



## LHVA hopes 'reading bug' bites *Summer Heritage Passport opens area's treasures*

By Natalie Gelb Solfanelli

The Summer Heritage Passport Program is a collaborative project of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA), the Lackawanna County Library System, and the Northeast Intermediate Unit (NEIU) 19.

The Summer Heritage Passport Program, now in its fourth year, has grown and has been improved and enhanced each season.

The Passport program was initially conceived as a partnership between LHVA and the Albright Memorial Library, with the assistance of NEIU 19, to maximize the use of LHVA's Traveling Trunks.

The Traveling Trunks help children and families in Lackawanna County to understand their community, their heritage and their environment. They are extremely popular and well used from September until June, but too often they sit idly throughout the summer.

Since the library summer reading program has nearly 4,000 participants, it seemed to be the ideal vehicle to bring the fun and educational trunks to more students, including preschoolers and children who live outside the area but who use the local libraries.

The project brings the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority's Traveling Trunks to eight public libraries in the Lackawanna County Library System (LCLS). The items in each trunk tell about life 100 years ago in the Lackawanna Valley.

Items include such artifacts as a railroad engineer hat and a conductor hat, a railway lantern, a railroad spike, coal and lace, clothing, maps, books and more.

The partners recognize that each child learns differently, therefore, different artists perform each week at each participating library. The presentations range from story-telling, to dance, poetry, artwork and music as a means to interpret local heritage.

This invitation to creativity engages the children in new ways, allowing them to learn outside of the classroom, to be introduced to various forms of expression, and to visit authentic historic and cultural sites that represent their personal heritage.

This year's theme for the Summer Heritage Passport Program is "Catch the Reading Bug." The theme is part of a statewide initiative that is chosen each year to be promoted in libraries across Pennsylvania. The theme explores the children's connections to the environment and, particularly in our region, the Lackawanna River, to help them develop a sense of place.

(Perhaps you visited the Electric City Trolley Museum's Festival of Trees this past holiday season where LHVA's

tree was named "Catch the Reading Bug along the Lackawanna River!") Any member of the Reading Club can attend each weekly session at any of the library venues. At the end of the eight weeks, he or she receives a passport for free admission to the following local cultural and heritage sites: Scranton Cultural Center, Everhart Museum, Steamtown National Historic Site, Electric City Trolley Station and Museum, Lackawanna Historical Society, Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour and the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museums. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Delighted parents have been able to take five or six children to Steamtown, the Trolley Museum or the Coal Mine Tour, for example, paying only the cost of one adult ticket. Many of these families would not otherwise have the opportunity to take their children to enjoy these fun and educational sites.

The project opens the doors of these significant cultural and heritage treasures, creating a network of residents who are able to visit, learn and appreciate the history of the region.

Needless to say, none of this would be possible without the cooperation of our generous historical and cultural partners who waive admission fees for the children.

The Summer Heritage Passport Program, free to members of the Lackawanna County Library System, is open to children from pre-school through grade 6.

To kick off the summer program, "Sunday in the Park," a family even, is held each June at the Everhart Museum in Nay Aug Park. Last year, more than 1,200 people participated in the Sunday in the Park event.

The Summer Heritage Passport Program has made it affordable for local children and their families to visit historic and cultural sites for the first time.

It has exposed hundreds of children and adults to the region's rich resources, and has heightened their appreciation of local history, ethnic traditions, environmental stewardship and artistic expression. It has been a powerful tool in developing a pride of place and civic engagement.

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