

# **Volunteer Leader Training Guide**

## **Sharing Your Family Legacy**

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Every family has an assortment of stories and artifacts that can inspire and connect people. When we gather those materials and share them gladly, we develop a better sense of who we are and, as a bonus, we join the generations of our family in loving connection.

### **Preparation**

- This unit can take up to 45-60 minutes depending on the depth with which you present the lesson. Engaging the audience with good discussion will fill as much time as you can allow.
- The purpose of this unit is to encourage participants to explore their family history and make it a part of their lives. By doing this they will help connect their descendants to the strengths of past generations and provide them with a feeling of family unity and belonging.
- Decide what you find important in the material and what you feel is important for the objectives you would like to accomplish in your presentation. Prioritize questions that you will use so as to stay within your time slot.
- Gather several symbols of your family history (picture, recipe card, keepsake, story, journal, etc.)

### **Lesson**

I have here some special items. *[Show symbols of your family history – picture, recipe card, keepsake, story, journal, etc.]* What do you suppose makes them important to me?

*[Wait for responses.]*

These things are all part of my family history.

*[Describe the items in greater detail and explain why they are important to you. Perhaps you could tell a story related to one of the items.]*

All of these things were and are important enough to my family to save and cherish. Can you think of mementos, heirlooms, recipes or other special things you have saved from members of your family?

*[Allow participants to respond. You may want to have a few individuals elaborate on their answers.]*

Simple things can have profound meaning. If you want to collect and share your family legacy, where do you start?

*[Each of us likely has a bit of family history right at home. Start simple. Pull out those boxes that are tucked away in closets.]*

Here are a few things to look for:

- Family documents such as medical records, school records or legal records
- Photo albums, letters, newspaper clippings, birth announcements or wedding invitations
- Old books, family mementos or antiques

If your photos aren't labeled, you may ask relatives if they know anything about the pictures. You might also get additional pictures and stories from relatives.

*[If you have time, allow participants to share stories of discovering documents and pictures.]*

Once you have gathered family information, it is time to use and share it! What ideas do you have for using and sharing your history?

*[Invite participants to describe the ways they have used or shared their family history. Make a note of the ideas on a chalkboard.]*

Here are a few ideas for using and sharing our legacy. Have we covered all of these?

- Frame the pictures of your parents and grandparents. Display them in your home.
- Make family scrapbooks. You might do this alone or with members of your family.
- Display tools or objects that were owned by your ancestors in a shadow box.
- Hang up quilts or needlework done by your ancestors.
- Create a family history room.
- Create a web site.
- Collect stories and pictures and make them into a book that can be copied for family members.

When we are surrounded by treasures of the past, it opens the door to conversations and stories that link us to each other and our histories. Can you think of other ways to prominently display your family history and family links to the past?

*[Give the group an opportunity to respond.]*

Sometimes we forget to capture our own stories. Your descendents and friends will want to know your story. What are some ways you can capture your story?

*[Write, audio record, video record, etc.]*

There are additional ways we can enlarge and share our legacy. For example:

- Host a family reunion.
- Care for family graves with your children or other family members.
- Share family stories instead of watching television.
- Decorate your house with memories of the past – frame pictures, make scrapbooks, display quilts.

Many of you already know how our lives are enriched as we collect our history and share our legacy. I hope you will share your ideas with us as you continue to collect and share your legacy.

Written with contributions from Steve Dennis and Dana Horton.