



## SunWatch: Fortifying Education through an American Indian Site

**Proposal:** Support education at and through SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park. The requested funds will provide 1) waived fees for all education programs and general admission for five years, 2) a dedicated staff member to develop relevant educational programs and facilitate public programs, and 3) in-depth evaluation and co-creation of culturally relevant educational resources.

**Background:** SunWatch in Dayton, OH is a unique, nationally known site that offers educational, scholarly, and cultural opportunities. Its history weaves throughout the history of the region from its earliest days as a 13<sup>th</sup> century village of the Fort Ancient people to digs by avocational archaeologists; from a salvage project to research excavations to the present immersive, reconstructed village and interpretive center.

SunWatch stands as a National Historic Landmark and continues to influence the archaeological discipline and curious minds interested in history and culture. Standing next to the iconic center pole that experts theorize was used to track the seasons based on the Sun's shadow, visitors can look back to the interpretive center or see life-size 13<sup>th</sup> century style houses, spy the heritage garden and native prairie or survey the landscape as past inhabitants may have done centuries ago. Stepping into a house made of traditional wattle and daub and sitting down for a story alongside a hearth in the middle, pelts on the walls, and pottery to the side, provides a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about the Fort Ancient culture while also connecting with past peoples in a tangible way and finding a gateway to learning about contemporary American Indian lives, cultures, and stories.

### Project:

1. **Waived admission and field trip fees.** Quarterly free events at the Boonshoft Museum see on average 150% attendance compared to a standard day. If that trend carries over to waiving the fees at SunWatch, we expect to have up to 110,000 visitors, 37,500 field trip and distance learning students, and 10,000 summer campers and Explorer Kit recipients over the next five years. Our educational programs meet state standards and help students and visitors develop critical social, emotional, and cognitive skills.
2. **SunWatch site specialist.** Designating one staff member to focus full time on SunWatch programs and relationships will allow us to spend more time understanding community needs, developing and evaluating programs, and building relationships specifically relevant to SunWatch. Since we expect a substantial increase in site visitors, this position will be responsible for conducting public programs during regular operating hours, facilitating field trip activities, investigating options for guest speakers and special events, and serving as a liaison for Tribal representatives.
3. **Educational resources.** SunWatch is an immersive educational experience. From the moment you step on site, the atmosphere leads to learning and reflection. Through powerful, thought-provoking educational resources and programs, we will guide visitors through an exploration of history, culture, community, and more.

**Available Upon Request:** Organizational Accessibility Initiatives and list of Research Citing SunWatch

**Request:** The Dayton Society of Natural History, the parent organization over SunWatch, respectfully requests \$1M in Congressionally Directed Spending to accompany private funds to enhance our educational impact. We are at a hinge point in SunWatch's organizational history, and this funding will secure a future where SunWatch's educational opportunities are a shining example to Ohio and the nation of the powerful, positive influence of informal education institutions at all levels of academics and the general public.

## SunWatch Educational Activities

### Current Offerings:

- Toddler Time: Program for 0-3 year olds and their parents. We are taking this program into the community to visit local libraries and community centers. Our aim is to inform parents how to their children about Indigenous cultures through SunWatch-related activities and artifacts.
- Passport to Kindergarten: Our educators are taking hands-on activities to Pre-K classrooms around the Dayton area to teach children about the people who lived in the Miami Valley 800 years ago. We use comparing the tools they used to act as archaeologist to explore patterns.
- School Tours: Students witness the history of SunWatch Indian Village and learn more about its inhabitants, the Fort Ancient people, with a guided tour through the museum and reconstructed village. Our educators will cater the experience to the age of the school group and may provide games or artifact encounters in the experience.
- On-Site Educational Programs: These include a variety of topics in different educational areas such as archeology, native prairie plants, pre-contact science and technology
- Classroom Programs: We go into classrooms either virtually or in-person to teach about SunWatch. Through a virtual platform, we can showcase artifacts and discuss historic native cultures. Or, we'll go into the classroom to teach about Pre-Contact Science and Technology.
- Scout Programs: We offer the Boy Scout Archaeology merit badge, as our educators will lead scouts through a simulated archaeological dig. Boy Scouts will learn about the archaeological techniques used as well as preservation and interpretation techniques.

