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OUR OPINION

Consider helping local African American museum in its moment of need

Jan 28, 2022

As the weeks pass since Dec. 11, we learn more and more about the extent of the local damage and losses that resulted from the deadly and historic tornado outbreak in Kentucky.

To date, much of the focus – appropriately so – has been trained on the individuals and families whose lives and livelihoods were upended and forever changed by the tragic events. There are many other types of victims as well, including important documents and artifacts related to southcentral Kentucky’s African American history.

Bowling Green’s African American Museum at 1783 Chestnut St. actually escaped the tornadoes themselves with what appeared to be relatively minor damage. However, on Dec. 22, an electrical fire ignited at the facility due to storm-loosened wiring. Firefighters arrived quickly enough to spare the structure from catastrophic damage, but a number of objects held inside were exposed to water as the fire was being fought.

A recent report by the Daily News' Aaron Mudd said museum officials have worked closely with Western Kentucky University personnel to dry out and/or freeze nearly three dozen boxes of items that are now in need of repair, conservation and preservation attention.

Meanwhile, work is underway to assess the full scope of the damage to the museum's building and collections, according to museum board Chairman John Hardin, a professor emeritus at WKU.

The museum is raising money in hopes of hiring a Kentucky-based conservator to assess the collection and recommend a treatment plan for the damaged objects. The museum also wants to purchase a new computer to inventory the collection and secure a new space for the museum. Once those goals are complete, the museum wants to establish a permanent endowment to help resume operations and eventually hire a full-time curator.

"The goal is ultimately to recover, document, preserve and present African American history in the Bowling Green area," Hardin said, describing the museum's mission.

When it was open, it did not charge visitors admission. Instead, it asked for voluntary donations," Mudd wrote in his Daily News article.

A GoFundMe campaign has been established to aid the museum in its recovery and mission. As of this writing, nearly \$2,000 of the \$5,000 goal has been raised, and we

encourage all who are able to consider donating to this important cause. (Visit this website to learn more or to donate: [https:// bit.ly/3GVEN3z](https://bit.ly/3GVEN3z).)

This museum has been a valuable hub for research and preservation of this area’s rich African American history for nearly a decade, and we look forward to its continued contributions to our community in the decades to come. The organization needs a boost in order to overcome an unforeseen hurdle, however, and we’re hopeful that residents see fit to help the museum during its time of need.

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