



**OPEN HOUSE DAY** SAT JUNE 13

**Connecticut**<sup>®</sup>  
*still revolutionary*

**2015 HANDBOOK**

A statewide day of discovery devoted to transforming state residents into Connecticut Ambassadors

# Contents

- 3     **Contacts & Resources****
- 5     **Introduction****
- 6     **Program Overview****
- 8     **Connecticut Ambassador Program****
- 10    **How to Make the Most of Your Open House****
  - Step 1. Invite Visitors
  - Step 2. Set the Stage
  - Step 3. Engage and Expand Your Audience
  - Step 4. Bring Your Attraction to Life
- 20    **Promoting Your Event: Local Media Kit****
  - Press Release Template
  - Tips for Creating a Media-Friendly Press Release
  - How to Identify and Work with Local Media
  - Distributing Your Press Release Prior to the Event
  - Pitching the Story
  - Day-of-Event Media Activities
  - Photo Opportunities
- 28    **Samples****
  - Letter of Invitation to Local Officials
  - Ambassador Program Sign-up Sheet
  - After Your Open House
  - After Event Checklist
  - Photo Usage Rights Agreement Form
  - Evaluation Form

# Contacts & Resources



Questions about Connecticut Open House Day can be directed to the following:

## **Sign-up**

Jean Hebert	860.256.2739
Rosemary Bove	860.256.2725

## **Ambassador Program**

Rosemary Bove	860.256.2725
---------------	--------------

## **Requests for Promotional Materials**

Jean Hebert	860.256.2739
-------------	--------------

## **Public Relations Support**

Kelsey Varwig	212.453.2474
---------------	--------------

---

# Welcome



# Introduction



## Welcome to the 11th annual state-wide Connecticut Open House Day!

This event has proven to be the perfect opportunity to share your property with those best positioned to support it in the future. So many of our attractions, museums, galleries, theaters and historic sites reflects the elements which make Connecticut great.

Veterans of Open House Day know that the two key reasons for this event are to:

- Showcase your attraction to previous and new Connecticut visitors
- Recruit residents as Connecticut Ambassadors

Successful implementation requires careful preparation and much attention to detail. To help you make the most of your day, this Open House Day Handbook includes:

- Tips on how to make your Open House Day a success
- A variety of sample invitations
- A public relations kit to promote your site's participation to local media

We hope you find this Handbook useful as you plan your Connecticut Open House Day. It is intended as a resource and a reference tool that can be used all year.

We wish you great success with Connecticut Open House Day. And we look forward to celebrating with you all that is quintessentially Connecticut on June 13th!



---

# Overview

# Program Description



On June 13, 2015, cultural and tourism sites across the state will join together to embrace Connecticut's fascinating worlds of history, art and tourism via Connecticut Open House Day. On that day, in a single, unified event, we will speak to the residents of Connecticut as never before, showing them what makes this great state of ours so exceptional: a colorful heritage, ethnic diversity, and a wealth of treasures in the form of art galleries, museums, theaters, historic properties, tourism venues and other unique attractions.

To qualify for any Open House Day special, properties may require at least one person in each visiting group to show a valid Connecticut driver's license. Properties may elect to extend Open House Day specials to out of state guests if they choose.

## **The Connecticut Ambassador Program**

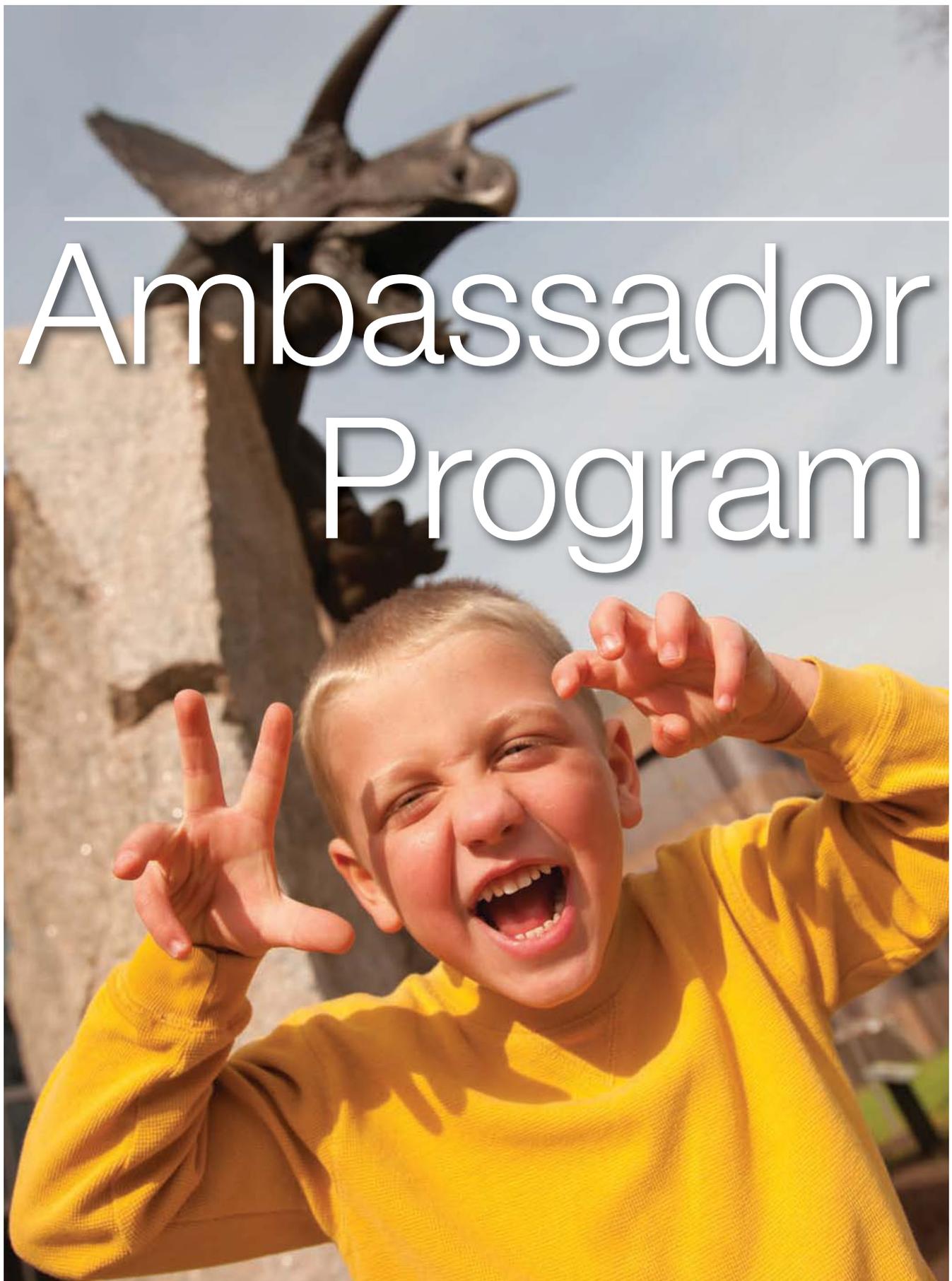
Open House Day is the signature event promoting our Ambassador Program, a state pride initiative we have designed to encourage our citizens to share Connecticut's cultural and tourism assets with visiting family and friends. We hope you will use Connecticut Open House Day to increase residents' awareness of Connecticut's cultural vitality and thereby transform residents into enthusiastic state advocates.

