

Press Release June 23, 2005

History.

Many of us involved in Holyoke have long believed that the sum of all the parts of the cultural, educational and historical sites and events in Holyoke are greater than the whole.

There are many more amazing places, and cultural and educational programs in Holyoke than people realize. Passport Holyoke began when Laurie Risler began working as Museum Educator at Wistariahurst. Laurie was previously a homeschooling parent who traveled extensively with her family. She had seen effective Passport programs in other communities. If other places can do it why can't we???

Passport Holyoke began meeting in May of 2003 with a handful of people from Holyoke Heritage State Park, the Children's Museum at Holyoke and Wistariahurst Museum. Over the years the meetings as well as our vision have gotten larger and larger. All of the Passport Holyoke Partners believe that by meeting regularly and talking to each other about our programming goals and outreach initiatives that we could build collaborations and create a buzz about the exciting things that are happening in Holyoke.

Our first project was to mail a brochure to educators that linked programs already in existence at our sites to the Massachusetts Frameworks as set by the Massachusetts Department of Education. We created various itineraries based on a number of themes. For example, a classroom studying industrialism in New England could visit Holyoke Heritage State Park, then go to see a performance of *Between the Canals* with Enchanted Circle Theater, visit the Fishlift at the Holyoke Dam or tour Wistariahurst to see what kind of wealth that industrialism created.

During our monthly Passport Holyoke meetings, outstanding collaborations did begin to happen. Antonio Costa at CDeVision created a website that would highlight our programs with links to our website. Wistariahurst and Enchanted Circle Theater joined forces to create the Skinner Servants' Tour. Wistariahurst's educator Laurie Risler will do a Harry Potter camp this summer at the Children's Museum. Don Sanders at MIFA started planning programs for his fall festival at many of our locations.

We are delighted to unveil our campaign and website. Please visit the Passport Holyoke sites and events! Great things are happening in Holyoke. We hope that you will think so too!