

# 'History in Focus' is focus of RCHS in 2017

Adapted from Rock County Historical Society press release

"History in Focus: Sharing Stories, Supporting Community" isn't just an annual theme for the Rock County Historical Society (RCHS) in 2017, as was proven at its annual kick-

off event in January held at the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center.

Utilizing that theme, RCHS's goal is to capture hundreds of stories throughout the year from all corners of Rock County, working in partnership with local businesses, local government,

nonprofits and the general public as partners to capture the essence of who Rock County is.

"The theme for 2017 is about being in the community, capturing stories that inspire action and awareness about the Rock County community," explained RCHS Execu-

tive Director Mike Reuter. "Storytelling is a way to inspire action within and elicit pride in a community. A large part of our mission is to capture and tell those stories in different, creative ways."

More than 50 community leaders were at the history campus for the unveiling of RCHS's History in Focus theme, its calendar of events and various story portals from which people can share their stories and histories. Four main portals are available for the public to share stories: social media, online, on a "Story Wall," and via the RCHS's "Story Squad."

A new "Story Wall" was unveiled at the kick-off, where guests use RCHS's Polaroid cameras to snap a photo of themselves and share a story of their choice, or to share a memory of living in Rock County.

Community members can also share their stories digitally, either using social media or the RCHS website to capture a moment or to tell a larger story. The Society's Instagram account, by using the hashtag #HistoryInFocus and via its website at [www.rchs.us/HIF](http://www.rchs.us/HIF) are story portals where stories can be shared and viewed by the public. Submitted stories via the website will be shared on the RCHS's new weekly blog, "Focus In," which shines spotlights on particular individuals, businesses or



Who better to usher in the new "History in Focus" theme of the Rock County Historical Society than Abe Lincoln himself? (Photo courtesy of Rock County Historical Society)

causes in Rock County.

The most interactive way the RCHS will capture stories is via its Story Squad, an army of "story capturers" who will go out into the community.

"Our Story Squad will be out in the community, gathering stories on the street, at specific events. We may even pop in at a place of business unexpectedly," says Reuter. "The Story Squad is a fun way to engage the community, getting them to share their story and, in the process, helping the Society preserve and promote Rock County history."

"The Squad will be wearing specific apparel to identify themselves,

and their main tool to capture stories will be a Polaroid camera and mobile phone, giving people the option of sharing their story in a more retro or modern way."

Throughout 2017, RCHS will be asking unique questions related to monthly, weekly or daily celebrations, themes or anniversaries.

"History is not just about the fun, fluffy, positive side of a community," says Reuter. "It is our job to create awareness of what needs to improve in Rock County, its issues, and use the past present and future to have a dialogue that leads to fostering a better way of life for all that call Rock County home."

## Historical society

houses the archives of the Rock County Historical Society and the Rock County Genealogical Society. Over 12,000 photographs, thousands of primary sources, newspapers, probate records and maps are included in the archival collections, according to the RCHS website.

**Special events**  
RCHS hosts and sponsors many special events each year. This summer and early fall, events include:

•June 22: Murder & Mayhem: Tour downtown Janesville's bars and saloons while hearing gruesome stories from Rock County's past. This adults-only event runs from 6:30-9:30 p.m.

•July 20: Night @ The Museum. A special evening (7-8:30 p.m.) of family fun. Kids are encouraged to come dressed in pajamas.

•Aug 6: 60th Annual Tallman Arts Festival. The juried festival draws artists

Continued from page 58

from throughout the Midwest to display fine arts and studio crafts in a variety of media and styles. The annual celebration of art, culture and entertainment from Rock County and beyond will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will also be hands-on activities for kids and adults.

•Sept. 5: Trivia Night: Questions will focus on history, entertainment, art, literature, music and more (6:30-8:30 p.m.).

•Sept. 21: Art Inspires Music: Musicians perform "Pictures at an Exhibition" as you move through the Lincoln-Tallman House, seeing pictures that inspired the music (6:30-8:30 p.m.).

•Oct. 3: Black Cats (& Dogs): Meet animals in need of adoption from the Humane Society of Southern Wisconsin (6:30-8 p.m.).

**More information**  
For more on the society's programs, events, exhibits, facilities and offerings, visit [www.rchs.us](http://www.rchs.us), or call RCHS at 608-756-4509.



The stately Lincoln-Tallman House at 440 N. Jackson St. in Janesville. (File photo by Jason Francis)

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- 2017 3-Person Scramble..... Sunday, June 25, 2017
- 2017 Big Cup Tournament ..... Sunday, July 16, 2017
- 2017 2-Person Trifecta ..... Sunday, August 6, 2017
- 2017 Two Cup Tournament ..... Sunday, September 17, 2017
- 2017 Prairie Woods Scramble ..... Sunday, October 8, 2017

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