

HEART OF STARK

GlenOak senior dedicated to preserving local history

Stark Community Foundation

Special to the Canton Repository

In partnership with The Repository, every Monday, Stark Community Foundation highlights positive happenings in our community. Here's to Good News Mondays!

As a second grader, Jimmy Zurbuch attended Plain Township's Winterfest event at Diamond Community Park and felt drawn to one table: the Plain Township Historical Society.

Around a decade later, the GlenOak High School rising senior became the first student — and the youngest member — to serve on the society's board of directors.

"For all of us, it has been fun and special to watch him grow from a second grader until now," said Cindy Guest, president and archivist of the group. "His passion for history has never wavered."

The historical society's display that originally caught second-grade Zurbuch's attention featured Plain Township's one-room schoolhouses and immediately piqued his interest in local history. Shortly after, he began attending meetings, participating in events and even contributing to the "Cruising Thru Plain Township" book series.

"I wanted to give back to an organization that I have grown up alongside, providing a young person's perspective as it continues to grow," said Zurbuch.

Today, Zurbuch is a member of a five-person team that installs monthly exhibits at Plain Township Hall that celebrate local history and honor America's 250th birthday. The team researches, develops graphics, creates content and procures 3-D items for the display.

Zurbuch designed and installed the July exhibit that features Stark County trails and parks in Plain Township, and he will take the lead on another upcoming exhibit in December.

"My favorite aspect of history in Plain Township is the history of education — from the historic one-room schoolhouses in the township's early days to Plain Local Schools' nine buildings today," said Zurbuch. "I am focusing on this transformation of education for my December display, incorporating the elements of education that I believe would resonate most with the daily lives of students my age."

In addition to the exhibit team, Zurbuch attends monthly meetings to plan activities and vote on key decisions.

"We do not consider him a high school student," said Guest. "He is a full-fledged member of the team."

By working with Zurbuch, Guest said that the historical society is exploring new ways to connect with students.

Specifically, she hopes to work with more high school students in conjunction with the Stark County Local History Group to transform its eight to 10-minute docuseries on various historical topics into social media content and videos that can be easily shared in local classrooms.

"Jimmy pushes us to think outside the box more



Plain Township Historical Society board member Jimmy Zurbuch stands near the July display at Plain Township Hall. July 31.

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than we regularly do," said Guest. "We have learned to put on our 'young person' hat when thinking through displays and sharing information to keep evolving as a historical society."

As the Plain Township Historical Society continues to preserve and share local history, both Guest and Zurbuch believe in the importance of involving young community members.

"If we do not pass our history on, who we are and where we came from will be lost," Guest said. "If we do not involve the next generation, who is going to be the next steward of information?"

For Zurbuch, taking on the responsibility of his role has been instinctual.

"I feel that to understand the place where you live today, you need to know its history," he said.

Learn more about the Plain Township Historical Society at www.preservingplaintwp.org.

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