



Executive Director's Update



2026 marked an exciting and transformative year for our nation and for the Fairfield Museum. The Museum was at the forefront of Fairfield's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, working closely with the Town and our extraordinary community partners to celebrate the wonderful diversity of people that have helped our community thrive for 387 years.

Fairfield Museum welcomes people from across our regional community for a wide range of activities that inspire us to share our stories and build a deeper, more empathetic understanding of each other. We use the past as a starting point for exploring current issues and questions in an effort to build a more inclusive and equitable community for the future. By bridging our diverse experiences and perspectives, we can work together to cultivate a deeper sense of community identity and civic engagement.

In today's turbulent and sometimes divisive environment, the Fairfield Museum's work is more important than ever. This year's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence offered us more than a moment for celebration. It was also a challenge to consider the distance between our founding ideals and our lived reality, and to recommit ourselves to closing that gap. History gives us perspective and inspiration in the ongoing struggle to create "a more perfect union," one that is open, honest, inclusive, equitable, and strong.

The Fairfield Museum has been deeply honored to work with the many donors, business sponsors, foundations, granting agencies, and community partners recognized in this report who share our commitment to that work. Thank you for making the Fairfield Museum a thriving cultural and educational center for our community. I hope you will join us for the work ahead.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in white ink, which appears to read "Michael A. Jehle". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Michael A. Jehle
Executive Director

ON THE COVER

In collaboration with Southport-based photographer Loryne Atoui, the Fairfield Museum featured 23 Fairfielders as part of its outdoor Portraits of Fairfield exhibition, which showcased today's multi-faceted community and celebrated the people from different backgrounds who call Fairfield home.

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By the Numbers

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

35,984

Museum Visitors

A 6% increase from 2024-25

216

School Field Trips
A 60% increase in
from 2024-25

Attended by
4,465
Students

168

Adult & Family Programs
Attended by

17,496
People
A 15% increase from
2024-25

New Exhibits and Programs Explored Fairfield's Vi

Fairfield in 1776: Revolution & Resilience and the complementary *Portraits of Fairfield* served as the centerpiece exhibitions of the Fairfield Museum's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The exhibitions were launched at our delightful Gala on the Green, attended by more than 200 guests.

Fairfield in 1776 explored the fascinating stories behind the town's revolutionary upheaval, when Patriots and Loyalists battled for control and the community was torn by divided loyalties. The American Revolution meant different things to different people, and through an exploration of the diverse perspectives of farmers, merchants, women, the enslaved, and others, the exhibition revealed the complexities behind our nation's founding.



Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Declaration of Independence at 250 was a special, limited engagement exhibition that displayed some of the earliest printed copies of the Declaration, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. A first edition of Thomas Paine's influential pamphlet *Common Sense* that sparked the Revolution could be seen alongside an original copy of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, revealing how America's struggle to create an inclusive democracy by and for the people remains a work in progress. The Fairfield Museum is grateful to Seth Kaller for sharing those rare treasures of American history.

tal Role in the Struggle for American Independence



Portraits of Fairfield, an outdoor exhibition of 16 large photographs by Loryne Atoui, accompanied by oral history interviews, celebrated the inclusive stories behind today's multi-faceted community and the many cultures that call Fairfield home. Although from many different backgrounds, Fairfielders today share a commitment toward building a strong and vibrant community.

Free Admission for 2026

Thanks to the generous support of Fairfield Museum donor John Herzog, the Fairfield Museum is offering free admission through November 25, 2026. We are grateful for John's support, which has enabled the Museum to welcome many new visitors.



Taking the Lead in Our Region's 250th Commemoration

As part of our commemoration of the 250th, the Fairfield Museum led a partnership with the Weston History & Culture Center and the Historical Society of Easton to host a sold-out history bus tour of the three towns' Revolutionary War sites. We also collaborated with the New Haven Museum, the Westport Museum for History & Culture, and the Norwalk Historical Society to create a new program series exploring the 1779 British raids of the Connecticut coast. Visitors enjoyed walking tours, living history demonstrations, and special exhibitions during an exciting week of programs.



Revolutionary War Encampment & Reenactment

Over Labor Day weekend, reenactors set up camp on the Fairfield

Museum Commons, giving visitors a fascinating glimpse into the life of an 18th-century soldier. The sounds of musket fire during skirmishes between Continental and British forces were a stark reminder that Fairfield was once on the front lines of America's war for independence. The reenactment was made possible through a partnership with the Town of Fairfield, Fairfield Community Services, and Experience Fairfield.

