



MUSEUMS
CELEBRATE
AMERICA'S
FREEDOMS
JOINING COMMUNITIES
IN A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
SEPTEMBER 11TH

During the month of September 2002, the American museum community will come together to **Celebrate America's Freedoms**. This initiative underscores the museums' roles as stewards of the nation's stories and special places where communities can reaffirm and examine our:

- freedom to assemble
- freedom to create
- freedom to worship
- freedom to inquire
- freedom to express ideas
- freedom from fear

Observing September 11: A Toolkit

In the days and weeks following Sept. 11, 2001, museums were given a critical opportunity to serve their communities, and they rose to the challenge immediately. From New York to California, museums provided an emotional refuge, connected diverse groups of people, collected donations for disaster relief, and provided visitors with helpful resources. Across the country, the public could see and experience museums as centers of community life.

In recent months, many museums have expressed a desire to unite with their communities once again, this time in remembrance of Sept. 11. AAM and IMLS have responded by encouraging museums to mark the day in a way that best suits their missions and resources and the needs of their communities.

To help museums and communities observe Sept. 11 in a meaningful and collaborative way, the two organizations have created a Day of Remembrance toolkit. Designed as a resource guide, the toolkit offers suggestions for enhancing the museum-community relationship. AAM and IMLS recognize that each community and its museums will remember Sept. 11 in a way that reflects the unique needs of the people they serve.

What Can You Do?

Talk to your museum colleagues.

- What staff expertise and resources can the museum offer the community?

Talk to your board of directors.

- How can the museum and the community work together to observe Sept. 11?
- Will the board endorse the museum's participation in a national Day of Remembrance?

Participate in and/or initiate public discussions about how your community should remember Sept. 11.

- Talk to other local museums about collaborating on Day of Remembrance activities and events.
- Talk to community groups and leaders. Who is discussing how the community should mark the Sept. 11 anniversary?
- Contact local community organizations, such as firefighters, rescue workers, police, churches, community centers, boys & girls clubs, libraries, schools, civic organizations (Rotarians, Elks), veterans groups.
- Contact local elected or community leaders, including the mayor's office, city council, county officials, aldermen, school board, school superintendent.

Encourage your museum staff and volunteers to participate in community observances of Sept. 11.

- Let your community know that museum staff and volunteers can help with Sept. 11-related activities.

Things to think about:

- Cooperative efforts are most successful when the organizations believe the efforts are mutually beneficial, leadership is supportive, and the group represents all participating institutions. The group should meet, decide how to work together, select a point person, assess each institution's strengths, and determine how responsibilities should be divided. Adapted from the [AAM Communications Kit](#) (1999).
- Community organizations have a deep knowledge of the constituencies they serve and wealth of experience in outreach and partnership. A successful partnership will preserve each organization's strength and identity, operate in neutral territory, and multiply the assets the participating organizations can offer. Adapted from [Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums](#) (AAM, 2002).

What Can Your Museum Do?

These suggestions are drawn from museums' responses to Sept. 11 tragedy and plans to mark the anniversary in September 2002.

Invite the community to use museum facilities—auditorium, cafeteria, meeting rooms, outdoor spaces, gardens, etc.—for Sept. 11 observances or public events.

- Invite local elected officials and community leaders to a Day of Remembrance program.
- Honor local firefighters, rescue workers, and police and their families.
- Host a community event such as a concert, poetry reading, or patriotic ceremony.
- Host a community conversation, panel discussion, or lecture on America in times of crisis, the value of America's freedoms, religious tolerance, or cultural diversity. Invite local elected officials, religious groups, veterans organizations, and/or other civic organizations to participate.

Offer programs or exhibits that remember those who lost their lives, celebrate America's freedoms, or otherwise commemorate Sept. 11.

- Present an exhibit that shows the diverse ways people express their ideas, create objects of beauty, inquire about the world, and practice their religious beliefs.
- Allow visitors to share reflections and thoughts in visitor comment journals or murals.
- Work with teachers and schools to develop materials for students about America's freedoms.
- Offer reflections on your community's response to the Sept. 11 attacks.
- Help local cable or public television stations develop Sept. 11-focused programming.

Be as accessible as you can, given your museum's resources.

- Offer extended hours—e.g., 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.—or stay open in the evening.
- Offer guided tours.
- Offer activities for schools or families.
- Offer free admission.