We are very excited about this event, in terms of resident enrichment and what it may provide to you: an ideal occasion for your site to gain visibility, to further employee hospitality training, and to engage your board members, donors, volunteers and friends.

## **Promotional Opportunity**

In addition to whatever promotional activities you opt to pursue on your own, we are supporting this event with public relations efforts. We are also dedicating a section of the CTvisit.com website to Connecticut Open House Day, which will include event information and a listing of participating venues for residents to view.

Make June 13th a day to remember!



---

# Ambassador Program

# Invite visitors to become Connecticut Ambassadors



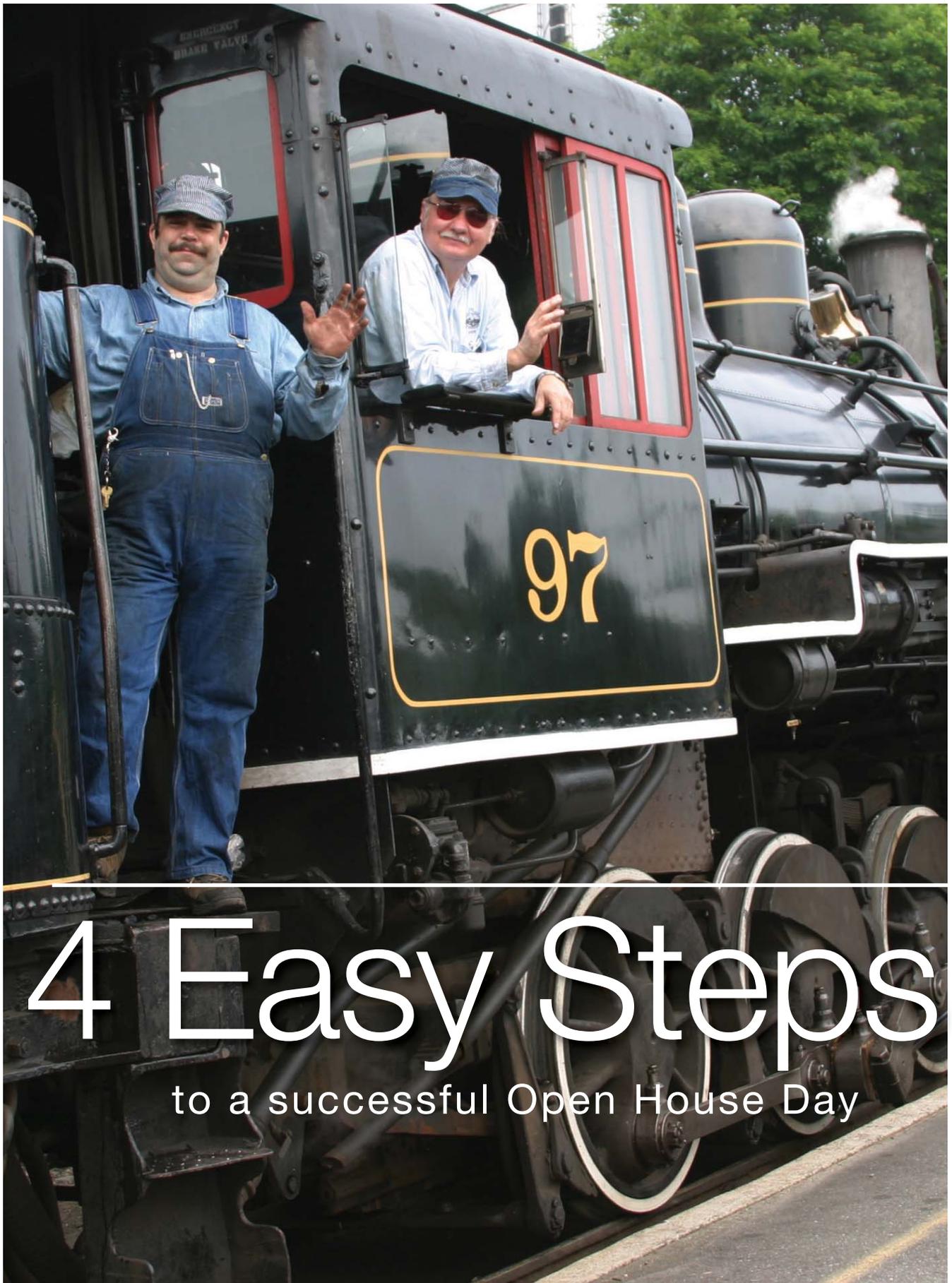
The goal of Open House Day is to transform state residents into Connecticut Ambassadors and convert them into your personal sales force. Encourage residents to share Connecticut's treasures with family and friends.

Each resident of Connecticut – including your staff – can become a Connecticut Ambassador simply by signing up during Open House Day. The Connecticut Ambassador Program keeps everyone aware of the attractions and events that make our state special.

When residents sign up at the Open House, they will receive periodic e-newsletter updates.

To become an official Connecticut Ambassador, visitors must sign-up (*Note: See sample sign-up sheet located on page 30*). To qualify as a Connecticut Ambassador, one must be a Connecticut resident.

