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Society researches ways to fund history museum

Westfield group has wanted museum about town for many years.

By **Katie Robbins**

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WESTFIELD -- A new museum focusing on the rich history of Westfield could be on the horizon.

The Westfield Historical Society, a group of about 45 members, has discussed throughout the years either building or setting up shop in an existing property.

"We'd like to have a museum. Other communities have this and we'd like to have the same," said Jim Peyton, president of the historical society. The group formed about 10 years ago.

He said one vision for the museum focuses on the town's history and involvement with the underground railroad.

"It takes time and funds to get something like this started," he said, adding that members have been researching how to get money, possibly through grants.

The society is on its way to getting its vision out in the public eye.

A fund-raiser Thursday at the new Chipotle put about \$1,200 in the society's pocket.

Diane Peyton, society member and Jim Peyton's wife, said the society jumped at the chance to be the beneficiary of a fund-raiser. Representatives from Chipotle, a new restaurant located near 146th Street and Greyhound Pass, looked for a not-for-profit organization in Westfield that could benefit from a grand opening sampling party for the restaurant.

Jim Peyton said Thursday's party attracted nearly 250 people who each donated \$5 at the door. All of the money raised -- \$1,200 -- was given to the society.

Westfield Town Councilman Ron Thomas, who went to the fund-raiser to support the historical society, said he believes the town does need a central location for historical artifacts to be placed.

"We need a place in the area, maybe at the Town Hall or at a couple of local businesses in the town, that will have items on display for the public to see," he said.

Nichole Kobrowski, society member, said it was great to see so many people get out Thursday night to support the society and its dream to develop a museum.

"It's so important to keep what we have," she said. "Westfield is a sleeper community and progress has started to swallow it up. We need to preserve it now."

Jim Peyton said it's too early to discuss where a museum would go in town, but now that there's money in the bank, talks will probably become more frequent.

He said one option would be to place the museum near the Monon or Midland Trace trails that will soon wind their way through Westfield.

"Putting it near the trails could make it more of a destination," Peyton said.

The Hamilton County, Carmel and Sheridan historical societies each have museums open to the public.

Call staff writer Katie Robbins at (317) 444-5549

DIVE INTO HISTORY

The Westfield Historical Society meets at 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of every month at Westfield Town Hall, 130 Penn St. For more information, contact Jim Peyton at (317) 896-5000.