmich.edu

wcolsen@saugatuckps.com

jppubrel@aol.com

FIRST EXHIBIT AT OLD SCHOOL HOUSE DISCOVERY CENTER TO FEATURE 6TH GRADERS' HISTORICAL VIEW OF SUMMER FUN

JAN. 23, 2009 -- Preparations for the first exhibit at the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society's Old School House Discovery Center began this month, as groups of sixth-graders from Saugatuck Middle School took turns visiting the Center to learn about exhibit creation and share thoughts about what has made their community a summertime vacation destination with nationwide attraction. The Discovery Center and its first exhibit are targeted to open in mid-May, exact date yet to be determined.

Given the theme "Summertime Fun", in a project conceived by Douglas Elementary 6th grade language arts teacher Wendy Colsen and Historical Society Museum chair Dr. James Schmiechen, retired Central Michigan University historian, the students will plan, design, research and produce displays that tell stories about how, when and why various kinds of summer recreation have come to characterize our area.

The Discovery Center exhibit will expand upon and add a different perspective to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Museum's major exhibit for 2009, "100 Years of Summertime and Fun", which will focus on art and artifacts documenting the history of leisure and summer life here.

"Working on a collaborative project with the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society is always such an exciting process for the kids," Colsen says. "They learn so many invaluable skills that apply to a real world setting, and the public presentation steps up the expectations for them. My favorite part is watching them get excited to do research each day and also the look of pride on their faces when they are showing their work to the public on opening night."

The assignment has gained extra relevance with the National Trust for Historic Preservation recently naming Saugatuck-Douglas one of it's "Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2009".

As the students discussed their exhibit's possibilities during the kick-off meeting, they also learned about new resources available to aid their research, including recent additions to the Historical Society web site, www.sdhistoricalociety.org, such as the "Image Blog", showing historical photos, and the "On-Line Research Center", a growing compilation of digitized Society archives.

The Historical Society has been refurbishing the Old School House since early in 2007, aimed at preserving and converting the building into a community resource where children and adults alike can explore the area's genealogy, history, culture, ecology and architecture through recreational activities,

educational programs, special events and access to the Society's growing archive of local artifacts, photos, records and newspapers.



Douglas Elementary School 6th graders (L to R) Cody Shriel, Jordan Overway and Reese Bohn listen as Historical Society's Dr. James Schmiechen explains resources available for exhibit development.



Douglas Elementary School 6th graders (L to R) Nick McDuff, Connor Rasmussen, Fya Redinger, Shanna Strowenjans, Jennifer Kelly and Michaela Sweigart discuss potential topics for exhibit displays with Historical Society's Dr. James Schmiechen.