SURVIVE, PROVIDE
THRIVE
Conner Prairie 2020 Impact Report

CONNER PRAIRIE
STEP INTO THE STORY
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If 2020 was a year of unprecedented hardship, 2021 will be a year of hopeful perseverance - a year in which we work together to rebuild and recover from the events that have shaped our daily lives and challenged our communities.

The ways in which Conner Prairie serves our community have changed fundamentally due to the pandemic. As the nation has experienced unparalleled economic, emotional, and logistical challenges throughout the last year, I am proud to report that Conner Prairie has forged ahead with innovative new methods of mission delivery. As pandemic restrictions shifted and evolved, the Conner Prairie team pivoted in real-time. From delivering our mission in new virtual ways and revamping our on-site experiences, we have been able to provide our community with a safe space to explore, learn, connect with nature, and enjoy tradition.

Last year saw the dawn of Conner Prairie at Home, Conner Prairie in the Classroom, modified on-site programming, virtual festivals, safety protocols, and the launch of our new brand. None of these accomplishments could have occurred without the support of our Board, donors, members, and guests. We rose to the challenges before us with a nimble adaptability, and we continue to persevere in 2021 as we find our new normal.

In the midst of 2020’s unique challenges, I had the distinct honor of working with a select group of national organizations, which helped to bolster our museum’s reputation and enhance the spirit of discovery and exploration at Conner Prairie. As Chair of the American Association for State and Local History, Board member of The Livestock Conservancy, and member of the American Alliance of Museums National Program Committee, it brings me great joy to represent Conner Prairie at the national level.

My local associations have been equally rewarding. Asante Children’s Theater, for example, has been a tremendous partner of ours over the last few years; and I am also honored to be Co-President of the Indianapolis Consortium of Arts Administrators along with Asante’s founder, Deborah Asante. As our respective organizations grow and evolve, the unique theatrical programming that we have developed together will find new ways to connect our audiences through both in-person and in recorded performances.

These highlights only skim the surface of what we accomplished in 2020 and where we’re headed in 2021. We continue to prove that our mission to inspire curiosity and foster learning by providing engaging and individualized experiences for everyone is alive and thriving. You will learn more details about how this mission has been expressed this year in the pages to follow.

Best regards,

Norman Burns
President and Chief Executive Officer
When the world changed, Conner Prairie’s staff responded quickly by finding new ways of bringing the museum’s mission to the community. Faced with this new reality, staff immediately began working for the continuation of Conner Prairie’s mission through reimagined mission delivery.

Kim McCann, Program Developer, reflects on Conner Prairie at Home and the positivity it brought to the community:

Q: How did our community experience an increased need for Conner Prairie’s programming during the COVID lockdown?

A: The looming unknown of the lockdown made people yearn for normalcy – things they know and find comforting. The Conner Prairie at Home content helped not only give some ‘edutainment’ to our members, but also sent a message that we were thinking of them, too. In many ways, we tailored content to speak to what was happening in our community and world, and provided information that was both useful and educational. We stuck to our mission.

Q: How does Conner Prairie plan to adapt and continue this program into the future?

A: The circumstances highlighted the wealth of creative, capable, and knowledgeable staff members at Conner Prairie. Since reopening, we have used some of the at Home content to highlight and support programming happening on the grounds. Thinking of new ways to share historical and instructional content during the lockdown has spurred new ideas about how we can continue to reach out to our members or visitors who are outside of Central Indiana.

Students and parents endured unprecedented challenges as a result of the pandemic, balancing work-from-home schedules with the educational needs of their children. For low-income families, the challenges were even greater.

Seizing the opportunity to think creatively and strategically while closed to the public, Conner Prairie pioneered new content and repurposed existing content to create *HiSTEAMic*™ Home Kits to reach families during a time of need. Home Kit development was initiated within days of Conner Prairie’s closure to the public.

In partnership with Lawrence Township Schools and the Hamilton County Youth Assistance Program, we first distributed the kits to 800 low and moderate-income families in our community. As a result of additional funding raised, Conner Prairie was able to assemble and distribute an additional 1,200 Home Kits to families in need, for a total of 2,000 Home Kits provided to families at no charge.

Three Home Kits were developed for different age groups, each with a different theme:

- Early Learning (Ages 0-3 and Ages 4-7)
- Backyard Explorer (Ages 4+)
- Take Flight (Ages 8+)

*HiSTEAMic is a Conner Prairie program philosophy where history is integrated with science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to inspire curiosity.
RETURNING TO THE PRAIRIE

Conner Prairie, as the steward of 1,046 acres of outdoor space, was met with a significant opportunity when restrictions began to lift. The museum found itself uniquely positioned to continue its daily experiences in a new way. With safety protocols approved by the Fishers Department of Health, Conner Prairie reopened its doors to the public on June 16th for programming in the museum’s main outdoor experience areas.

