

Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities plans to renovate Kraft Building for "STEM Meets Humanities" program

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EDWARDSVILLE - An exciting new initiative is underway at the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities (MJCH®) that will begin with the renovation of the former Kraft building, located at [1310 N. Main Street](#) in downtown Edwardsville, and continue with programming to target young leaders in underserved areas of Madison County.?

The initiative – “STEM Meets Humanities” – will address problems we all face in society that the study of the humanities continuously works to understand. These problems will be tackled with instructional programs in schools that teach children to problem-solve using traditional humanities disciplines such as history, literature and philosophy, combined with the traditional STEM disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math. Social problems will be addressed through engaging activities

such as the creation of sustainable food sources through urban gardening, fun games to teach children core mathematics for everyday problem solving, the use of robotics to address issues such as loneliness among the elder population, and much more.

“This initiative is the second phase of our mission,” said Mannie Jackson, founder and president of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation (MJCHF), a native of Edwardsville and former owner of the Harlem Globetrotters. “In 2015-16, the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities headquarters opened and we have engaged more than 5,000 people since.”

In November, “STEM Meets Humanities” will open in the historic building adjacent to the MJCH®. Hands-on activities and curriculum will be used to find critical solutions to fundamental social and human problems such as educational inequities, negative discourse, poverty, energy and water needs, using the center’s core principles – respect, dignity, understanding and forgiveness.

“Our young leaders will have an opportunity to find solutions to problems and social conditions through experimentation, communication and teamwork,” Jackson said. “If we instill these core values in our young leaders while also teaching them marketable STEM skills, they will enter the workforce as capable and compassionate professionals.”

“The MJCHF is pleased to enter into a partnership with Lewis and Clark Community College, the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences and its IRIS Center for Digital Humanities, the SIUE STEM Center, the Madison County Regional Office of Education, Madison County Community Development and local schools districts to develop such a dynamic and innovative STEM hub for Madison County youth,” MJCHF Executive Director Dr. Ed Hightower said.

“We anticipate building renovations to begin in July 2017 and to be completed in November 2017. The only changes to the exterior structure will be some tuck pointing, but the historical integrity of the Kraft building will not be disturbed. The goal is to remodel the interior to meet the programmatic needs for STEM programming.”

Dr. Sharon Locke, director of the SIUE STEM Center, will coordinate activities involving the “STEM Meets Humanities” initiative, and has targeted the Brooklyn, Madison, Lovejoy and Alton school districts for the pilot year of programming. Funding will be provided by grants and donorship.

“Ultimately we want to remove barriers that hinder those in underserved groups from realizing their aspirations and full potential,” Locke said. “They need the opportunity and confidence to succeed more than ever. If we guide them toward STEM careers and teach them the ultimate life-skill of compassion, they will learn that they can achieve

anything. In 2018, our goal is to expand this initiative to other schools throughout Madison County."

The digital components of "STEM Meets Humanities" programming will include targeting 7th - 9th grade children from Madison County student learning areas and teaching them to build and create content for websites, podcasts, documentaries and digital maps. In addition, 90 elementary-age students will take part in Math Games, a spinoff of a pilot program started by Dr. Greg Budzban, dean of Arts & Sciences at SIUE. The pilot program included a group of Alton grade school students who competed in a national Math Games competition and won first prize in the nation. Older students in high school and college will be incorporated into the programming as near-peer mentors.

"This is an exciting opportunity for our public school students throughout Madison County," said Regional Superintendent Dr. Robert Daiber. "This type of learning is a fundamental component of being a human in the digital world and we should feel fortunate that the MJCHF, Lewis and Clark and SIUE were able to bring it to Madison County."

"Lewis and Clark's research initiative, beginning Fall 2017 with support from the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation and University of Illinois Foundation, will provide critically important indicators using humanities and cultural mapping techniques that will help inform the MJCH® STEM Meets Humanities initiative," said L&C President Dr. Dale Chapman, who is also on the MJCHF Board. "It is important that the research inform policy and education."

For more information about the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation and the STEM Meets Humanities Initiative, please email drehightower@mjchf.com, visit www.mjchf.org or call 618-655-2881.