After Open House Day, please fax completed sheets to:  
Connecticut Office of Tourism  
attention: Rosemary Bove  
CT Ambassador Program, fax number: 860.707.1811



# 4 Easy Steps

to a successful Open House Day

# How to make the most of Open House Day



Connecticut Open House Day is an opportunity to showcase your site to new visitors and reintroduce it to those already familiar with it. The goal is to transform state residents into Connecticut Ambassadors and convert them into your personal sales force.

The following suggestions are offered to assist you in making your Open House (and future marketing efforts) a success – by encouraging visitors to return again and again with friends and family.

The concept is simple.

- First:           **Be Unabashed!** Get people to visit!  
Actively promote yourself in any way you can.
  
- Next:           **Make it fun!** Provide a memorable experience!  
Take advantage to provide the best possible activity.
  
- Finally:       **Keep them wanting more!** Ensure they return!  
Provide simple give-aways, brochures and follow-up to reinforce the good feelings and customer relations.

Remember...the enthusiasm – and the end result – begin with you!

# Step 1.



# Invite Visitors



Start by spreading the word among your core customers with a personal invitation. This is a great way to engage donors and board members, and to share your site with friends.

## **Local Officials**

Local dignitaries, town officials and influential public figures automatically lend credibility and provide an instant media draw. Take their picture and get a quote to send to local media. Reinforce their support by sending officials a thank-you note and a photo of them at your attraction.

## **Media**

Media plays an important role in getting exposure by letting your target audience know in advance about your Open House.

*(Note: See Press Kit section.)*

## **Mailing List**

Enhance your mailing list with lists from local arts organizations or collaborate with other participating Open House Day attractions nearby to share other Connecticut Open House Day costs and make it a bigger draw.

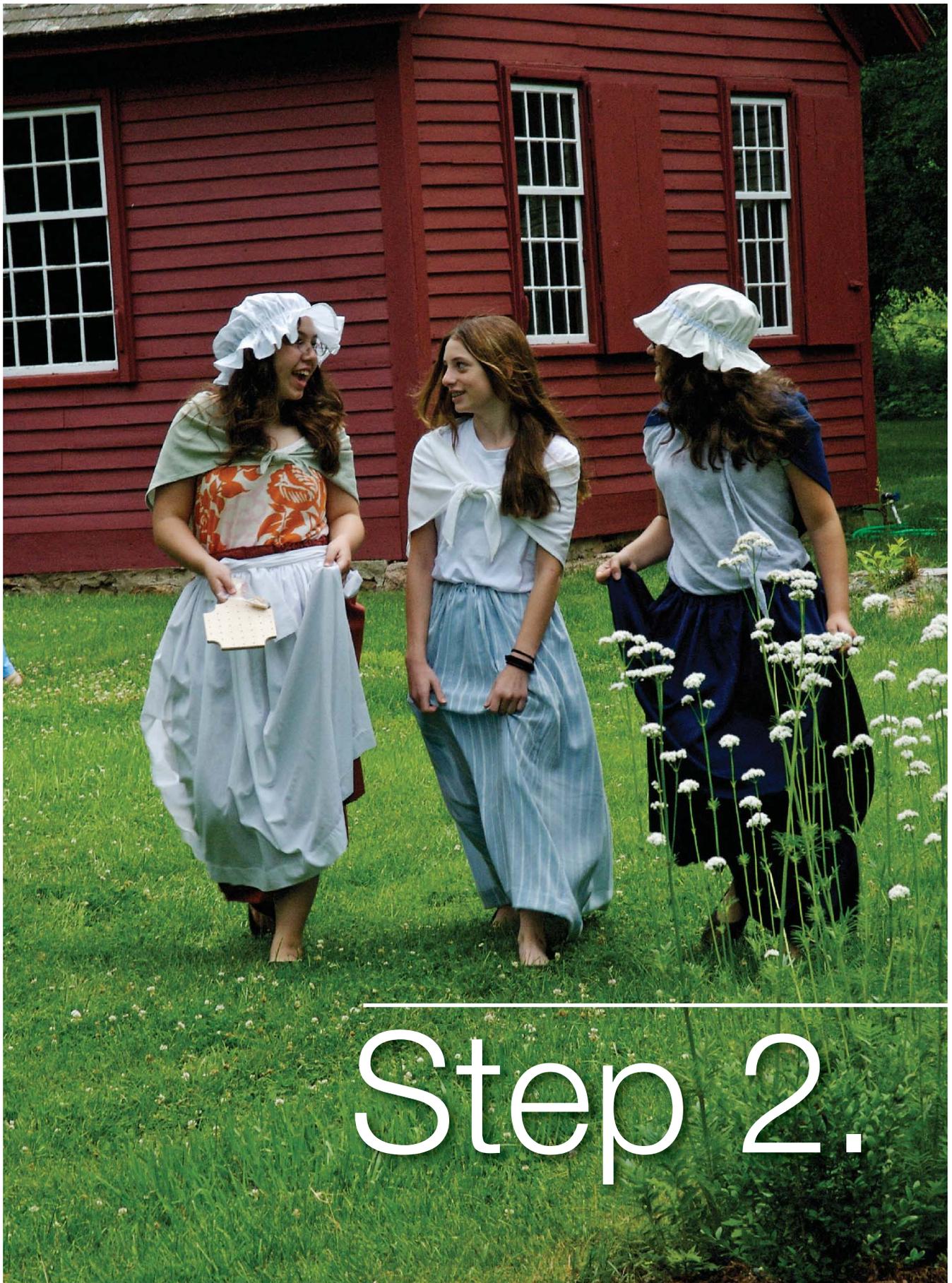
## **Promote on Your Own**

Invitations can be produced inexpensively in a variety of formats.

- Letter-sized Flyers
- E-Flyer (PDFs)
- Website Links

The design of your invitation should communicate your message in a clear, colorful and exciting manner. Balance “motivation” with “information,” and make sure that dates, times, places and any other pertinent information (special offers or activities) are clearly displayed. The Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT) is linking to your website to promote your participation. Link back to the COT website –

**[www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com)**



# Step 2.

# Set the Stage



Now that you have the attention of your target audience, take advantage of Connecticut Open House Day as an opportunity to spruce up your venue. Be sure your site is presented in the best possible manner. Reinforce the theme of your attraction with music, activities and other offerings.

