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The Harrison Township Historical Society's exhibition and oral history project documenting the 2021 tornado that devastated the community has been selected by the American Association for State and Local History to receive the prestigious Albert B. Corey Award.

Harrison Township Historical Society Wins Prestigious 2023 AASLH Albert B. Corey Award

Nashville, TN – The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) congratulates the Harrison Township Historical Society for winning the Albert B. Corey Award for their *Tornado!* exhibit.

The Albert B. Corey Award is part of the AASLH Leadership in History Awards, the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation of state and local history. Named in honor of a founder and former president of AASLH, the Albert B. Corey Award is limited to one

winner per year. It recognizes a primarily volunteer-operated organization that best displays the qualities of vigor, scholarship, and imagination in their work. This special honor includes a \$500 award for the organization.

Immediately following the EF-3 tornado that struck Harrison Township in 2021, the Society recognized the significance of not only the storm's devastation, but also the powerful stories of the community's efforts to recover and rebuild. With grant funding from the Gloucester County Cultural and Heritage Commission in partnership with the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State, the Society implemented an oral history project documenting this unprecedented event by preserving memories of the storm and its aftermath and helping the community process the trauma and shock of the disaster. Through powerful images, moving interviews, and accessible exhibition techniques, the organization put together an incredible exhibit that shared the experiences of local citizens and the process of rebuilding a community. The exhibition opened in September 2022, marking the one-year anniversary of the storm.

The awards committee was tremendously impressed by this project's rapid development, attention to best practices, and impact as a key component of the healing process for the community. They cited the project as an incredible example of a history organization serving its community by both preserving contemporary history and responding to the need for connection and hope in a difficult time.

"I was so delighted to hear that the Historical Society won this award," said Melissa Ziobro, the oral historian responsible for interviewing the affected residents, community volunteers, first responders and government officials. "The Society showed incredible leadership in acting quickly, yet sensitively to document this historic event in the words of those who lived it."

This year, AASLH confers 53 national awards honoring people, projects, exhibits, and publications nationwide. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of state and local history. The Harrison Township Historical Society is the only organization from New Jersey included among this year's awardees.

"We are honored to receive this prestigious award," said the Society's president, Robert Schumann. "This was the most challenging exhibition in my recollection that our Society has undertaken, and one of the most important. We are grateful to be so recognized nationally, and appreciative of the support and encouragement we received from our community. Most especially we are indebted to the residents who generously shared their stories with us so they can be preserved for future generations."

The AASLH awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards not only honor significant achievement in the field of state and local history, but also bring public recognition of the opportunities for small and large organizations, institutions, and programs to make contributions in this arena. For more information about the Leadership in History Awards, contact AASLH at 615-320-3203, or go to www.aaslh.org.

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About the Harrison Township Historical Society

Founded in 1971, the Harrison Township Historical Society is an all-volunteer organization focusing on the people and heritage of Old Harrison Township (present-day Harrison, South Harrison and Elk Townships) from prehistoric times to the present. The Society's museum is housed in Mullica Hill's historic Old Town Hall and presents programs at its Richwood Academy Cultural Center in Richwood, NJ. Through its collections, long-term and changing exhibitions and cultural programs the Society preserves and interprets the past for present and future generations. For more information about the Society visit www.harrisonhistorical.com

About AASLH

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), a national nonprofit association, provides leadership and resources to help the history community thrive and make the past more meaningful for all people. AASLH serves the tens of thousands of history organizations, professionals, and volunteers around the country who help people of all ages develop critical thinking skills and understand how learning history helps society make progress toward justice. Through research, advocacy, and our field-leading professional development program, AASLH advances public history practice and connects history practitioners to critical issues in the field and to one another. For more information about AASLH visit www.aaslh.org.