

The Maryland Humanities Council is pleased to present ***Hometown Teams: Galesville Community Center*** (Museum on Main Street Exhibit and Youth Access Grant) for consideration for the 2015 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize.



***“Sport related activity, and especially baseball have been described by scholars as a ‘Third Place,’ where community building activities occur outside the home or work environments. In the African-American community of Galesville, this tradition is alive [and] well.” –Galesville Community Center***



***Galesville Hot Sox in the Mid-1970s***

### **Project Genesis**

In the fall of 2013, Maryland Humanities Council (MHC) launched its campaign to host the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service “Museum on Main Street” exhibit *Hometown Teams*, to tour throughout the state of Maryland from February to November 2015. MHC initiated the application process for five sites to host *Hometown Teams* and participate in capacity building activities throughout 2014, working in fields varying from exhibition design to docent training to marketing. The Galesville Community Center (GCC) in Anne Arundel County applied to the Council to host the exhibit and was selected based on its goal to galvanize the community in examining, preserving, and celebrating the area’s historic resources, which include the 1870s Wilson House, Hot Sox Ballfield at Wilson Park, and the Galesville Community Center itself, a renovated Rosenwald School building.

Approximately 25 years ago, Anne Arundel County began to realize the importance of and need for the preservation of significant and historic places across the county, including Galesville. Various preservation organizations, in particular, realized that without restoration and preservation, some of those vital community resources would start to disappear. Since that time, the Galesville Community Center has emerged as a strong presence in community-organizing efforts, eliciting support from funders, local organizations, project partners, and community members of all origins.

The Galesville Community Center saw hosting *Hometown Teams* as the ideal opportunity to further its goal to discover and preserve Galesville’s unique history. The GCC entered into partnership with the Anne Arundel County Cultural Resources Division of the Office of Planning and Zoning, and the organizations launched the community-driven interpretive project “Field of Dreams: Home Grown History,” to begin efforts to gather and share the stories of the people associated with those significant

places of the Four Rivers heritage area, which includes Annapolis, London Town, and South County, Maryland.

In the fall of 2014, Carol Harsh, Director of Museum on Main Street, approached state humanities councils hosting Museum on Main Street (MoMS) exhibitions about partnering to apply for a Youth Access Implementation Grant, a project funded by The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education and Access as an internal Smithsonian program designed to encourage and enhance youth outreach opportunities related to Smithsonian projects. Seizing this opportunity as a way to engage new youth audiences, augment MoMS and other Council programming by capturing and sharing stories that were often overlooked, and further cross-cultural relationships, MHC partnered with the Galesville Community Center to submit an application. In the winter of 2014/15, we were selected by MoMS to participate, solidifying this opportunity for MHC to facilitate exploration of the history of the Galesville community while deepening relationships among disparate segments of the population.

### **What We Envisioned: Project Goals**

The Galesville Community Center has provided an exemplary model of the reasons that the Maryland Humanities Council sponsors the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street program in the state of Maryland. MHC's goals for *Hometown Teams* are fourfold:

1. Strengthen communities through partnerships among local organizations;
2. Support and strengthen small cultural organizations;
3. Engage non-traditional audiences, especially youth and men;
4. Provide a fun hook to the humanities.

*Hometown Teams* is the fourth Museum on Main Street exhibit tour that Maryland Humanities Council has sponsored in the state. This year's Youth Access Grant with Galesville is the second *Stories from Main Street* project that MHC has participated in, after partaking in the pilot grant in 2013 in conjunction with the Maryland tour of *Journey Stories*.

In bringing *Hometown Teams* to Galesville and participating in the *Stories from Main Street* Youth Access Grant, the Galesville Community Center writes that it has striven to "raise awareness for Galesville's rich heritage and the strong African-American history of the community visible today in the structures and traditions that survive." *Hometown Teams*, "[fostered] collaborative programming to further promote and educate the public about the compelling and in situ heritage of Galesville. The exhibit provided a focal point and future project for the community to continue to work together." The Galesville Community Center also sought to involve schools and students in discovering and preserving area history.

The Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street staff emphasizes the role of community-based research for youth participating in *Stories from Main Street* and resulting Digital Interpretive Projects to achieve the Institution's goals. "Our goal is to teach our youth participants the skills and perspectives used by public historians. Research/inquiry, interpersonal communication and the ability to synthesize information into an engaging digital presentation are some of the skills and experiences we are expecting our students to gain during the course of this project. These skills are concrete and ones that they can take with them into higher education and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The overarching goal is to take the students from learning the facts, to interpreting those facts in a way that shows critical thinking, thoughtful choices, and a connection between their personal interests/story and the larger stories and themes being expressed in their project."

### **How It Worked: Project Description**

In the fall of 2013 when Galesville Community Center (GCC) applied to host the Smithsonian Institute's Traveling Exhibition *Hometown Teams: How Sports Shaped America*, the GCC did not have a website, a Facebook page, a computer, a scanner, a copier, Wi-Fi, or any equipment to conduct oral histories, edit them, or present the final products. The idea of producing three public programs and a companion exhibit was daunting to the project coordinators. However, the GCC emphasized how this project could work to bring people together from all walks of life, and how a place like the community center building would serve as a gathering point to facilitate community organizing and dialogue.

Over the past two years, the Galesville Community Center's work on *Hometown Teams*-related programming and the *Stories from Main Street* Youth Access Grant have energized and united the community in myriad ways. To begin the project of recording the history and stories of the area, the GCC conducted "Community Days" where community members were invited to bring in photographs and objects related to Galesville history, and specifically, the local Negro League Hot Sox baseball team. Gertrude Makell, President of the Galesville Community Center, describes how this project has revitalized the memories of many of the former Hot Sox players. The project recognized the historical significance of the team and its players for the very first time.

To get the community involved and take ownership of this project, the Galesville Community Center Exhibition Team worked directly with the local schools and had local STEM students conduct primary research, interpretation, design and fabrication of exhibits, and presentation of the information to the public. Students at South River High School collected oral histories and produced documentaries incorporating these histories, thus connecting them with the older, racially diverse groups of people who make up a vibrant segment of the Galesville community. Up until the launch of *Hometown Teams* and the "Field of Dreams" project, there was very little about the Hot Sox and the Galesville community on written record, so one of the first and main sources of information about the Hot Sox was the surviving players and fans. Collecting oral histories was thus paramount to preserving these stories. The GCC contracted with noted oral historian Lyndra Pratt Marshall to facilitate the project and provide training for teachers and students.



*Dedication of the walking trail between Galesville Community Center and Hot Sox Field at Wilson Park on Maryland Day 2015. Photo Credit Valeu Photography.*

As part of their STEM Community Challenge, six students from South River High School in Edgewater, Maryland conducted interviews with Galesville residents. These interviews were facilitated by members of Anne Arundel County's Cultural Resources Division, the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, and Gertrude Makell of the Galesville Community Center. The purpose of the interviews was twofold: first, to provide the students with what they'd need to put together exhibit panels highlighting the history of Galesville, and second, to instill in

them a sense of what makes small towns matter and how they fit into an increasingly modernized world (the objective of their STEM Community challenge). The exhibit panels, which were an integral part of the local exhibit that accompanied the Smithsonian *Hometown Teams* exhibit in Galesville, featured information, photos, and graphical themes developed by the students with guidance from Brett Arnold, an archaeologist and historic research specialist, and Heather Ersts, a public relations liaison and museum exhibit designer.

Each video was edited by the South River High School students from raw footage totaling between 2 and 4 hours, and highlights a certain part of Galesville's unique history. In this town of fewer than 700 people, many of the memories were intertwined and enthusiastic residents showed up multiple times to talk about their experiences with several of the students' topics. In the first video, residents share their experiences with the Rosenwald School, which still stands on West Benning Road (one of the town's two cross streets) and served as the segregated school for Galesville's African American children from 1929 to 1956. The second video chronicles the residents' relationship with the water, which surrounds the town on three sides and provided both jobs, in the form of fishing and processing shellfish, and entertainment, in the form of pleasure boating, in equal measure. The third video records memories of the Galesville Hot Sox, a local baseball team and community fixture that provided a reason for the community to gather and have fun together most Sundays between 1915 and 1977. Together, these videos offer a brief glimpse of growing up in Galesville and how Galesville's past is ever in the forefront of residents' engagement with their community.