## **Make an Impression!**

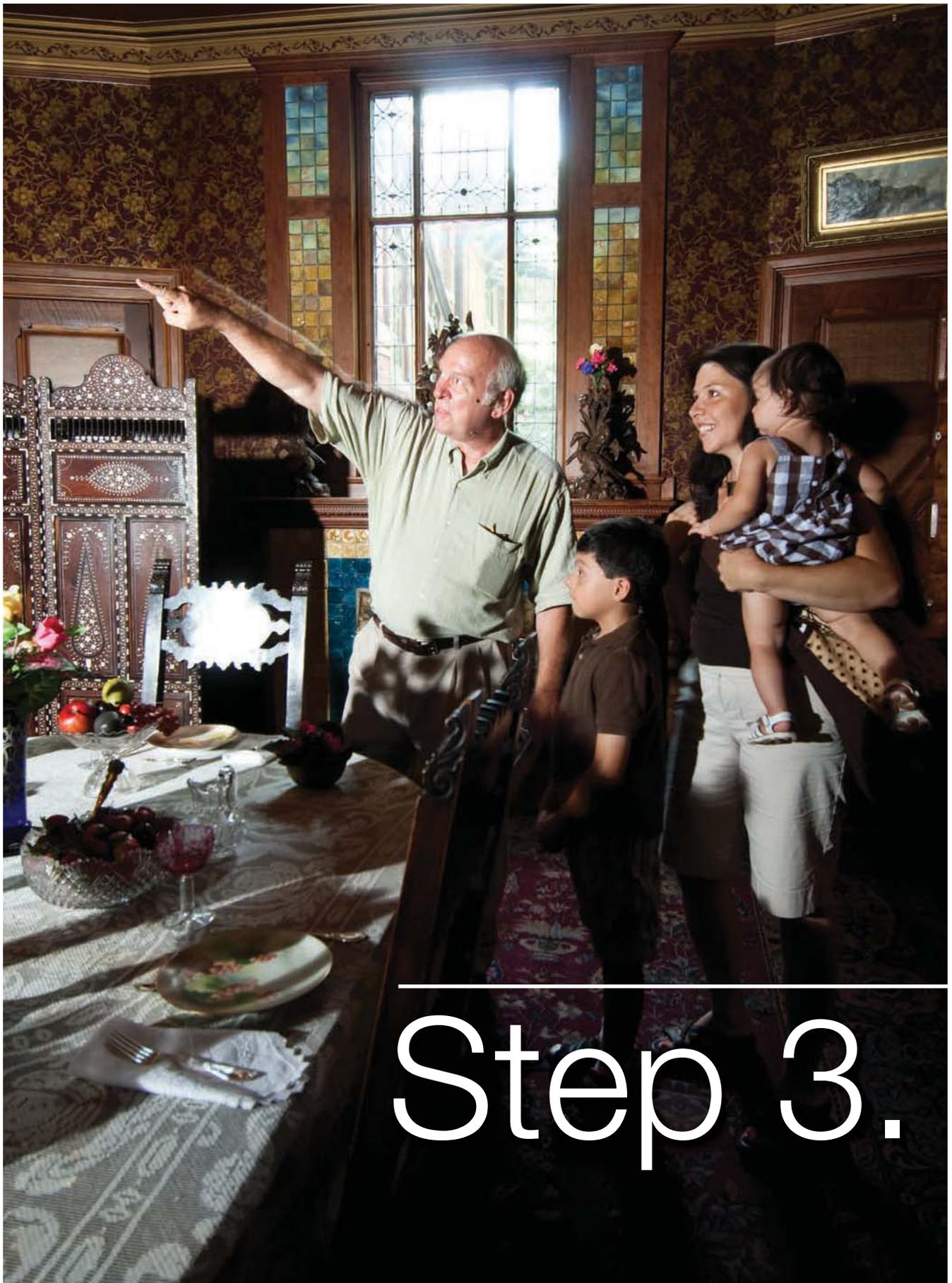
Create a festive feel using balloons, ribbons, flags and the Connecticut Open House banner or lawn sign at your site entrance as visitors enter your property. This will also attract walk-ins who may not know about your Open House, but are curious as to what's going on. Integrate your site colors and logo wherever possible.

## **The Welcome Mat!**

Extend old-fashioned hospitality by serving complimentary refreshments: cookies, coffee, cider, etc. Tie themes together into the concept of your site. For example, historic homes might want to feature cookies of the period; an art museum might want to serve cookies that resemble small works of art. Another idea is to collaborate with local restaurants or lodging establishments and have them donate refreshments in exchange for promotion at your venue.

## **Put on a Show!**

It is important that new visitors get the most out of their visit and leave feeling excited about their Connecticut Open House Day experience. At a minimum, exhibits should be well maintained and working. This is a chance to have some extra fun and enhance your attraction. Don't forget the small details. Polish the floors and cut the grass – and make sure restrooms are clean and well stocked with soap, towels, etc.



Step 3.

# Be Engaging



## **1. Welcome People**

Position a greeter at the door to welcome visitors. Supply your greeter with brochures and other tourism information. Establish your appreciation of their patronage as they enter, as well as setting a positive tone for the visit.

