

# SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

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## SDHC/GVSU "STORIES OF SUMMER" PROJECT WINS GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

JAN. 26, 2018 -- The Kutsche Office of Local History at Grand Valley State University has announced receiving a \$12,000 grant to support a joint program with SD History Center aimed at capturing oral histories and visual materials documenting our area's transformative summers of the 1950-1970s.

Awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities through its "Common Heritage" program, the grant shares \$250,000 funding for 23 similar projects nationwide, all aimed at capturing America's cultural heritage "hidden" in personal life stories, family histories, photo albums, newspaper clippings and other home memorabilia.



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**Humanities**

According to SDHC Executive Director Nathan Nietering, the Center's "Stories of Summer" project was designed in partnership with GVSU to preserve our area's evolution through its turbulent post-war growth of tourism and concurrent rise as a lakeshore destination for the LGBT community.

The period shares the focus of SDHC's current two-year exhibition at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum at Mt. Baldhead, "Cold War / Hot Towns," in which first-hand accounts of wild music festivals, motorcycle gangs on the backstreets of Douglas, college parties in downtown Saugatuck and more are presented around a structure representing the Mt. Baldhead radar tower, dramatizing its mission to relentlessly search the skies for Soviet bombers at the height of the Cold War scare.

Adds Kimberly McKee, director of the Kutsche Office, "while the area's logging, agriculture and maritime histories are well-documented, there's a marked absence regarding the LGBT experience within Saugatuck and Douglas that begs to be filled in."

To kick off the project, the History Center will host a community meeting at its regular 7pm monthly program at the Old School House on April 11 to more fully explain plans and enlist volunteer assistance.

On two summer Saturdays -- June 2 and July 21 -- the History Center and Kutsche Office will team up to host "History Harvests" at the Old School House, conducting oral history interviews and receiving materials brought in by community participants. Special equipment will be set up to photograph or scan submitted materials for digitizing as additions to SDHC archives; originals will be either accepted if donated, or returned to their owners along with duplicate digital images.

Staff member from Grand Valley's University Libraries then will preserve the digitized interviews and images on-line for public access. Transcribed copies of oral histories and collected materials will be kept at SDHC's Old School House in Douglas and in an on-line database.

In September, date to be determined, a community-wide dialogue will be scheduled to share items uncovered and highlight interesting aspects of the interviews, and to invite feedback about other ways to make the information widely available.

For more information about the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center, its Museum in Saugatuck and Old School House in Douglas, volunteer opportunities or activities planned for 2018, visit [www.MySDHistory.org](http://www.MySDHistory.org).

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