



## **Executive Director Organization and Position Profile**

### **Organization**

#### **History and Location**

Founded in 1863 as the Ithaca Historical and Scientific Society, The History Center in Tompkins County is an award winning, community oriented cultural organization. It was reorganized in 1935 as the DeWitt Historical Society and received its absolute charter from the New York State Education Department in 1952. Growth and expansion continued in the 1960s; and in 1973, the historical society hired its first professionally trained director. In the spring of 1993, the organization moved to its current location on East State Street.

Located in the heart of the Finger Lakes in Ithaca, New York, The History Center's downtown location places it in the middle of this unique and diverse county, home to Ithaca College, Cornell University, a striking landscape of rivers, gorges and state parks, and a quality of life that is nationally recognized. Among Ithaca's many notable cultural and educational features are a fine public school system and The Discovery Trail Partnership, a group of eight cultural organizations, including The History Center, which promotes awareness and understanding of the connections among art, history, literature, science, and the natural world.

During the past five years, The History Center's robust capacity building initiative has resulted in a forward-looking center for learning about history that is a respected and cherished presence in the rich cultural landscape of Tompkins County and Upstate New York. The History Center is committed to innovative programming, financial sustainability, and working in partnership with our community. The organization's name change – from the DeWitt Historical Society to The History Center in Tompkins County – reflects these institutional priorities.

An independent 501(c)(3) organization, The History Center has an annual operating budget of approximately \$370,000. A dedicated team of eight administrative and program staff cover all areas of operation in a congenial and professional environment.

#### **Mission and Programs**

The mission of The History Center is to “help people use the tools of history to understand the past, gain perspective on the present, and play an informed role in shaping the future.” In order to accomplish this mission we seek out the diverse needs and interests of our community; design learning experiences and provide services that respond to those needs and interests; create opportunities for people to learn about themselves and their place in the world; preserve and encourage access to The History Center's collections of over 100,000 photographs, 15,000 artifacts, and 900 linear feet of archival material all documenting Tompkins County's rich history; and provide a welcoming environment for public discussions that bring historical perspective to current issues. This commitment of The History Center as a resource for learning provides the foundation for dynamic programs such as:

The Student Historian Initiative – Recognized nationally as a model program for museums serving secondary school students, The Student Historian Initiative offers high school students hands-on access to our historic collections, instruction in investigative research, and the opportunity to write and publish original newspaper articles in the *Ithaca Journal*.

The History Center Research Library and Archives – Each year hundreds of researchers—scholars, high school and college students, genealogists, history enthusiasts, and others—make use of original documents, maps, newspapers, diaries, scrapbooks and photographs.

Environmental History Partnership with Ithaca College – Recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as a model program for college students, this collaboration offers an in depth, hands-on research opportunity using The History Center’s primary resource materials on local environmental history. Ithaca College students research and report on key environmental issues including land use, water resources, and agricultural and industrial development.

Eight Square Schoolhouse Living History Program – The Eight Square Schoolhouse, the last remaining one-room octagonal brick schoolhouse in New York State, is visited by hundreds of school children each year who spend a day experiencing the life of an elementary school student in 1892. There is a plan and substantial funding to restore the building to ensure that this unique learning opportunity remains available to future generations.

Public Forums – The History Center has become an impartial community gathering place to explore and bring historical perspective to important issues of the day. For example, we sponsored a series of forums on Hurricane Katrina shortly after the event, hosted a community forum on the proposed renaming of State Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, provided a panel discussion on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Willard Straight takeover at Cornell University, and are currently holding a series of programs about recent immigration to the county.

Exhibits and Programming – There is a plan through 2013 that integrates exhibits and associated programming of presentations, History Cafés, Family Days, and Living History activities. This plan also suggests many collaborations with other community organizations and events.

Living History Program – A troupe of actors and guides provide accurate and entertaining information about historical, colorful characters from the area through walking tours and participation in other festivals and Center programs.

Digitization – The History Center has begun to digitize parts of its collections, e.g. glass plate negatives and paintings, in an effort to expand the audiences for our extraordinary collections. [www.ToolsofHistory.org](http://www.ToolsofHistory.org) is enhancing our online presence to improve delivery of our programs and services.