## **2. Invite Everyone to Become an Ambassador**

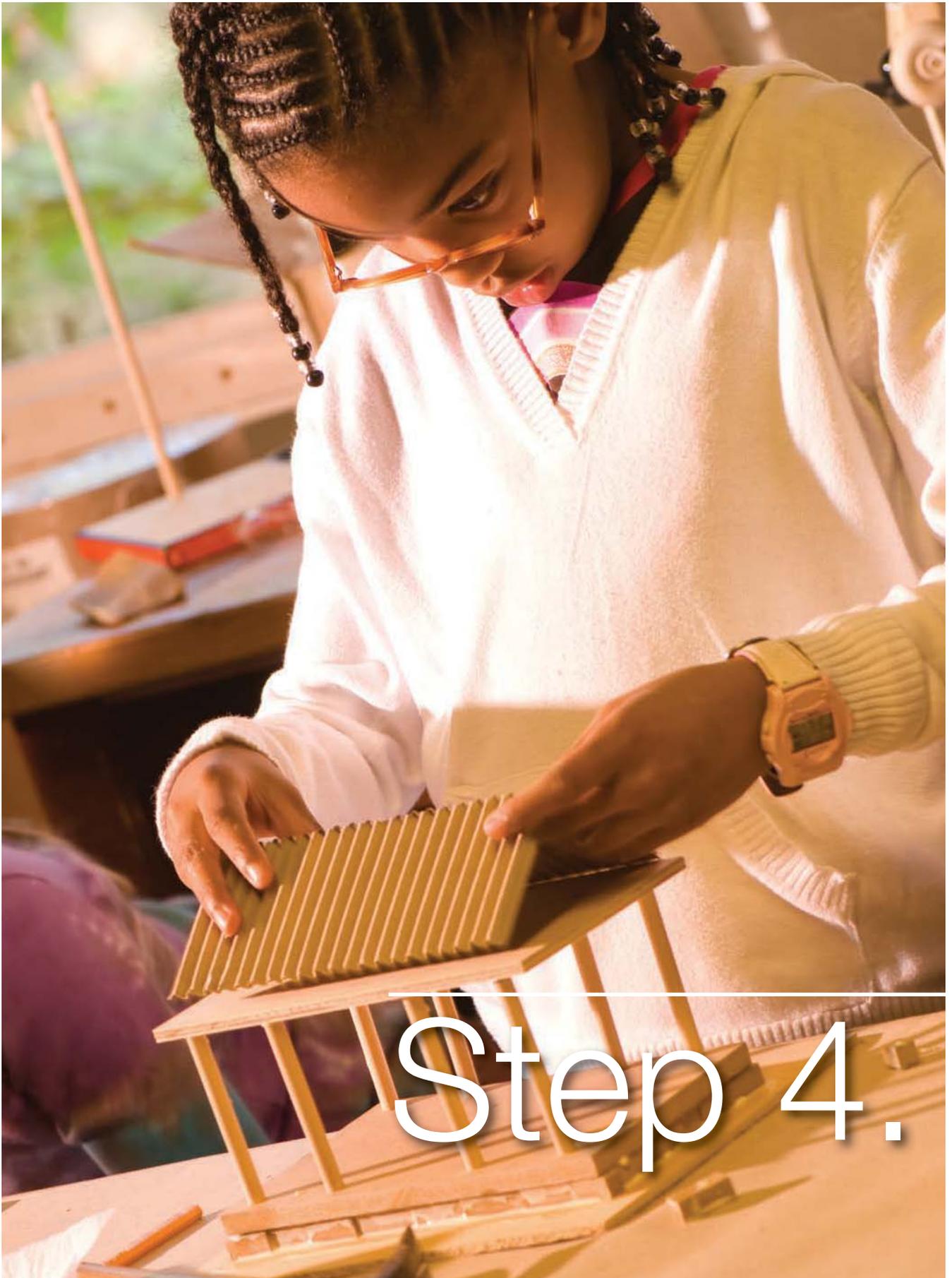
The Connecticut Ambassador Program invites every Connecticut resident who visits your site to promote the cultural and tourism assets of Connecticut to new prospective visitors. This is key to promoting your attraction and building an audience.

## **3. Capture Your Audience**

To build on the success of your Open House, it is critical to create an accurate record of the people who visit that day. Once you have collected visitors' names, addresses, and emails – and have provided them with tourism information, you can begin ways to engage them. *(Note: The Ambassador Program sign-up sheet included in the Samples section should be photocopied to capture visitors' names, addresses and e-mails then fax to 860.707.1811.)*

## **4. Keep Them Coming Back**

Now that you have the attention of Connecticut residents and converted them to state advocates, do something that will make them remember their Connecticut Open House Day experience, and want to return with family and friends. Consider sending them home with discounts on items or coupons for future visits. Remember: These are your best prospects for repeat business!



Step 4.

# Bring Venue to Life



Going beyond the expected and bring your venue to life! Express the vitality of your property through the arts and unique demonstrations. Involve local arts groups and/or your dedicated volunteers by allowing them to perform, or present special activities that express your Connecticut Open House Day message and define your site.

## **Dress the Part!**

Historic sites become time machines when guides dress in period costumes. Art museum guides might invent an original costume reflecting a work of art – how about a Calder mobile hat or an impressionist shirt with colored dots of paint?

## **Hands-on Activities!**

Prepare an activity to invite participation on different levels: from a simple writing and drawing activity to engaging in a dance piece or game. Allow for visitors to choose to participate or not.

## **Demonstrate!**

Showcase activities pertinent to your property performed by skilled artisans, e.g. the weaving of textiles, production of furniture, blacksmithing, boat building – anything that provides a new appreciation of the complexities and craftsmanship of a by-gone era.

## **“Backstage” Tours!**

Get your visitors thinking about what goes on behind the scenes at your site every day: How do the lights and scenery change so quickly? What’s the view from the orchestra pit? Where do you store art when it is not on display? How do you repair a painting? What happens when an animal gets sick?

