



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION TOUR SITES ANNOUNCED**

Charleston, WV — The West Virginia Humanities Council is sponsoring a special West Virginia tour of the new Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition, *Crossroads: Change In Rural America*, beginning August 2021 through June 2022.

The exhibit examines the present-day turning point at which many rural American towns find themselves. Since the early 1900s, rural America has experienced significant changes in demographics, educational opportunities, access to services, and economic viability. Today, the population of the nation's rural areas is less than half of what it was in 1900, yet America's small towns continue to creatively focus on new opportunities for growth and development. Economic innovation, including investment in cultural and creative economies, has helped many communities create their own renaissance.

The following venues have been chosen to host the exhibition while it tours West Virginia: The Jack Caffrey Arts and Culture Center in Welch; the new Coal Heritage Discovery Center in Mount Hope; the Museum of American Glass in Weston; Arthurdale Heritage in Arthurdale, Preston County; the Wetzel County Museum in New Martinsville; the Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center; and Moorefield High School, sponsored by the Hardy County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Each venue will display *Crossroads* for approximately five weeks, and the final schedule will be announced this fall.

"We had an incredible response from many institutions across the state," says Council Program Officer Kyle Warmack. "Every application was so strong, it made our decisions very difficult, and if we could hold onto *Crossroads* longer and grant this opportunity to every organization that applied, there's no question that we would."

"We feel the sites selected represent the best possible geographic spread, giving every West Virginian a chance to experience a unique exhibit near their part of the state," says Council Executive Director Eric Waggoner. "What's

more, every organization that applied has so much to say about change in their community. We're very excited to help these host sites express these visions of their communities' pasts, presents, and futures."

"While the Smithsonian exhibit forms the core of each stop on the tour, each host community contributes a huge amount of their own programming, exhibits, and other related events," Warmack adds. "You'll be able to visit every one of these sites, and see and experience something very different."

The *Crossroads* tour is made possible through the Museum on Main Street (MOMS) program, an alliance of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, the Federation of State Humanities Councils, state humanities councils across the country, and cultural organizations in small, rural communities.

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***The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council is supported by the NEH, the State of West Virginia, and contributions from the private sector. The purposes of the West Virginia Humanities Council are educational, and its mission is to support a vigorous program in the humanities statewide in West Virginia.***