



## Bob Evans Farm Museum features Smokey Bear's 65th Birthday

*The Bob Evans Homestead Museum features a different theme each year. Smokey Bear was chosen for the 2009 theme and the Wayne National Forest once again helped put the displays together.*



An antique cut-out of Smokey Bear greets people in the foyer.

"This has been one of the most fun and rewarding things I've worked on in a long time," said Ann Cramer, Archaeologist on the Wayne National Forest. "I had some great help and the story line is heart-warming. Everyone loves Smokey Bear, and we have an incredibly rich legacy to share so we wanted to make sure we did it right." She enlisted the help of Chris Euler, Gary Chancey, and Teena Ligman from the Wayne; and Ligman soon got Helene Cleveland from the Washington Office involved and Bev Stout from Indiana DNR. The graphics and the details of the exhibit were a collaborative effort of many people. "But," Cramer notes, "it wouldn't have been possible without Bob Evans Farm and the Homestead Museum."

The Homestead Museum was originally Bob and Jewell Evans' home. Today it is a museum open to the thousands of visitors who come to Rio Grande, Ohio to tour



An alidade from the Shawnee Lookout Tower and information on Forest Fire Towers featured in the Museum.



Glass cases with artifacts and panels telling Smokey's story line the museum walls.

the Bob Evans Farm for the year-round festivals, events, and activities. Built in the early 1820's the 2-story brick home known as the Homestead served first as a stagecoach stop and inn. Later it was a home. Renovated to become a museum in 2003, it is on the National Register of Historic Places. The downstairs of the museum features a kitchen that looks just as it would have when Bob and Jewell lived there. The rest of the downstairs has the history of the Bob Evans family and business. But upstairs, in 2009, is all about Smokey Bear.

Cramer forged the partnership with Bob Evans Farm when she developed the first collaborative exhibit featured at the Homestead in 2005 entitled "Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad." The Wayne worked closely with the Homestead Museum and Friends of Freedom Society to do an exhibit on the Underground Railroad. They developed a series of large canvas panels and were able to fill several cases with artifacts to interpret the story of the Underground Railroad in southeastern Ohio. The exhibit was so popular that Bob Evans asked Cramer to work with them in 2006 on a mining exhibit. That exhibit entitled "Diamonds in the Rough: the Legacy of Coal Mining in Ohio's Hill Country" was a partnership with the Museum, Wayne National Forest, Little

Cities of Black Diamonds Council, Ohio's Hill Country Heritage Area,

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and The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Watershed Management Project. In 2009, Cramer once again was called on, this time to do an exhibit on Smokey Bear. As before, Cramer met the challenge.

The exhibit opened in mid-April and was featured prominently in the recent birthday party event for Smokey Bear. It will also be well-attended during the Bob Evans Farm Festival in October but throughout the year the museum has a steady visitation of people to the rooms with panels telling Smokey's story. The panels and displays also include the story of the fire lookout towers and firefighters who, along with Smokey, have been part of the country's fire prevention and control efforts for 65 years.

Cramer believes they have done Smokey proud and that the legacy of the little bear rescued so long ago in New Mexico is well told in rooms of the Homestead Museum in Ohio. "Thousands of people come through this museum every month," notes Cramer. "And though most of us over 40 grew up really knowing Smokey's story I don't think it is generally well known to people today, so we are able to put a story behind the bear they see on TV and on billboards. We're giving him a history and a connection to people who come, so when he asks them to prevent wildfires, he'll be asking a friend."

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