## **Local Celebrities!**

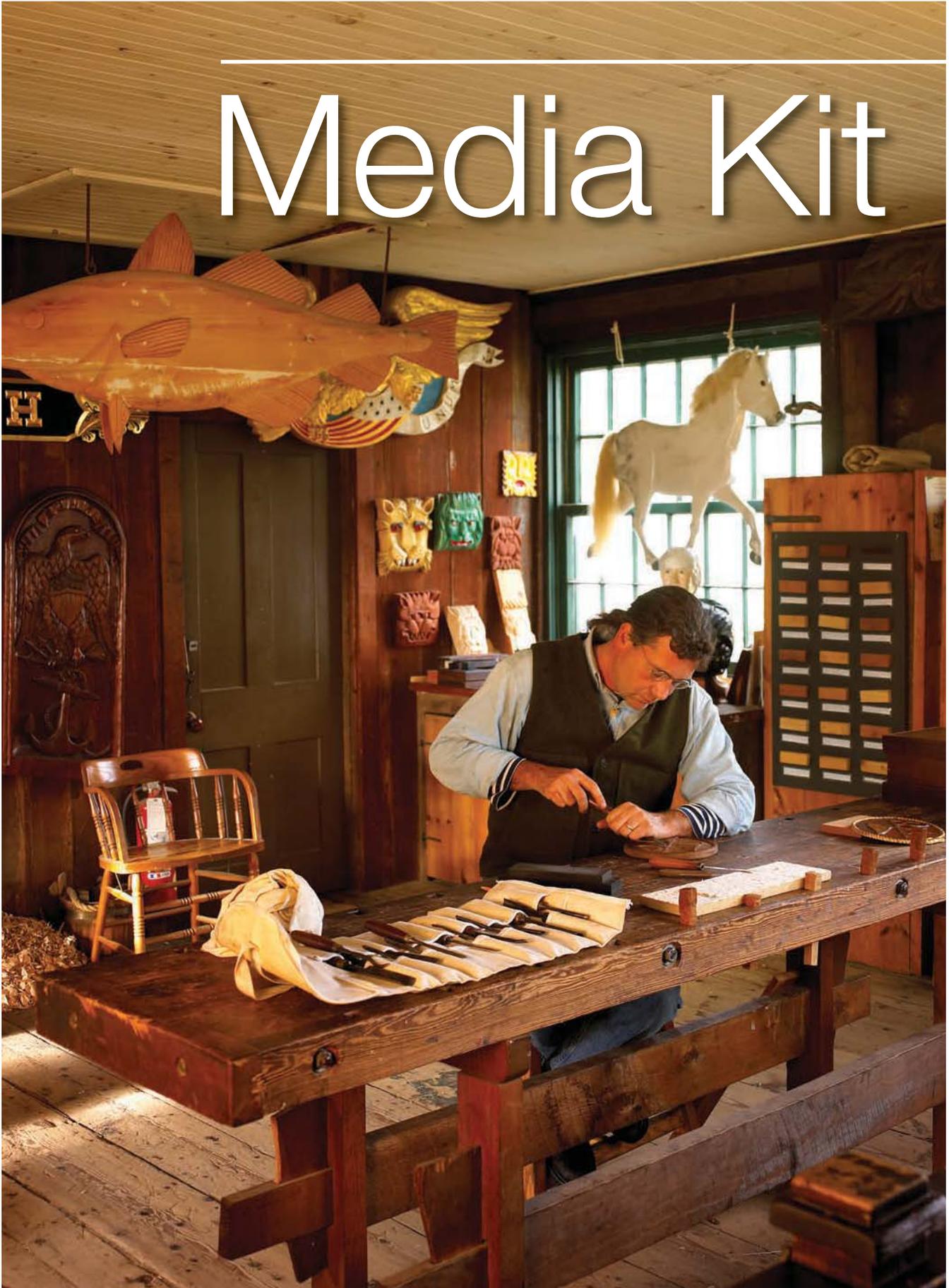
If your property has access to people who are experts in their respective fields – e.g. scientists, historians, artists, writers – use them! Invite local personalities and colorful guests as tour guides.

## **Book Signings!**

Historians, artists and performers create books, posters and limited edition art works which may relate to your attraction. Invite them to sign and sell copies on-site.

---

# Media Kit



# Sample News Release

Your Organization's Letterhead

**For Immediate Release:** (12 pt. type, bold)

May 00, 2015

(date you fax or email to media)

**Contact:** (12 pt. type, bold)

Name

Phone number

Email address

(16 pt. type, bold)

## **(SITE NAME) TO CELEBRATE STATEWIDE CONNECTICUT OPEN HOUSE DAY ON JUNE 13**

***Festivities Designed to Build Awareness of  
State's Cultural and Tourism Assets Among Residents***

(12 pt. bold italic type)

(12 pt. type)

(SITE TOWN/CITY), Conn., DATE) – The (your site name) in (town name) today announced plans to participate in the Eleventh Annual Connecticut Open House Day – a unified celebration of the state's fascinating world of art, history, and tourism – on June 13, 2015. During this one-day event, (site name), along with more than 200 other organizations and attractions throughout the state, will open its doors and offer special incentives (discounts, free admission, free gifts, special offers, etc.) to visitors.

This exciting statewide event, sponsored by the Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT), is designed to broaden awareness among residents of Connecticut's exceptional cultural and tourism assets and encourage them to become ambassadors who share their newfound discoveries with visiting family and friends.

In addition to (describe most interesting aspect that will be featured such as special exhibit or program), (your site name) will feature incentives and programs including:

(bullet your level of participation);

- sigmum ediffism roeism bod;
- ipsum tau kapicus chi;
- porum rex sigma kappa.

-more-

## Open House Day/2

To qualify for any Open House Day special, at least one person in each visiting group must show a valid Connecticut driver's license.

Connecticut Open House Day also includes opportunities to become a Connecticut Ambassador as part of COT's Ambassador Program, an ongoing initiative designed to cultivate pride among residents in the state's many diverse historic, arts, tourism and entertainment treasures. For more information about Connecticut Open House Day, visit [www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com) or call 1-888-CTvisit.

(insert your site's boilerplate description copy here)

**The Connecticut Office of Tourism** brings together tourism, historic preservation, history, and the arts. Its mission is to preserve and promote Connecticut's cultural and tourism assets in order to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of the state.

For more information about Open House Day, log on to [www.cultureandtourism.org](http://www.cultureandtourism.org).

###

# Press Release

## Creating a Media-Friendly Press Release



- Use the Connecticut Open House Day press release template provided on page 21.
- Print/place the lead page on your site's official stationery, regardless of whether you plan to distribute your press release via fax, email or U.S. mail. Letterhead provides a professional image.
- If you do not have news release stationery, type the word "News" in a bold typeface somewhere toward the top of the letterhead page, so the media instantly recognize the piece as a dated news item.
- Below "News," type "For Immediate Release" (see sample press release for format).
- Leave approximately an inch of white space between the contact information and the headline.
- The headline should be in all caps and in a larger type size than the body copy; 16 pt. or 14 pt. bold is acceptable. The headline should be single-spaced and centered on the page. The subhead should be in 12 pt. bold, italic type.
- The body copy of the release should be in 12 pt. type. The first paragraph should begin with your town and the date (e.g. HARTFORD, Conn. (May 1, 2015). Begin lead paragraph here...
- At the end of each page, type "-more-" to indicate the continuation of the press release. At the close of the release, type "# # #" to indicate the end. This formatting follows the Associated Press guidelines used by media professionals.
- Carefully proofread your press release before distributing it to the media. You will lose credibility with the media if your press release contains misspelled words or typos.
- Try to keep your release to no more than two pages in length. Editors appreciate brevity! The lead paragraph should contain the news you want to communicate, with subsequent paragraphs including more detail and background information in order of importance.