### **Governance and Planning**

The History Center in Tompkins County is governed by a dynamic, harmonious, and effective Board of Trustees, currently thirteen in number, which includes attorneys, educators, business and community leaders, and representatives of Cornell University, Ithaca College, and area nonprofits.

The Board is fully engaged in the key strategic and developmental issues facing the organization, provides generous financial support, and helps initiate and sustain strong community partnerships.

### **Position Description**

The Board of Trustees of The History Center in Tompkins County seeks a dynamic Executive Director who will work with the Board and staff to carry out the mission in a manner respectful of the past and adventurous about the future. She/He will work within a broad network of community partners from Ithaca College, Cornell University, regional cultural institutions, foundations, and local governments. In order to succeed in this position, the Executive Director must be a leader committed to partnership and community, proficient in fundraising, and able to articulate the vision of The History Center to its diverse array of stakeholders.

### **Leadership Opportunities**

The History Center's new Executive Director will work with the community, Board, and staff to take on the following leadership challenges:

- Develop The History Center's unique potential to serve our community by seeking out and responding to its diverse needs and interests.
- Plan, implement and evaluate current programming and services based on stakeholder needs and The History Center's capabilities.
- Provide thoughtful leadership, perspective, and policy guidance on the role of collections and exhibitions in The History Center's programming.
- Continue to shape and implement an effective strategy to achieve financial sustainability, including development of partnerships, earned revenue opportunities, foundation and government support, and robust individual, corporate, and planned giving.
- With the Board of Trustees, staff, and stakeholders, develop effective long range planning for The History Center.

### **Ongoing Responsibilities**

- Program, Product and Service Delivery – Oversee the design, marketing, promotion, delivery and quality of programs, products and services to assure that they are consistent with the mission and effective in their outcomes.
- Community and Public Relations – Engage our diverse community to promote high visibility for The History Center and present a consistent, strong, positive image to all stakeholders.
- Fundraising and Resource Development – Guide and participate in the building and nurturing of relationships with donors and potential donors, including identifying resource requirements, researching funding sources, soliciting donors, and developing grant proposals.
- Budget Planning and Financial Management – Recommend the annual budget for Board approval and prudently manage the organization's resources within the budget guidelines and applicable laws and regulations.
- Human Resource Management – Identify, hire, retain, and motivate qualified staff and manage the human resources of the organization according to policies and procedures that conform to current laws and regulations.

- Administration and Board Support – Manage and oversee the organization including planning, the facility, and technologies. Work with the Board of Trustees to ensure the implementation of the mission.

### **Candidate Profile**

- Effective management experience demonstrated by a track-record of successful leadership that shows growth and development of a cultural or heritage organization.
- Success in motivating, directing, empowering, and retaining professional staff.
- Flexible management style: delegates responsibility to staff when appropriate, allows for independence and creativity, and encourages teamwork and interchange of ideas.
- Experience in educational, cultural, museum heritage, and/or humanities environments.
- Success in building relationships with diverse constituencies and community organizations.
- Adept with current office technologies and committed to the technological competence and potential of the organization.
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills.
- Minimum of a Bachelor's level degree required, with a Master's in a relevant field preferred.

### **Personal Characteristics**

- Commitment to the mission of The History Center.
- Ability to think creatively and analytically and to act decisively.
- Visionary, entrepreneurial, and goal-oriented with a clear sense of direction.
- A dynamic leader with the ability to relate and appeal to diverse groups of people.
- Energetic and flexible, willingness to take on many tasks.

### **Compensation**

Competitive salary, commensurate with experience and qualifications, and benefits.

### **How to apply**

The History Center in Tompkins County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. People of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Please send cover letter and résumé (e-mail submission preferred) to:

Executive Director Search Committee  
The History Center in Tompkins County  
401 East State Street, Suite 100  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607) 273-8284  
[director@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:director@thehistorycenter.net)  
[www.TheHistoryCenter.net](http://www.TheHistoryCenter.net)

Application materials should be submitted in confidence no later than May 21, 2010  
Application reviews will begin at that time.