The return to the Prairie was a breath of fresh air for guests and staff alike. After weeks of staying indoors, Conner Prairie offered an escape – an opportunity to be transported to another world and to step into a new story.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE IN 2020:
133,572

"Conner Prairie adopted a new approach to interpretation upon reopening; interpreters are no longer tied to posts, but have the freedom to roam and initiate conversations with guests. We actually found that the increased mental and physical space that COVID-19 created has allowed for deeper, curiosity-driven interactions with guests."

- RICH COOPER, VP AND CHIEF PROGRAMS OFFICER

"Your staff is simply phenomenal. Much of why we love Conner Prairie is the way the staff interact with our kids in such a beautiful, respectful, and patient way. They treat them as full people and participants in their life and learning."

- GUEST FEEDBACK
The events of 2020, from the COVID-19 pandemic to Black Lives Matter protests against racial injustice, called upon museums everywhere to provide for everyone in new ways.

With a continued commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion, Conner Prairie stayed attuned to the needs of the community, ultimately redefining the way the world views and uses museums.

Indiana’s First Fully Accessible Playground
Built With Unlimited Play

Ag Adventures at Estridge Family Park

After weeks of stay-at-home orders and with spring in full bloom, Conner Prairie returned to provide a new experience – the first fully inclusive playground in the state of Indiana. Ag Adventures at Estridge Family Park was designed with guests of all abilities in mind and is fully accessible to guests with physical or developmental disabilities.

The playscape’s agricultural theme is a nod to Conner Prairie’s long history of agriculture. Educational panels highlight stories from Conner Prairie Farms, once owned by Mr. Eli Lilly, and connect guests to other agricultural experiences and exhibits on the grounds.

Thank you to the Estridge Family Foundation and the Conner Prairie Alliance for their support of the Ag Adventures Playground.

Conner Prairie is leading the way with this play space,” shared Natalie Mackay, the Executive Director from Unlimited Play, the designer and builder of the custom play area. “Their goal was to create something that enables everyone to be active and fully experience the equipment and the outdoors together, and we’re proud to have helped them make this very special feature a reality.

Thank you to the Estridge Family Foundation and the Conner Prairie Alliance for their support of the Ag Adventures Playground.
Throughout June and July, Conner Prairie was able to provide its award-winning Summer Adventure Camps to over 1,600 local youth. This was made possible by adaptability and awareness of health and safety; Conner Prairie conducted over 8,000 health screenings during camp weeks to ensure a safe experience for campers. After weeks of being limited to indoor spaces and small groups, Adventure Camp offered an action-packed escape for our community’s youth.

Activities included:

- Canoeing
- Archery
- Fishing
- Swimming
- Ziplining
- Horseback Riding
- Arts & Crafts
- Obstacle Courses

The activities were outstanding, and the overall experience brought a sense of normalcy and joy during such a difficult season of life. Thank you!

- Camp Parent

The production premiered at Conner Prairie in August and was brought back by popular demand for more performances at Witherspoon Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. Museum Theater provided guests with a way to process and participate in dialogues about our nation’s past, present, and future.

Conner Prairie’s partnership with Asante is a powerful one. Together through artistic direction and professional actors, we provide a historical lens to breathe life into a shared vision of theatre between two notable institutions.

- Merlin Bell, Manager of Applied Theater

In the spring, the museum began developing Conner Prairie in the Classroom (CPC) to respond to and provide for the emerging needs of local schoolchildren and educators. Designed to help K-8 teachers meet their students’ educational needs and provide digital curricula that stands in for the traditional field trip, CPC delivers a full menu of lesson plans to be accessed and utilized throughout the entire school year.

CPC’s initial launch consisted of two modules of engaging, fun, pre-recorded video content featuring talented historical interpreters. The modules meet cross-curricular state educational standards by covering topics such as navigation, transportation, and currency with breaks for activities and classroom discussion. All modules also include a comprehensive workbook and additional supplementary resources to enhance the students’ learning experience.