# Local Media



The Connecticut Office of Tourism is spearheading the statewide publicity effort for Connecticut Open House Day. Participating properties will receive exposure on the official state web site, [www.CTvisit.com](http://www.CTvisit.com).

## Identifying Local Media Contacts

To promote your participation in Connecticut Open House Day on a local level, contact weekly and daily publications that serve your region to find out who covers the arts, history, historic preservation or tourism, as well as get the contact information for calendar editors.

- Conduct a publication-by-publication on-line search for a list of each publication's staff and their news beats.
- Visit: [www.connquest.com/connecticut/todo/newspapr.html](http://www.connquest.com/connecticut/todo/newspapr.html) to find a list of Connecticut newspapers and links to their online editions.
- Obtain a copy of each publication and view the publication masthead, which is a listing of editorial personnel.
- If no reporter or editor is listed for your specific area of interest, contact the editorial department and ask for the name of the appropriate individual and his/her contact information. You may also want to try looking at the publication to see who has written the arts, history, entertainment or tourism stories in that edition.

*Note: When speaking to the editorial department, be sure to ask about their story and calendar listing lead times (how far in advance she or he requires the information in order for it to appear in a timely manner prior to June 13th).*

# Getting the Word Out



## **Distributing Your Press Release Prior to the Event**

- Compile the names and contact information of your media contacts into an alphabetical list for easy reference.

*(Note: You should create your media list as soon as you receive this information.)*

- Be sure to ask in advance about each person's preferred method of receiving information (e.g. fax, e-mail or U.S. mail).
- Create your press release using the template and Tips for Creating a Media-Friendly Press Release.
- Distribute your press release in accordance with your pre-determined method of distribution (fax, e-mail, etc.) far enough in advance of the event to ensure your information will be used.

*Note: Newspaper calendar listings generally require event information three weeks in advance. Newspaper editors or writers should receive the release no later than Friday, May 29th.*

# Pitching Your Story

## **“Sell” Your Attraction**

Begin making follow up calls to the media two business days after sending out the press release to ensure the information was received.

## **Distributing Your Press Release Prior to the Event**

- Let the media know about any exceptional activities being offered or if local dignitaries plan to attend.
- Be sure to ask:
  - If they plan to visit your site on June 13;
  - If they have questions about your sites activities or incentives;
  - If they have general questions about Connecticut Open House Day.
- Ask the reporter/editor about any special interests he or she has, or if she or he is preparing any larger stories to which you might be able to contribute.
- If a member of the media expresses interest in visiting your site, ask about possible times he or she is considering attending. Try to steer all media toward times when the most exciting events are planned – or when your staff is most available to escort them around the property.
- Always be helpful and accommodating to the media. If the media requests information you do not have or asks a question you can not answer, please contact:  
Kelsey Varwig, 212.453.2474



# Media Activities



## **Day-of-Event Media Activities**

If a reporter shows up unexpectedly, try to assign a staff person to serve as a guide for the length of his or her visit. The better job you do of hosting the media, the better chance you stand of getting a solid story placement.

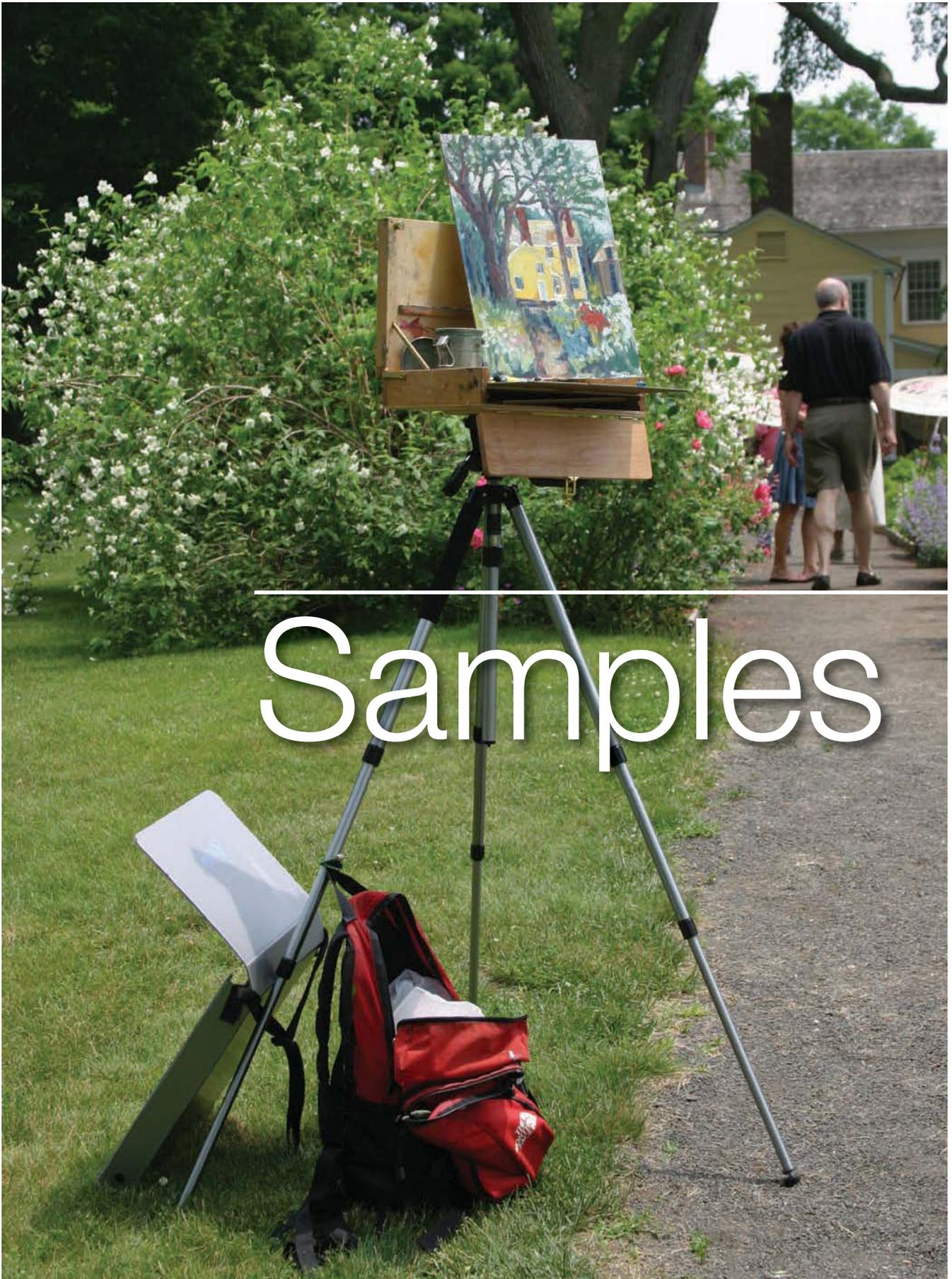
Be prepared for TV cameras to arrive unannounced. TV stations may opt to visit a local site for live Connecticut Open House Day footage. Have site information at your fingertips for the reporter to use live or the cameraman to take back with him to the studio. You may also want to direct them to our PR contact, Kelsey Varwig to answer questions about activities statewide.

