

Texas State University | SAN MARCOS

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6/16/08

Humanities Texas Awards Grant for Collaborative Oral History Project

SAN MARCOS – Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has awarded an \$11,938 grant to Texas State University-San Marcos for a project that is being developed in collaboration with the Lyndon Baines Johnson Museum of San Marcos.

The end product of the collaboration will be an interactive exhibit at the LBJ Museum of San Marcos, located on the court house square in downtown San Marcos. The exhibit will include audio clips, photographs and other items evolving from a university-sponsored oral history project. The words and thoughts of Johnson-era San Marcos community leaders, area residents, Texas State alumni and friends of the late President are being recorded and transcribed. Texas State remains the only university in Texas to have graduated a U.S. President.

The theme of the exhibit will be “Remembering LBJ and His Legacy: Local Recollections – An Oral History Project.” After the special invitational preview opening on Saturday, August 23, 2008, just prior to the university’s new student convocation, the official public opening will be Sunday, August 24. Museum Director Scott Jordan says he expects the major components of the exhibit will remain in place for most of the 2008-2009 school year.

Texas State employed history graduate Barbara Thibodeaux to conduct the oral history interviews. To date, she has interviewed close to 50 people to get their special perspectives about Lyndon Johnson, his legacy and how it relates to the university and the City of San Marcos where he lived and studied during his formative early years.

The Oral History Project is an outgrowth of the Texas State LBJ Birthday Centennial Steering Committee’s Community Subcommittee, chaired by San Marcos resident Bill Cunningham, a Texas State journalism graduate, who is also a former San Marcos city councilman and former Texas State University System regent.

The LBJ Museum of San Marcos is dedicated to promoting “a better understanding and appreciation of the life and times of the 36th President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson.” The non-profit’s mission statement explains its special niche in the Johnson legacy as having a primary focus “on the years President Johnson spent as a student at what was then Southwest Texas State Teachers College and his teaching experiences in South Texas and the impact these experiences had on his leadership in the development of legislation, especially in the areas of education and civil rights.”

Because of its accessible location, Texas State President Denise Trauth asked the museum’s board of directors if the museum would like to partner with the university by developing an interactive exhibit using interviews and photographs resulting from the Oral History Project. The board readily agreed, and the largest cooperative venture between the university and the museum to date was born.

Equipment and display panels made possible by the Humanities Texas grant will add an element that the museum has been missing since its opening Dec. 6, 2006 – interactive capabilities and better portable elements that will enable the transport of exhibit elements to off-site venues, such as the local public schools.

“We are pleased to support this project highlighting LBJ’s educational legacy in San Marcos during his centennial year,” said Michael L. Gillette, executive director of Humanities Texas.

Over the past three decades, Humanities Texas has awarded more than 2,000 grants to Texas organizations for public programs grounded in history, literature and other humanities disciplines. The grant is made possible with support from “We the People,” and NEH initiative promoting the understanding of U.S. history.

If he were still alive, President Lyndon Baines Johnson would turn 100 years old on August 27, 2008. Although the President’s centennial birthday sparked a national celebration that culminates with his actual birth date, Texas State will keep the LBJ focus in academic work and special programming throughout the 2008-2009 academic year.

The university’s unique Common Experience program, which has for the past four years adopted a specific theme for a cross-discipline academic and special event focus for the year, has chosen “Civic Responsibility: The Legacy of LBJ” for the 2008-

2009 academic year. A working steering committee and an honorary committee composed of dignitaries closely associated with LBJ are leading the planning for Texas State's LBJ Centennial Celebration. Co-chairs of the committee are Becky Prince, vice president for university advancement, and Gene Bourgeois, associate provost.