Leading Civics Education

The Museum's partnership with the City of Bridgeport Lighthouse Program to provide free civics education for K-12 students continues to grow. Over the 2025-26 school year, 427 students from 20 Bridgeport schools delved into the history of their community and learned how to become better citizens while exploring Fairfield Museum's new exhibitions. This summer, we also welcomed the Bridgeport Youth Club for field trips inspired by our exhibition *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Declaration of Independence at 250*. 144 middle school students witnessed early printings of the Declaration of Independence alongside other key founding documents. Those vital field trips were made possible by generous grants from the U.S. Department of Education's Civics Education for CT Students Project, The Perkin Fund, The Allison Family Foundation, and John Herzog.



Mark Your Calendars for These Not-to-be-Missed Programs



October 15, 2026. *Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century.* A panel discussion exploring practical ways we can build a new, collective commitment to democratic citizenship, featuring: Stephen Heintz, President Emeritus of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; CT Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas; David McCullough III, co-founder and CEO of American Exchange Project; and Fairfield University's Aaron Weinstein, PhD, Assistant Professor of Politics. Presented in partnership with Fairfield University's Center for Arts & Minds at the Dolan School of Business Event Hall on the campus of Fairfield University. 6 PM.

October 18, 2026. Fall Speaker Series. *From Liberty to Legacy: Exploring American Ideals in the Musicals 1776 and Hamilton with Michael Langlois.* 1 PM. Explore how each musical portrays the Revolutionary era, and discover how changing historical contexts shape the way we tell our national story.

October 25, 2026. 10th Annual Halloween on the Green on the Fairfield Museum Commons. 12–4 PM

November 8, 2026. Fall Speaker Series. *Nobody Men: Neutrality and Loyalties in the American Revolution with Travis Glasson.* 1 PM. Follow the stories of the overlooked individuals of the Revolutionary era who fell between Patriot and Loyalist—highlighting how their choices shaped the Atlantic world.

November 13 & 14, 2026. 12th Annual Holiday Pop-Up Market, a thoughtfully curated festive marketplace featuring handmade goods, original artwork, and unique gifts. November 13: 4 – 7 PM; November 14: 10 AM – 4 PM.

November 21, 2026. The opening of our newest exhibition, *Life with Animals.* Animals and humans have long shared a deeply intertwined relationship, from Indigenous understanding of the natural world, to working farm animals, to our love of pets. This intriguing exhibition will share rare artifacts from the Fairfield Museum's collection to tell the stories behind our relationship with nature, pets, animal mascots, and our evolving love of animals.

November 28, 2026. Grand Opening of the Annual Holiday Express Model Train Show. 5 – 7 PM

Visit FairfieldHistory.org to learn more!



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Fiscal Year 2025 – 2026

The Fairfield Museum is grateful to the following donors and members who have generously supported our programs, exhibitions, and events. List includes gifts made between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026.

