Heritage center to close during January

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BY JESSICA SIBLEY
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WALHALLA — Residents and visitors won't be able to browse through the Oconee Heritage Center in January.

The facility is being closed while staff members work to fully catalog each artifact in the museum.

Curator Leslie White says the monthlong project is necessary to preserve the area's history.

"Our primary concern is behind-the-scenes organization first and then exhibit changes second," White said. "I'm excited about the changes. A complete catalog of our artifacts is a professional museum standard that I will be proud for the Oconee Heritage Center to reach. It will also give us new ideas for exhibits and programs that the community can enjoy."

Staff and volunteers will also be working during the January closing time to improve current exhibits, which span the entire history of Oconee County.

White said that she hopes to improve the dugout canoe displays, add more interactive components for children, expand the range of topics covered in the museum and exhibit new artifacts.

"When the museum first opened it was inundated with artifacts being donated by local residents," she said. "Staff and volunteers at that time were unable to keep up with the influx of objects and so many were not properly documented or stored.

"We want to show those donors that we appreciate their donation by doing our best to get these important pieces of history properly documented and conserved for posterity.

"Knowing what we have in storage and improving the organization of these objects will ultimately allow us to rotate exhibit pieces more frequently and provide better exhibits and historic interpretation," she said.

"We apologize for the inconvenience, but think people will appreciate our efforts to be the best museum that we can be," White said.

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Assistant Curator Emily Hopkins works to catalog artifacts at the Oconee Heritage Center. The museum will be closed during the month of January.