## **Media Photo-ops**

If you feel your Connecticut Open House Day event contains an exceptionally strong visual component or you expect local dignitaries to join in the festivities, be sure to hire a photographer to capture as much of both as possible on June 13th. This will enable you to:

- Send photos out after the event for post-event publicity
- Post photos on your web site
- Use photos in your newsletter
- Post photos on community bulletin boards
- Post photos on your town library bulletin board
- Post photos on your town hall bulletin board

Plus, send photos of your event to the Connecticut Office of Tourism. Please send high-resolution Jpegs at 300 dpi to:  
jean.hebert@ct.gov



# Samples

# Invitations to Local Officials



## Your Site Name

Cordially Invites You to Join Us in Celebrating  
our state's Fascinating World of  
History, Preservation, Art and Tourism  
on  
Connecticut Open House Day

Saturday,  
June 13, 2015

Please be our very special guest at this unique, one-day statewide event. Many art galleries, museums, theaters, historic properties, tourism attractions and other key sites throughout the state will participate in Connecticut Open House Day, including (your site name).

Our goal, and that of the Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT), which is sponsoring the event, is to broaden awareness of Connecticut's wealth of cultural and tourism treasures among state residents and to encourage them to share their newfound discoveries with visiting family and friends. Ultimately, we hope to transform Connecticut citizens into enthusiastic state advocates. In fact, Connecticut Open House Day serves as the official event to promote the Ambassador Program, a COT initiative designed to cultivate resident ambassadors by building pride in Connecticut's heritage, diversity, contemporary culture and tourism offerings.

We hope you will plan to join us on June 13th in celebrating all that is quintessentially Connecticut.

R.S.V.P. by (date)  
(Name)  
By (date)  
(Phone Number)

Contact information for attraction



Name of Your Attraction: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sign Up to be a Connecticut Ambassador

As a Connecticut Ambassador, I grant permission to be kept up to date with Connecticut's events, attractions and tourism opportunities via e-mail. My e-mail address will not be shared with anyone else and if I choose to stop receiving e-mails, I can simply unsubscribe online by contacting Rob Damroth at Robert.Damroth@ct.gov. Please write legibly.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

# Follow Up



## After Event Check List

To reinforce the success of your Open House Day, it is important to follow-up with notes and photos to help people remember their wonderful experience of visiting your venue.

Here's a helpful checklist:

- Send a personal note (and photo if available to VIPs and elected officials who attended.
- Provide local newspapers with photos of VIPs as quickly as possible.
- Stay in touch with your new visitors who signed up to keep the positive momentum on-going.
- Provide the Connecticut Office of Tourism with:
  - Copies of the Connecticut Ambassador Sign-Up sheets (fax to Rosemary Bove at 860.707.1811).
  - Complete the Open House Evaluation Form.  
Mail or fax them to the attention of Jean Hebert,  
**Mail:** Connecticut Office of Tourism, One Constitution Plaza,  
2nd floor, Hartford, CT 06103.  
**Fax:** 860.707.1811
- Send digital images of the day to Jean.Hebert@ct.gov (see photo use form on page 32)

# Connecticut Office of Tourism Photo Usage Rights Agreement Form



Usage Rights of Images of \_\_\_\_\_:  
(Attraction or property name, herein after "owner")

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Image file name(s))

The owner hereby grants to the Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT) rights of photo usage of the images specifically referenced herein, for a time period of no more than two years from the date of receipt, to promote the destination of Connecticut. This includes, but is not limited to: media, public relations, advertising, online and special projects. Specific marketing purposes may include:

- As part of an expanding listing on Ctvisit.com for the aforementioned property
- On CTvisit.com's homepage
- In the Connecticut Tourism consumer e-newsletters
- As part of the 52 Getaways section on CTvisit.com

COT shall not sell or otherwise grant useage rights to any third party without the express written consent of the owner. COT shall not use the images for profit.

\_\_\_\_\_ shall retain ownership of the images with all the rights afforded to it. (Attraction or property name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attraction or Property Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please mail the original signed photo agreement form to Jean Hebert at the Connecticut Office of Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd floor, Hartford, CT 06103.

# Evaluation

## Give Us Your Feedback



Please complete the following so that we may improve future Open House Day events. (Use another sheet if you need more space.)

Name of Attraction \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many people visited during Open House Day?
2. How does this compare to an average Saturday in June?
3. What public relations/media did you do for your site?
4. Share your success stories with us.
5. Recommendations for ideas for future Open House Days.
6. Comments from your visitors:

Thanks for your comments! If you have any other ideas send them to the CT Office of Tourism: Fax: 860.707.1811



A statewide day of discovery devoted to transforming state residents into Connecticut Ambassadors coordinated by the Connecticut Office of Tourism



### **Connecticut Open House Day**

Discover the wonders in your own backyard on **Saturday, June 13th, 2015** during CONNECTICUT OPEN HOUSE DAY. Art galleries, museums, theaters, historic sites and other attractions throughout the state will celebrate with free or discounted admission, refreshments or other special incentives.

For a complete list of participating properties go to **CTvisit.com** or call **1-888-CTvisit**.

