



Wednesday, March 28, 2007

## **Don't associate museum with waste**

**by JOHN MICHALSKI**

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I read Cheryl Birch's letter of March 21 with real sadness. I share her anger at our country's neglect of its poorest, most vulnerable citizens. In criticizing the America's River Museum, however, and the \$8 million grant it has received, she attacks the wrong enemy.

First, she doesn't seem to understand how such a grant works. We were not given this grant to spend on whatever we chose. We received it specifically for this purpose, and we either spend it on the museum or we don't get it at all.

Even more distressing, however, is her notion that this is wasted money. I believe it's a wise investment in our future. It will bring new jobs and increase tourism. Most of all, it will bring a richer quality of life to our city. Twenty years ago, Dubuque was a dull, dying factory town that young people couldn't leave quickly enough. Now it's a dynamic city to which "refugees" like me are happily returning. The efforts of Jerry Enzler, Teri Goodmann and others to make the America's River Museum a reality have contributed greatly to this transformation.

If Ms. Birch wants to condemn real government waste, like the half-trillion dollars a year lavished on the Pentagon (billions of it on ineffective Cold War-era weapons), then I will happily stand with her. But I hope she will re-examine her opinion of the museum expansion. This grant is well deserved and well spent.

<http://www.thonline.com/article.cfm?id=152716>