### Ideal Future Offerings:

- Public Program Guides: Have educators/interpreters engage non-scheduled visitors at the site. People stationed by the exhibit, out on the deck, at the big house, and/or walking between areas. These educators would use the main exhibit and the deck overlook as spots to talk about the village or the things visitors can see and walk to.
- Public Program Demonstrations/Activities: Many different options for activities to engage the public in, such as gardening, demonstrations of tools, chunky (game played by SunWatch inhabitants), archery, basket weaving, mat weaving, flint knapping, etc.
- Astronomy Programs: We have a telescope at SunWatch and can observe the night sky. We can set up the portable planetarium there to compare what we see in the night sky versus in the planetarium. We can also provide archaeo-astronomy lectures and activities.



Dayton Society  
of  
Natural History

Boonshoft Museum of Discovery  
SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park

October 26, 2022

Congressman Michael Turner  
120 West Third Street, STE 305  
Dayton, OH 45402

Dear Congressman Turner,

Thank you for the opportunity to write a letter of support on behalf of the Dayton Society of Natural History.

As you know, the Dayton Society of Natural History (DSNH) is the parent non-profit for both the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery and SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park. These two locations each offer unique educational opportunities for the children and adults of the Dayton area. Together they reach over 200,000 visitors each year.

SunWatch is a National Historic Landmark, an actively researched archaeological site, and an important meeting place for local American Indians. It is host to a variety of cultural events for the community as well as private Native American ceremony events. The Village represents a reconstructed 800 year old community of the Fort Ancient culture.

While it is a National Historic Landmark, that status does not come with funding. Currently funds for the site are dependent upon admissions, Gift Shop sales, grants and donations, and support from the Boonshoft Museum. The buildings are aging, the site is somewhat remote (requiring extra security), and staffing and utility costs continue to grow.

The DSNH Board believes strongly in the importance of the site and will continue to make it a priority for maintenance, staffing, and being available for tours and classroom field trips but we need your help. We are requesting \$1,000,000 in support to allow the site to be free to the public and school groups for the next five years. The funds will allow us to continue to keep the site staffed and we hope will encourage even more students and families to visit. It will also increase access for cultural uses by our American Indian population.

I believe that this funding will help us to continue the mission of the Dayton Society of Natural History and hope that you will support this project. If I can provide additional information to encourage consideration of the request, please feel free to contact me at (937) 604-1072.

Sincerely,

Jason Trimbach  
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, Dayton Society of Natural History



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

451 West Third Street  
P.O. Box 972  
Dayton, Ohio 45422-1326

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Judy Dodge  
Deborah A. Lieberman  
Carolyn Rice

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Michael Colbert

October 27, 2022

Dear PDAC Committee Members,

We are submitting this letter of support on behalf of the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery for its “SunWatch: Fortifying Education Through an American Indian Site” project.

As a reminder, the Boonshoft Museum plays a crucial role in our community by providing a meaningful educational experience for adults and children alike. It is unlike any other museum in the state because it houses a children’s museum, natural history museum, planetarium, zoo, and science center. They are also a leader in educational programming for children in the Miami Valley and around Ohio.

SunWatch is a unique site that offers educational, scholarly, and cultural opportunities. Its history weaves throughout the history of the region from its earliest days as a Fort Ancient village to digs by avocational archaeologists; from a salvage project to research excavations to the present immersive, reconstructed village and interpretive center.