The Galesville Community Center has hosted two exhibition baseball games featuring the Hot Sox; a celebration Luncheon at which players were recognized and the progress of the "Field of Dreams" project was presented; activities for Maryland Day last March 2015; and a teacher training workshop on methods for utilizing oral history techniques in Social Studies classes. As a part of the overall "Field of Dreams" preservation project, a trail between the GCC and Hot Sox field at Wilson Park was cleared and mulched, and unveiled during Maryland Day festivities.

Furthermore, efforts to create and celebrate a complete history of Galesville have spurred economic development by creating a destination and enhancing the opportunity for "heritage tourists" to visit the locale. The GCC contracted with Joan Gaither, a documentary story quilter, to produce the Hot Sox Documentary Quilt in 2014, a visual representation of the Hot Sox team's journey. Caitlin Merritt, Architectural Historian and Preservation Planner with Anne Arundel County, joined the project team and was instrumental in producing the "Field Guide to Galesville," unveiled during the Opening Day Celebration of *Hometown Teams*.



Former Hot Sox players in front of the Hot Sox Documentary Story Quilt. Photo Credit Valeu Photography.

### **Community Partnerships**

The Galesville Project Team has employed partnerships with numerous community organizations over the two-year course of this project. In addition to the work with students at South River High School and Central Middle School, the Galesville Community Center and Anne Arundel County Cultural Resources Division of the Office of Planning and Zoning have been active in providing resources to Social Studies teachers with Anne Arundel County Public Schools. The Galesville Heritage Center and Four Rivers Heritage Area organizations have worked with the GCC to provide information and artifacts about the history of the town and historic sites, including the Wilson House. Grantmaking and promotional organizations including Preservation Maryland, Maryland Historical Trust, Anne Arundel County Trust for Preservation, Inc., The Lost Towns Project, Inc., Maryland Office of Tourism, Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, Arundel Community Development Services, and Anne Arundel County's local-level government have variously provided funding, publicity, or programming support for the "Field of Dreams" efforts.

Valeu Photography has documented events and meetings from the start of the project, and local businesses like Marty's Bag Works, Canvas Connections, Renno's Market in Shady Side, MD, West River Artists, and Wimsey Cove Framing and Art have provided in-kind support. Galesville's Ebenezer A.M.E. Church has been an active partner in promoting events to the wider African-American community, and has offered food and drinks at events. Negro League Legends Hall of Fame founder Dwayne Renal Sims has participated in various events, offering his perspective on the importance of local sports teams and the history of Negro League teams in Maryland.



*Visitors and former Hot Sox players at the Hometown Teams exhibition at the Galesville Community Center.  
Photo Credit Valeu Photography.*

### **Impacts**

Today, the Galesville Community Center has a professionally designed website ([www.historicgalesville.org](http://www.historicgalesville.org)), a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/GalesvilleCommunityCenter](https://www.facebook.com/GalesvilleCommunityCenter)), and even Wi-Fi access throughout the building. A long-term benefit of the acquisition of technical equipment through the Youth Access Grant is that the Galesville Community Center will be able to better serve the region by hosting students and student organizations, community meetings, teacher workshops, and public programs. It will also be able to position itself as a more desirable rental facility, thus ensuring a more financially secure organization in the future.

Technology purchases have also provided resources for continuing interaction with schools. The GCC now possesses the capacity to conduct and collect oral histories, edit them, and share the finished products. This will facilitate projects in other areas even beyond the discovery of local sports history. There are already plans for Central Middle School to continue with oral history projects in the next school year, 2015-16, working with one of GCC's close partners, Lost Town Project, Inc. Over 500 local students could benefit from the new GCC equipment in the 2015-16 School Year alone.



Also of significance are the intangible products this project has created for the Galesville community and Anne Arundel County students: working to discover, record, and interpret the community's history will preserve it for future generations; experiencing "real-world" work and creating real products; generating and recording knowledge of local history; and fostering intergenerational and interracial relationships among students, community members, heritage professionals, and even families as well as pride in one's community and place.



