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First Curator Leads Development of Village's Orland Park History Museum



The Orland Park History Museum has taken a significant step toward its grand opening with the appointment of Diane Grah as its inaugural curator. The village's former village hall at 14413 South Beacon Avenue is now the Orland Park History Museum.

"Diane Grah brings 15 years of suburban museum experience to Orland Park's museum," said Mayor Dan McLaughlin. "She has a love for history and we are excited to have her on staff as we prepare to open the community's first ever museum."

As the museum's part-time curator, Grah oversees the daily operation of the museum, works with board committees, museum volunteers, donors and village staff, and is spearheading the effort to develop the museum into a cultural and educational asset to the village. Her current priorities include assembling exhibits for the museum's grand opening and, with volunteer help, organizing the museum's collections.

Grah most recently served as the executive director of the Forest Park Historical Society. She also served as research center director of the Oak Park-River Forest Historical Society and, in her hometown, was a founder of the Hillside Historical Society. She received her master's and bachelor's degrees from Chicago's North Park University in non-profit management and history, respectively. She lives in Orland Park with her husband and two children.

"The community will be able to see the museum for the first time on Saturday, April 30 when we host an open house from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.," McLaughlin said.

"The old village hall now serving as Orland Park's first museum is appropriate because that site is an important part of village history," McLaughlin said.

The Beacon Avenue location was the site of Orland Park's village halls dating back to the 1800s through November, 1989 when the Ravinia Avenue Orland Park Village Center opened. The current Beacon Avenue building was built by volunteer firefighters in 1960 and photos remain of the two story white clapboard village hall that stood at the site in the late 1800s.

The museum is looking for volunteers to help with the collection, give tours of the museum and to help committee members with different activities. Museum committees include Finance and Special Events; Communications and Marketing; Programs and Education; Collections; and Membership. Those interested may call Grah at 708/873-1622 or send an email to museum@orlandpark.org.

"We welcome anyone who enjoys history," McLaughlin said. "This is a great way to learn about the community and to help make history at the same time as we open Orland Park's first museum."

Volunteer members of the Orland Park History Museum Board include Diane Chin, Elizabeth Grad Christofylakis, Karen Friker, Jim Gira, Tom Dubelbeis, Eileen Neary and Chuck Pelini.