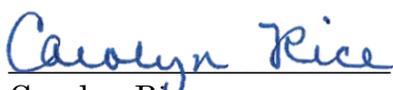
Today, SunWatch stands as a National Historic Landmark and continues to influence the archaeological discipline and curious minds interested in history and culture. The highly immersive experience of the reconstructed American Indian village provides a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about the Fort Ancient culture while also connecting with past peoples in a tangible way and finding a gateway to learning about contemporary American Indian lives, cultures, and stories.

The Boonshoft’s request is directly related to supporting educational opportunities at and through SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park. The requested funds will provide 1) waived fees for all education programs and general admission for five years, 2) a dedicated staff member to develop relevant educational programs and facilitate public programs, and 3) in-depth evaluation and co-creation of culturally relevant educational exhibits.

In its 129-year history, the Boonshoft Museum has proven that it can stand the test of time and maintain and present history for all to learn and enjoy. The Dayton Society of Natural History, the parent organization over SunWatch, respectfully requests \$1M in capital budget appropriations to accompany private funds to enhance our educational impact. This funding will secure a future where SunWatch’s educational opportunities are a shining example to Ohio and the nation of the powerful, positive influence of informal education institutions at all levels of academics and the general public.

Sincerely,

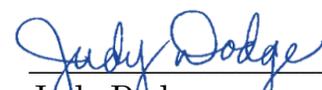
Montgomery County Commissioners:



Carolyn Rice  
Commission President



Deborah A. Lieberman  
Commissioner



Judy Dodge  
Commissioner

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**CITY of DAYTON, OHIO**  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY COMMISSION**  
101 WEST THIRD STREET • P.O. BOX 22 • DAYTON, OHIO 45401  
CITY HALL • (937) 333-3636 • [www.daytonohio.gov](http://www.daytonohio.gov)

October 25, 2022

Priority Development and Advocacy Committee  
1401 S. Main St., STE 200  
Dayton, Oh 45409

Dear PDAC Committee:

I'm pleased to write this letter on behalf of the Dayton City Commission in strong support of the Dayton Society of Natural History's proposal to enhance the education programs at SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park.

As you know, SunWatch stands as a National Historic Landmark in Dayton, and is well known for its unique site, work, and programs that continue to help improve knowledge of archeology, native prairie plants, historical science and technology in youth and adults. In addition, SunWatch gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about the Fort Ancient Culture while also connecting with past peoples in a tangible way, providing a gateway to learning about contemporary American Indian lives, cultures, and stories. I have personally taken advantage of the programs and displays available at SunWatch, and I would very much like to enable more of our residents to do the same.

Therefore, the requested funds (see attached proposal) would allow SunWatch to waive fees for all education programs and general admission for five years, promote a dedicated staff member to develop relevant educational programs and facilitate public programs, as well as evaluate and co-create culturally relevant educational exhibits.

In conclusion, I fully support the efforts of SunWatch as they seek funding to enhance their programs. These programs will become a critical component of our educational development in Dayton, and it would certainly help both youth and adults to gain vital knowledge through education, projects, and hand-on activities.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Matt Joseph,

**OHIO PAIN CLINIC, LLC ·**  
**7076 Corporate Way, Suite 201**  
**Dayton, Ohio 45459**

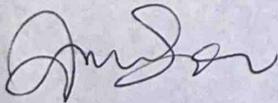
October 29, 2022

Priority Development and Advocacy Committee  
1401 S. Main St., STE 200  
Dayton, Oh 45409

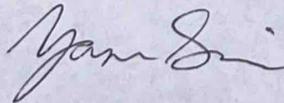
Dear PDAC Committee:

We are pleased to write this letter on behalf of the Dayton City Commission in strong support of the Dayton Society of Natural History's proposal to enhance the education programs at SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park. As you know, SunWatch stands as a National Historic Landmark in Dayton, and is well known for its unique site, work, and programs that continue to help improve knowledge of archeology, native prairie plants, historical science and technology in youth and adults. In addition, SunWatch gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about local history while also connecting with past peoples in a tangible way, providing a gateway to learning about contemporary American Indian lives, cultures, and stories. We, along with our children, have personally taken advantage of the programs and displays available at SunWatch, and would very much like to enable more of our residents to do the same. Therefore, the requested funds (see attached proposal) would allow SunWatch to waive fees for all education programs and general admission for five years, promote a dedicated staff member to develop relevant educational programs and facilitate public programs, as well as evaluate and co-create culturally relevant educational exhibits. In conclusion, we fully support the efforts of SunWatch as they seek funding to enhance their programs. These programs will become a critical component of our educational development in Dayton, and it would certainly help both youth and adults to gain vital knowledge through education, projects, and hand-on activities. Thank you for considering this.

Sincerely,



Dr. Amol Soin  
Owner,  
Ohio Pain Clinic



Yasmeen Soin  
Trustee,  
Dayton Society of Natural History/Boonshoft Museum of Discovery

Congressman Turner,

1 November 2022

I am writing in support of funding for Sunwatch Indian and Archeological village educational programs. Our family represents multiple perspectives, which may offer insight as to the need for meaningful investment into Sunwatch, and what that commitment can provide for schools, students and families.

I have been a cultural educator for 27 years and come from a long line of Mohawk women dedicated to family and community service. I am an Air Force veteran, retired military spouse and a mother of 2 amazing sons, one of whom is on the Autism spectrum. My husband and I met as young Airmen stationed at Little Rock AFB, AR. He is originally from Ohio, and I from Buffalo NY. Like many military personnel, we looked for ways to build our “home away from home”. What I was searching for were organizations that offered cultural support, educational resources, and opportunities to connect with other Native Americans in the community. What I know now is that I was really looking for Sunwatch. Unfortunately, it would take almost 20 years to get to Wright Patterson AFB, but the timing was perfect.

Every weekend we would look for places to explore that were culturally rich and sensory friendly. That is when we discovered Sunwatch. I was overwhelmed by the immense cultural and historical significance, and yet to look around the village you can see the unrealized potential. The educational value is immeasurable, and I see no greater foundation than in educational programming. Programs are vital in connecting the next generation of students, from preschool to college to our culture, history, and the science of discovery.

I am excited by the possibility of funding, especially as a Native American community organizer. It’s institutions like Sunwatch that have the unique opportunity to bring in programs, with our voices. After 6 years in D.C. with the Smithsonian museums as free resources, I believe if Sunwatch is able to open its doors, free to the public, this next generation will experience educational growth at an exponential rate. That kind of investment in Sunwatch is legacy work, and something only a few can aspire to, but many hope to play a role in. Sunwatch is a place for all of us that want to experience a piece of “home away from home”, and I would like to express my sincerest gratitude for the future of opportunities that our Native American community will experience if funding is granted.

NiaWen,

Stephanie Van Hoose, Mohawk, MBQ, T-MT  
Indigenous Advocacy and Education  
R.E.A.C.H Community Organizer

Congressman Mike Turner

120 W. Third Street STE 305

Dayton, OH. 45402

To the Honorable Michael Turner,

We, members of the Native American community residing here in the City of Dayton, Ohio are requesting your consideration in supporting the funding request for SunWatch Indian Village and Archeological Park.

In 1989 The Miami Valley Council for Native Americans was founded within the City of Dayton, Ohio to preserve, promote and protect Native American culture and heritage. The mission statement of the organization read as followed: The Miami Valley Council for Native Americans exists to 1) preserve, honor, and promote American Indian culture; 2) raise awareness of issues faced by Native Americans today; 3) build bridges between cultures; and 4) foster right relationships with all beings. Today, members of the community continue the work and vision of the once vital organization.

