Humanities Washington is dedicated to improving civic life in Washington State through programs that nurture creativity, promote dialogue, and spark critical thinking. Our commitment to public humanities programs stems from the belief that the humanities have the capacity to transform the lives of all Washingtonians. The humanities enrich, excite, open and inform our minds with ideas and new understandings. We are pleased to share with you a brief report of our activities for the past year.

In May, we presented a discussion at Town Hall, Seattle, with local author Jack Hamann. His debut book On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of WWII tells the fascinating and true story behind the lynching of an Italian prisoner-of-war at Fort Lawton in Seattle in 1944. Hamann was interviewed by nationally-celebrated librarian and NPR book reviewer Nancy Pearl.

The Inquiring Mind speakers’ bureau continues to reach rural audiences with high quality humanities programs to which they would otherwise not have access. We sponsored 98 IM programs in 2005, serving an estimated audience of 4,600 at libraries, community centers, schools and other cultural organizations.

The 7th annual Bedtime Stories gala, held at The Ruins in Seattle, was again an enchanting evening spent in celebration of story. Thanks to our sponsors and guests, we raised nearly $40,000 to support our programs. Authors Deb Caletti, David Guterson and Charles Johnson shared their original stories on the theme Moonstruck, while Andrea Alhadef and Gillian Durkee performed an original musical composition and Roger Fernandes related creation stories of the Salish tribes.

We closed our year with the presentation of the annual Humanities Washington Award to Ruth Kirk for her contributions over fifty years to the Northwest’s conservation, naturalist and academic communities. Pulitzer-Prize winning author and journalist William Dietrich gave the keynote address, “Attention Must Be Paid: Witnessing Our Changing Environment.”

After a decade at the helm, President/CEO Margaret Ann Bollmeier left to be near family in Wisconsin and to pursue non-profit consulting work. We are currently conducting an executive search, which will conclude with the hiring of a permanent President/CEO in spring 2006.

In 2005, we gave 21 Project Grants for a total of $85,500. These grants supported programs such as major exhibit Rivers, Edens, Emperors: Lewis & Clark and the Revealing of America, the Confluence Project along the Columbia River, an exhibit on Latino culture in the Northwest, the Fort Okanogan History Tour, the Skagit River Poetry Project and a scholarly exploration of African-American Islam. In addition, 45 Quick Grants were awarded for a total of $20,730. Primarily small and rural organizations presented a total of 406 programs. Our outreach expanded through the introduction of a monthly E-News update, while our Website (www.humanities.org) underwent significant updates and recorded 460,000 hits during the year.

Mothers/Read/Fathers read, a literacy program that empowers parents to be their child’s best teacher, continues to thrive. We partnered with 68 agencies and trained 65 new instructors. Nearly 1,100 parents were served by 74 classes and over 6,000 books were distributed to families. Generous support from the PacificCorp Foundation for Learning made it possible for us to expand the program in Yakima and Walla Walla, while six western counties received books through a grant from the Employees Community Fund of Boeing Puget Sound. These and other grants made it possible to reach a record number of families in 2005.

Two Smithsonian Institution Exhibits toured Washington State through the Museum on Main Street partnership. Yesterday’s Tomorrow, an exploration of popular beliefs and expectations about the future, visited Gig Harbor, Dayton, Ellensburg, Yakima, Friday Harbor, Leavenworth and Everett to end its 12 site tour. Over 8,200 people visited the exhibit, and each museum developed their own companion exhibit about the future of their community. We also launched Between Fences, a cultural history of fences and land use, in La Conner, the first museum in a 6 site tour.

In 2005, we awarded $48,500 to 3 filmmakers through the Documentary Pooled Fund. In the future, we would like to support more films as the pool grows. We are currently looking into the feasibility of creating a Film Grant as a major program of Humanities Washington. Dan Golding is our current Film Grant consultant. We are grateful to our donor since the inception of the pool, the Martin-Fabert Foundation, for their ongoing support.

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