Modules 1 and 2 were initially sent to over 600 local educators and piloted in all classroom settings – in-person, virtual, and hybrid. After receiving positive feedback from teachers, Conner Prairie made these resources freely accessible on its website, extending the impact of the program even further. Now, two additional modules are in development for distribution in 2021.
Festival Season

Autumn and winter at Conner Prairie typically evoke images and memories of family traditions – trademark festival experiences like Headless Horseman and A Merry Prairie Holiday. Even in an especially challenging year, Conner Prairie’s acres of festival grounds poised the museum to create a sense of normalcy for its community by providing a safe space for these traditions to continue.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE FOR BOTH FESTIVALS: 49,198

Creating lasting memories and transformative experiences is at the heart of what we do at Conner Prairie. In 2020, we partnered with A Kid Again to host a holiday party at A Merry Prairie Holiday, bringing a heartwarming experience to local children facing life-threatening conditions.

A Kid Again makes life for families caring for a child with a life-threatening condition “normal” again by helping them gain back moments of positive, family-shared experiences. Learn more at akidagain.org.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

After approval from the Fishers Department of Health, Conner Prairie was able to move forward with Headless Horseman. Staff worked carefully to ensure safety and welcomed over 29,000 guests.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 29,235 (2019: 37,990)

A MERRY PRAIRIE HOLIDAY

A Merry Prairie Holiday returned for its second year with programming changes to keep staff and public safe. A new walk-through light experience was added in the Civil War Journey area, as well as cheerful holiday music playing all over the festival grounds.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 19,963 (2019: 21,713)

I purchased a membership during our visit in late September and could not be happier with the value. We were able to make it for the Headless Horseman and now this one [A Merry Prairie Holiday]. All three visits have been an “A”. Keep up the great work!

- GUEST FEEDBACK
selected Dr. Clarence G. Newsome as the project’s curator. Dr. Newsome conducted an extensive literature review, working to create a robust story arc that weaves together notable Black religious leaders and denominations in the 19th century. He also uncovered a powerful parallel – the connection of the wilderness of the Northwest Territory to the Promised Land. It is this connection that serves as the basis for the project’s title, Promised Land as Proving Ground. The exhibit continues to develop as Conner Prairie seeks input from experts nationwide and forges new partnerships, strengthening the project and illustrating the museum’s commitment to its DEAI Promise.

Even with the obstacles that 2020 presented, Conner Prairie continues to forge a path forward. By telling new stories, stewarding its natural resources, and strengthening its commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion, Conner Prairie thrives.

Conner Prairie recently began a two-year project to identify and address areas of weakness within the organization related to DEAI and to build a plan to address these challenges. The project began with an internal DEAI assessment created in partnership with the museum’s DEAI Task Force. In February 2020, a survey was developed and sent out to active Conner Prairie staff with the goal of assessing the attitudes, behaviors, and values around DEAI, organization values, and curiosity. Soon after, Conner Prairie initiated conversations with Sites of Conscience across the country. After virtual conversations with four similar institutions, Conner Prairie began identifying approaches to take with a staff training program.

In August, the six-month intensive program was opened for voluntary participation to staff and board members. 45 staff members and three board members took part in the training, which included small-group conversations around cultural awareness and the history of race in America as well as full-group sessions led by subject matter experts. As a primarily white organization, internal efforts like these will remain critical to Conner Prairie’s ability to tell inclusive stories and create unique experiences for everyone.
Conner Prairie stewards 1,046 acres of natural habitat and green space, including over six miles of shoreline along the White River. Our land is something we hold dear – it was the land inhabited by the Lenape people when forcibly removed from the east and marks the settlement of William Conner. It allows us to look into the past, and makes Conner Prairie a unique historic place. Now, with an eye to the future, Conner Prairie is setting its sights on stewarding this land with sustainability at the forefront.

**FUTURE OF THE WHITE RIVER**

The White River is our anchor. With 3.3 miles running through our grounds, Conner Prairie is the largest remaining private landowner of property along the river. Centuries ago, the river was a source of nourishment, trade, and transportation; today, the White River is a symbol of Conner Prairie’s future.

In 2020, Conner Prairie began a shoreline stabilization process through generous funding provided by Duke Energy. Stabilization restores and creates natural freshwater habitats, and improves safety for thousands of guests who access and experience the river each year. This project is also critical for the water quality in the river. By stabilizing 700 square feet of shoreline, drinking water for over 500,000 Hamilton County residents is improved. This work has effects beyond our immediate community; improved water quality in the White River and other tributaries of the Mississippi River reduce algal bloom as far downstream as the Gulf of Mexico.

Conner Prairie also plans to bolster sustainability efforts through its Prairieship program in 2021 by hiring One-River and Sustainability Interns. In collaboration with multiple local and regional institutions, the One-River internship will explore the connectivity of the White River through observation, sampling, and analyses of conditions at multiple points along the river. The Sustainability Intern will research and develop strategies to measure our sustainability efforts.
To all of our donors, supporters, and partners – thank you for your enduring support in a truly unique year. Your enthusiasm for Conner Prairie’s mission makes it possible for us to survive, provide, and thrive.