*South River High School STEM students interviewing a former Hot Sox player.  
Photo credit Valeu Photography, courtesy Galesville Community Center.*

Larry Foote is one of the 45 players who contributed his memories and Hot Sox memorabilia to developing the exhibit. "This has meant so much to me to be able to reminisce about a great part of our community and a bigger part of my life," said Foote, a retired [Anne Arundel] county employee, in Annapolis's *Capital Gazette*. "It was a big celebration every weekend when the Hot Sox played, just the fellowship and good times we had were incredible." Mr. Foote experienced health issues prior to his participation in the Hot Sox documentary projects, and has described how the opportunity to tell his story has revitalized his health and given him reason to re-engage with his community.

Since the news of the award of *Hometown Teams* to GCC came in late 2013, the Center has applied for and received grants totaling \$35,000, with all funds received matched by Anne Arundel County Schools for a total of over \$80,000 invested in the "Field of Dreams" project. These investments demonstrate the belief in the need for this project in the community and how it has served as a model project for Anne Arundel County schools. The Hot Sox baseball team has received citations from the Maryland General Assembly and County Council of Anne Arundel County for the team's, "contributions to America's baseball story and South County history," and "contribution to Galesville, in not only providing an outlet for African-American baseball players, but for being an anchor in the community; for giving people a reason to gather, socialize and cheer; the Anne Arundel County Council commends your historical contribution to your community as Galesville's hometown team," respectively.

### **Financial Structure**

Maryland Humanities Council sponsors and assumes overhead costs for *Hometown Teams* as the organization serving as the state-level coordinator for Museum on Main Street. MHC receives a reduction in cost from the Smithsonian Institution for participating in the Capacity Building Training program with local host sites, including the Galesville Community Center. In turn, MHC offers the host sites several ongoing opportunities for organizational development, including half-day personal consultations with consultants in fields varying from exhibition development, docent training, marketing and social media, museum programming, and school programming; non-competitive small grants for programming and/or exhibit design; planning and installation workshops; and membership with the Small Museum Association and Maryland Museum Association.

The Youth Access Grant is facilitated by The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education and Access and granted through the Museum on Main Street office. The Maryland Humanities Council received \$6,200 to grant to the Galesville Community Center to fund the purchase of technology and work with project scholar Lyndra Marshall.

In addition to the capacity building assistance that the Galesville Community Center received at no cost to the organization, the GCC has sought and received grants and in-kind support for “Field of Dreams” related projects totaling more than \$80,000. Maryland Heritage Areas Program, governed by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and administered by the Maryland Historical Trust, awarded a significant grant for programming support. Locally, the organization has contributed its own funds to the project as well, including promotional costs, local overhead costs, some technology fees, and volunteer hours.

### **Summation**

One of Maryland Humanities Council’s major goals for *Hometown Teams* was to strengthen communities through local partnerships. There can be no doubt that this goal was achieved in Galesville. The oral histories, the Hot Sox Documentary Quilt, the Field Guide to Galesville, and most importantly the relationships that were built between local students and hometown heroes like the remaining Galesville Hot Sox players: these byproducts of the *Hometown Teams* project will live on in Galesville long after the *Hometown Teams* exhibit moves to the next stop on its tour. The Galesville Community Center’s work to explore, preserve, and share local history has energized its public and solidified its place as a community driver.

### **Support Materials**

MoMS *Stories From Main Street* blog, featuring the Galesville Youth Access Grant Projects:

<http://www.blog.museumonmainstreet.org/stories/2015/07/hometown-heroes-galesville-maryland-youth-access-grant-projects.html>

*Capital Gazette* article published 07/23/2015:

[http://www.capitalgazette.com/sports/other\\_sports/ph-ac-cs-galesville-exhibit-jackson-72515-20150723-column.html](http://www.capitalgazette.com/sports/other_sports/ph-ac-cs-galesville-exhibit-jackson-72515-20150723-column.html)

### **Program Websites**

<http://mdhc.org/programs/hometown-teams/galesville/>

<http://www.historicgalesville.org>