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Rogue Valley Participates in Smithsonian Innovation Exhibit
*ScienceWorks Hands-On Museum and Southern Oregon Historical Society Partner to
Explore Invention in the Rogue Valley*
*“Places of Invention” Presents a New Smithsonian Model for Collaborative Creation of Exhibit
Content*

The Smithsonian’s Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation announces six new grants, doubling participation in its groundbreaking collaborative exhibition project, “Places of Invention,” set to open at the National Museum of American History in 2015. Following a national call for contributors to its Affiliates Project, six Smithsonian Affiliate teams—led by the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Mass.; Conner Prairie Interactive History Park in Fishers, Ind.; the National WWII Museum in New Orleans; ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum in Ashland, Ore.; Telluride Historical Museum in Telluride, Colo.; and Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland— will receive \$10,000 to research and document innovation in their communities.

With Lemelson Center guidance, Affiliate organizations and their community partners will use different documentation techniques—oral histories, site visits, collections research and community events—to create videos highlighting the unique combinations of inspiring surroundings, creative people and ready resources that sparked local innovation. These short videos will become an integral part of the “Places of Invention” interactive map, accessible in-person at the museum and online anywhere in the world. Related public programming will take place at each Affiliate location as part of the museum’s “Taking It to the Nation” initiative, which strives to bring the museum to the hometown and doorstep of every American.

“When discussing innovation, place matters,” said Art Molella, director of the Lemelson Center. “While the lone inventor maintains its romantic status in the minds of most, more than 15 years of research by the Lemelson Center has demonstrated the value and necessity of community. The addition of the stories behind the innovative communities these six new museums represent will help us create an even more robust portrayal of American ingenuity within ‘Places of Invention.’”

ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum and Southern Oregon Historical Society will work together with the Smithsonian Institution team to document innovation and invention that has taken place in the Rogue Valley over the last two centuries.

“We know the Rogue Valley is unique in its ability to draw rugged individualists and creative entrepreneurs to the area,” ScienceWorks executive director Chip Lindsey said. “Southern Oregon Historical Society holds a rich collection of stories and artifacts that shed light on the fascinating history of this region. Through listening groups, interviews and research, we are learning more about the innovative nature of the Rogue Valley, from the agricultural marketing genius of Harry and David in the 1930s, to Brammo today leading the electric motorbike industry.”

The new Affiliate Project participants join the six members of the project’s pilot phase—American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Mass.; Museum of History and Industry in Seattle; Peoria Riverfront Museum in Peoria, Ill.; Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh; U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala.; and The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art, and Technology in Newark, Ohio.

“Places of Invention” will take visitors on a journey through time and place to discover the stories of people who lived, worked, played, collaborated, adapted, took risks, solved problems and sometimes failed—all in the pursuit of something new. The exhibition features six communities representing what can happen when the right mix of inventive people, untapped resources and inspiring surroundings come together—precision manufacturing in Hartford, Conn., late 1800s; Technicolor in Hollywood, Calif., 1930s; medical innovations in Medical Alley, Minn., 1950s; the birth of hip-hop in the Bronx, N.Y., 1970s; the rise of the personal computer in Silicon Valley, Calif., 1970s–1980s; and clean-energy innovations in Fort Collins, Colo., 2010s. “Places of Invention” is under development thanks in part to a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Established in 1996, Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. The long-term goal of Smithsonian Affiliations is to

facilitate a two-way relationship among Affiliate organizations and the Smithsonian Institution to increase discovery and inspire lifelong learning in communities across America. More information about the Smithsonian Affiliations program and Affiliate activity is available at www.affiliations.si.edu.

The Lemelson Center has led the study of invention and innovation at the Smithsonian since 1995. The center's activities advance scholarship on the history of invention, share stories about inventors and their work and nurture creativity in young people. The center is supported by The Lemelson Foundation and located in the National Museum of American History. For more information, visit <http://invention.smithsonian.org>.

ScienceWorks Hands-On Museum is the regional science museum for Southern Oregon and Northern California. Located at 1500 East Main Street in Ashland, the museum is home to more than 100 exhibits, and hosts themed weekends, and ongoing fun, educational, science programs for all ages year-round. For more information, call (541) 482-6767 or visit www.scienceworksmuseum.org.

The **Southern Oregon Historical Society's** mission is to make history come alive by collecting, preserving, and sharing the stories and artifacts of our common heritage. SOHS operates the Research Library at 106 N. Central Avenue in Medford and Historic Hanley Farm in Central Point. For more information, call (541) 773-6536 or visit www.sohs.org.

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