Looking Ahead

At Conner Prairie, we hope to have a heart for the past, head for the present, and an eye to the future. Looking out from the William Conner House, one can see a vast, open landscape of hundreds of acres of natural habitat. William Conner saw the potential for this land. Today, with an eye to the future, Conner Prairie envisions a new path forward.

In 2018, Conner Prairie began laying the groundwork for a Site Master Plan. Conner Prairie is home to 1,046 acres of land; only about 70 acres of this land are used for programming. Designed to activate and steward the remainder of this habitat, the Site Master Plan consists of 25 projects that serve as a road map for Conner Prairie’s development in years to come.

The Prairie Pathways Campaign was launched to meet this need. The heart of the campaign is a newly reimagined Museum Experience Center to create year-round and lifelong engagement for guests, complete with the conditions necessary to display permanent exhibits from Conner Prairie’s extensive collections. As the largest private landowner of White River frontage, Conner Prairie also imagines new activation of the White River – brand new trails, increased shoreline access, and education hubs to engage and immerse guests in nature.

These projects are only the start of an exciting future ahead. With the support of some incredible philanthropists and community partners, the Prairie Pathways Campaign is already off the ground and under way. Stay tuned for more updates on the campaign as it progresses!
2020 CONNER PRAIRIE LEADERSHIP

Conner Prairie Museum

Chair: Christine Altman
Vice Chair: Steve Hageman
Secretary: Jill Grossman
Treasurer: Reggie Henderson
Jessica Bastin
Beth Bechdol
Mike Berry
Marvin Blade
Will Bryan
Norman Burns - Conner Prairie President & CEO
Melissa Caito
Kip Chase
Greg Conner - Horizon Council President
David Day
Gay Dwyer
Suzanne Gaidoo
Jeff Hagerman
Clint Hangebrauck
Leonard Hoops
Dave Kinard
Deon Levingston
Jay Love
Leah McGrath
Fred Medley
Jane Niederberger
Don Orr
Mike Rechin
Dick Ristine
Jenny Schalliol
Rebecca Shrum
Shawn Smith
Denny Sponsel
Marsha Sutton - Alliance President
Brian Timmerman
Rich Thrapp - Immediate Past Chair
Randy Wilson

Conner Prairie Foundation

Chair: Chris Cooke
Vice Chair: Bill Batt
Secretary: Jay Ricker
Treasurer: Kevin Schmidt
Jerry Semler
Rich Thrapp

Director Emeriti

Doug Church
Berkley Duck
Pat Garrett Rooney
Stan Hurt
Jay Ricker
## Financial Report

### Conner Prairie Museum, Inc. (Operating Fund 10)

#### Summarized Statement of Activities for the 12 Months Ending December 31, 2020*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Support</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Endowment Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gifts, Grants &amp; Sponsorships</td>
<td>$2,003,561</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission &amp; Program Fees</td>
<td>$1,503,292</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memberships</td>
<td>$659,920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rental &amp; Other Income</td>
<td>$420,692</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Retail</td>
<td>$404,304</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue and Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,393,505</strong></td>
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#### Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; Guest Experience</td>
<td>$6,726,744</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management &amp; General</td>
<td>$1,512,079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Affairs &amp; Marketing</td>
<td>$1,087,631</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$899,768</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Services</td>
<td>$159,599</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,385,821</strong></td>
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#### Changes in Net Assets

- **$7,684**

### Conner Prairie Foundation, Inc.

#### Summarized Statement of Financial Position for the 12 Months Ending December 31, 2020*

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<thead>
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<th>Asset</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash &amp; Investments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property &amp; Equipment, Net</td>
<td>$17,735,012</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$153,337,043</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Liabilities

- **Accounts Payable** $1,283,998
- **Total Liabilities** $1,283,998

#### Net Assets

- **Without donor restrictions** $134,226,815
- **With donor restrictions** $17,826,230
- **Total Net Assets** $152,053,045
- **Total Liabilities & Net Assets** $153,337,043

*Unaudited numbers

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### Revenue Sources
- **Endowment Support**: 52%
- **Admission & Program Fees**: 14%
- **Gifts, Grants & Sponsorships**: 19%
- **Membership**: 7%
- **Rental & Other Income**: 4%
- **Food & Retail**: 4%

### Expenditure Categories
- **Programs & Guest Experience**: 65%
- **Management & General**: 15%
- **Public Affairs & Marketing**: 10%
- **Fundraising**: 9%
- **Membership Services**: 1%

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*Unaudited numbers*