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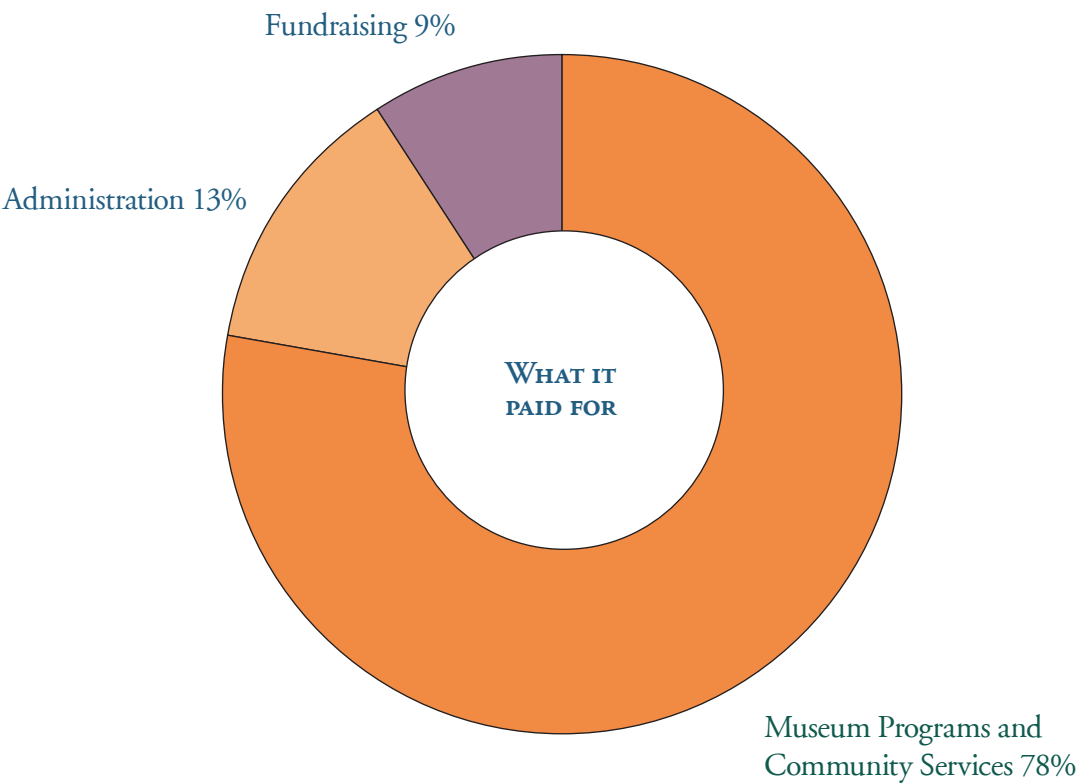
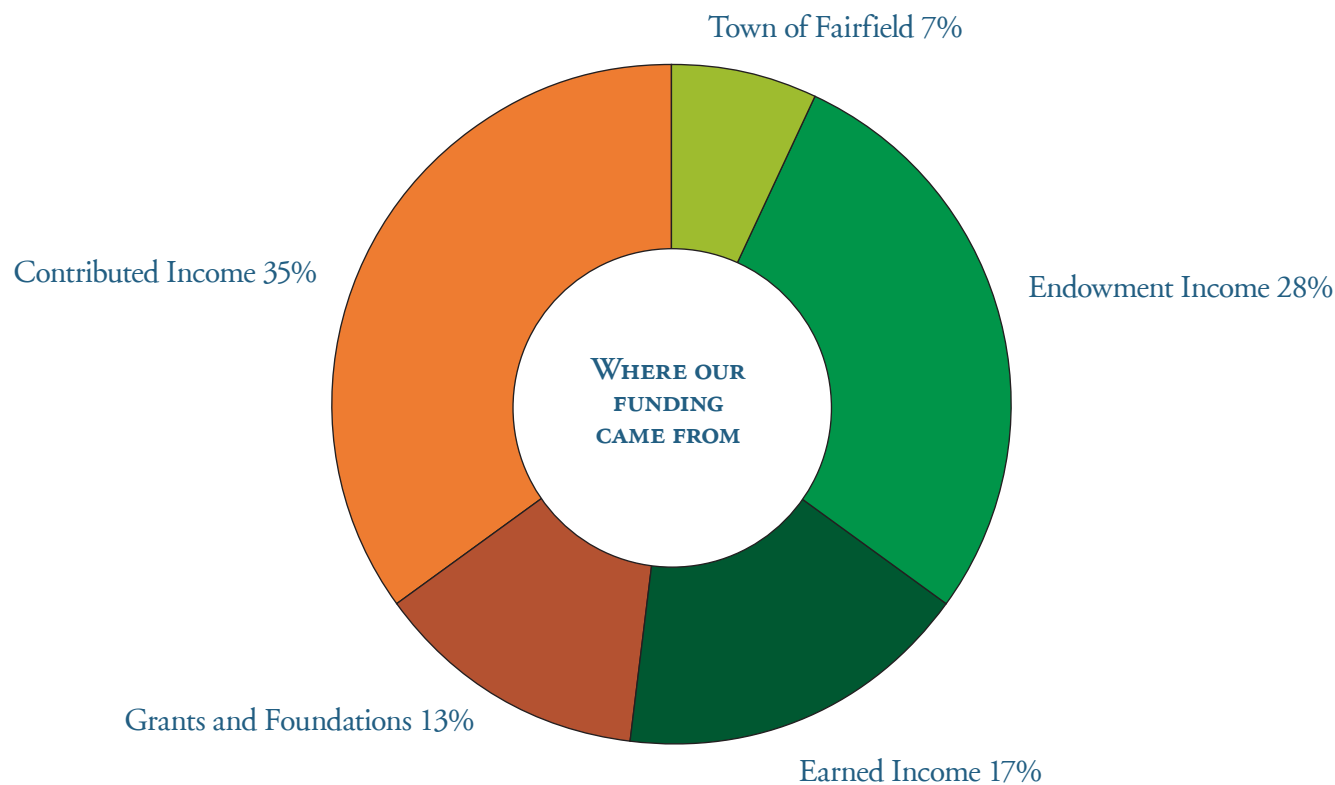
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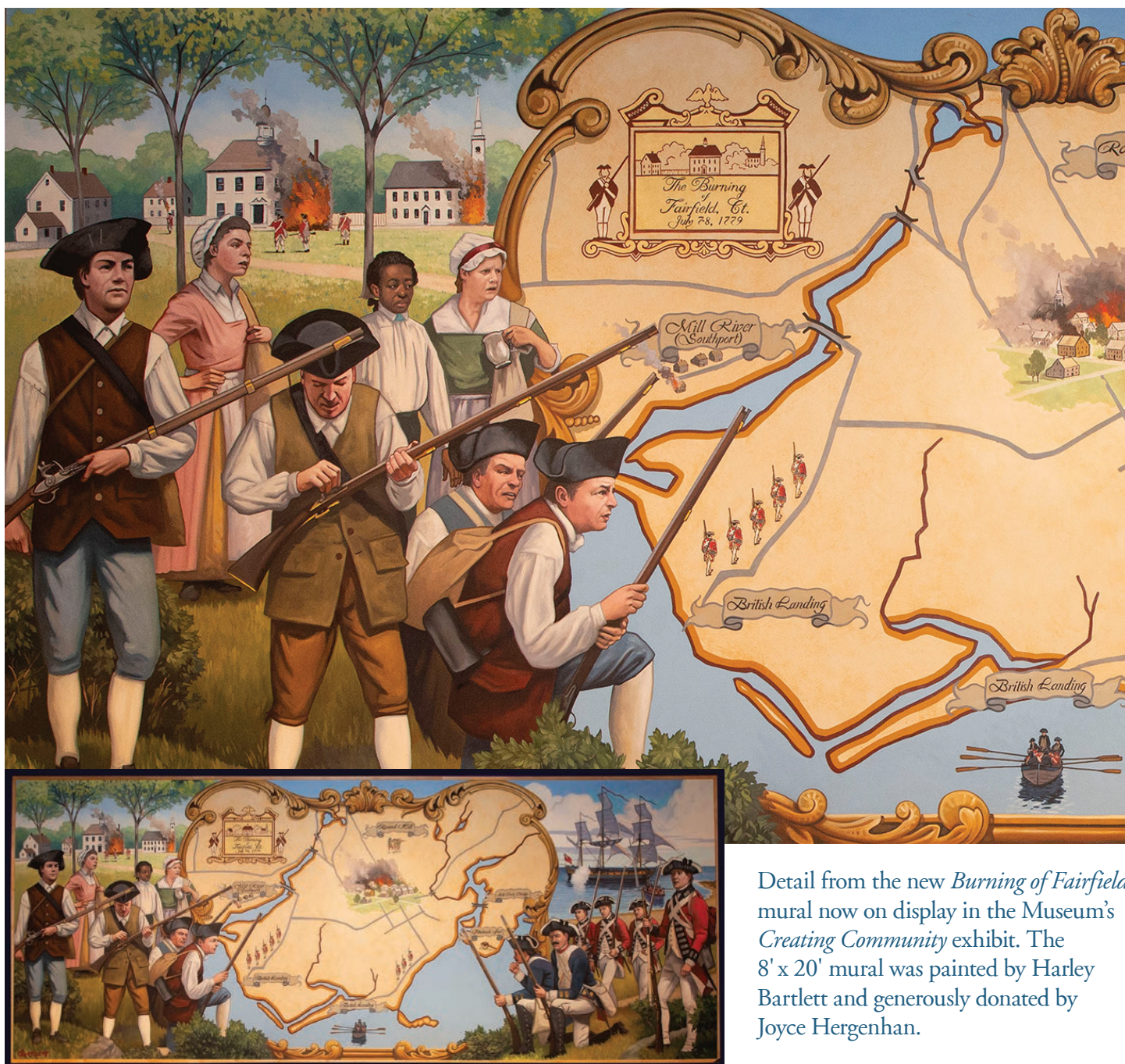
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Detail from the new *Burning of Fairfield* mural now on display in the Museum's *Creating Community* exhibit. The 8' x 20' mural was painted by Harley Bartlett and generously donated by Joyce Hergenhan.

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