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## **Erie Canalway News Release**

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### **2009 ERIE CANALWAY HERITAGE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

*Recipients offer successful models of heritage development*

**WATERFORD, NY** - The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to announce the Village of Brockport as the recipient of the 2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence. Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum in Spencerport and the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor's Center in Lockport won Honorable Mention awards.

"This year's winners provide innovative models for preserving our heritage and stimulating community and economic revitalization," said Joe Callahan, Chair of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. "We hope people will visit each of these sites to see for themselves what great places they are."

The Heritage Award honors and celebrates significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognizes excellence in advancing the goals of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan. A five-person independent jury selected award recipients based on a written application and site visit, which included meetings with officials at each site, as well as community leaders, municipal representatives, and other stakeholders.

Award recipients will be recognized at an Award Luncheon Ceremony at noon at the Ithaca Yacht Club in Ithaca during the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission annual meeting on Wednesday, June 24, 2009.

#### **2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence - Village of Brockport**

A long-term, community-wide effort to make the Village of Brockport a more attractive home, workplace, and destination for travelers has strengthened Brockport's economy, while preserving the integrity of this Victorian village on the Erie Canal. Brockport's multifaceted plan included four major components: revitalizing its canalfront, preserving historic structures, making Main Street vibrant, and building community pride. Brockport's emphasis on *living its history*, rather than simply preserving it, led to innovative approaches to heritage development, benefitting residents and visitors alike.

“Our accomplishments have been possible only because Brockporters have been amazingly willing to volunteer their time, money, and effort and three successive Village administrations have given unstinting support,” said William Andrews, Chair of the Village of Brockport’s Historic Preservation Board.

Brockport’s 1998 Canalfront Master Plan and enrollment in the NYS Certified Local Government program provided guidance and access to financial resources. Strategic pursuit of a number of grants and community-wide fundraising efforts enabled the village to rehabilitate its canal wall, institute a historic home improvement program and, in 2005, open its Welcome Center along the canal.

The Welcome Center, staffed by 100 volunteers, now serves 600 boaters annually and has enabled Brockport to become a destination for canal travelers. Simple but clever amenities, such as free bicycles and wagons for groceries, facilitate access to shops and other community attractions for canal travelers, pumping more than \$100,000 each year into Brockport’s economy.

### **2009 Honorable Mention**

#### **Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum, Spencerport**

The Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum, opened in 2006, constitutes a successful adaptive reuse of a former trolley depot to serve as a visitor center and canal museum on the Erie Canal. Volunteers logged more than 80,000 hours to bring the project to fruition, resulting in renewed community pride and a center for both residents and visitors to gather and celebrate Spencerport’s canal heritage.

“I am so proud to be the historian of a community of people who are interested, and involved in the preservation of their heritage for generations to come,” said Carol Coburn, Ogden/Spencerport Historian. “Nearly 150 volunteers and thousands of hours of work went into creating a fully operational visitor center and Spencerport Depot and Canal Museum. We are very pleased to be recognized for its contribution to the Erie Canalway.”

#### **Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor’s Center, Lockport**

Opened in 2005, the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor’s Center serve as a critical starting place for visitors to Lockport, whose historic Flight of Five locks remain “the holy grail” of early canal engineering. The project involved a million dollar transformation of a former historic church and is the result of an innovative partnership among the Niagara County Historical Society, which designed and operates the Discovery Center, the City of Lockport, which operates the visitor center, and The First Presbyterian Church, which owns the building. A coordinated, disciplined, and professional approach to planning and project implementation proved a highly successful method of achieving results.

“It is great to have been selected for such a prestigious award,” shared Douglas Farley, Director of the Erie Canal Discovery Center. “It’s an honor that should be shared with several collaborative partners that worked for many years to see this facility become a reality. In addition to the Niagara County Historical Society, we must thank the City of Lockport, the First Presbyterian Church of Lockport, and the Grigg-Lewis Foundation for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout the planning, construction and daily operation of the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitors’ Center.”

For more information about the award and this year’s recipients, visit [www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org).

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