In 2008 a relationship was established with SunWatch Indian Village and Boonshoft Museum to create not only a presence but an awareness to the rich history that exist within the City. An inclusive education is vital to the success and future of our community. The work at SunWatch Indian Village, under the management of Boonshoft Museum, is at the forefront of historical preservation of the first Daytonians. Collaboration between Boonshoft and members of the Native American community brings an authentic vision of our shared history. SunWatch history cannot be separated from itself. It is a shared collective of powerful stories in American Indian History, Ohio History and Daytonian History.

We, the Native American community want to Thank You for your consideration.

Guy W. Jones

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October 26, 2022

Hon. Michael Turner  
United States House of Representatives  
2082 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Turner:

Please accept this letter supporting SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park's request for funding of educational programs.

SunWatch plays a crucial role in our community by providing a meaningful educational experience for adults and children alike. This unique site offers educational, scholarly and cultural opportunities and is a National Historic Landmark that continues to influence the archaeological discipline and curious minds interested in history and culture. The highly immersive experience of the reconstructed American Indian village provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Fort Ancient culture while also connecting with past peoples in a tangible way and finding a gateway to learning about contemporary American Indian lives, cultures, and stories.

Their funding request includes:

- Waived admission and field trip fees – when SunWatch hosts their quarterly free events, they see on average 150% attendance compared to a standard day. If that trend carries over to waiving the fees at SunWatch, they could have up to 10,000 visitors, 7,500 field trip and distance learning students, and 1,000 summer campers and Explorer Kit recipients each year.
- SunWatch site specialist – designating one staff member to focus full time on SunWatch programs and relationships, which will allow them to spend more time understanding community needs, developing and evaluating programs, and building relationships specifically relevant to SunWatch.
- Educational exhibits – exhibits are a fundamental piece of the immersive educational experience at SunWatch. The partially reconstructed village requires regular maintenance and highly specialized skills. In addition, the exhibits in the interpretive center have not been significantly changed for decades. They are not only aged, but also sorely outdated based on new information and research.

The Dayton Society of Natural History, the parent organization over SunWatch, is requesting \$1M in capital budget appropriations to accompany private funds to enhance their educational impact. This funding will secure a future where SunWatch's educational opportunities are a shining example to Ohio and the nation of the powerful, positive influence of informal education institutions at all levels of academics and the public.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Raga  
Executive Director

Priority Development and Advocacy Committee  
1401 S. Main St., STE 200  
Dayton, OH 45409

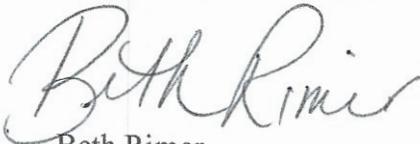
To Priority Development and Advocacy Committee:

The Ohio Writing Project (OWP) at Miami University is one of the longest running sites of the National Writing Project. As part of the Miami University English Department, OWP supports K-12 teachers across the region and celebrates the professionalism, expertise, and talent of educators.

OWP is currently partnering with the Dayton Society of Natural History and the SunWatch Indian Village through a one year NEH Building a More Perfect Union grant. Through this grant, we have connected K-12 teachers and students with SunWatch through the development of literacy resources that relate to Ohio SS and ELA standards. In field trips and workshops visits, we have seen both educators and students benefit from their experience at SunWatch as they develop literacy skills, interact with cultural materials and address the importance of indigenous histories here in Ohio.

SunWatch provides a valuable and unique educational experience that enriches the Ohio State Standards in Social Studies across multiple grade levels. Through field trips, students and teachers interact with history and heritage as they learn alongside cultural materials in a way that is not possible in a book. Students and teachers leave energized and engaged in learning.

Too often, experiences like visiting SunWatch are out of reach for schools due to financial constraints. Knowing the impact of learning on location at SunWatch, we enthusiastically support the goal of SunWatch offering free and financially manageable student admissions and programs as they continue to be a partner to Ohio's schools.



Beth Rimer  
Co-Director  
Ohio Writing Project  
Miami University