Historical museum marks
American Archives Month

By SAMANTHA MORIN
Daily Press Staff Writer

October is American Archives Month at the Artesia Historical Museum and Art Center.

For some, archiving is a term that may be unclear. An archive is a place where materials are stored and preserved, and a place where people go to find information. Instead of having information compiled in a book, the materials in an archive are raw materials in their original form.

Most people have their own personal archives. It may be a file cabinet, a cardboard box filled with important documents like birth certificates, car titles and house mortgage information, or that catch-all drawer.

Archival materials and records are stored in an archive. Archival material is information that is generated or created about activities and events. The materials can be letters, diaries, recordings, financial and legal documents, and visual materials, such as photographs and films. They are unique, one of a kind sources of information.

The Artesia Historical Museum and Art Center at 505 W. Richardson Ave. holds some of Artesia's finest treasures and serves as an archive, preserving the community's history.

The local museum has its own internal records (administrative and past exhibits), a collection database that documents what's in the collection, such as the donor and the object's history and historical records.

Some people wonder why records matter, asking "Why do the government and we as American citizens need to take action to protect records from damage or destruction?"

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) explains important reasons.


(Continued on Page 7)
(Continued from Page 1)

Records are essential to protecting rights. School records document educational attainment. Adoption records establish parental rights. Military service and employment records provide access to pensions and other benefits. Guardianship records protect those who cannot speak for themselves.

Records are essential to restoring order and resuming operations following a disaster. Businesses need proof of assets, liabilities, contracts, and other legal obligations. Governments need documentation of decisions, regulations, precedents and lines of succession and authority. Individuals need proof of identity, medical histories and documentation of assets. Communities need historical records to retain a sense of continuity with the past on which to build a future.

In an effort to preserve local government records, the "Close to Home Project" sponsored by CoSA focuses on records that are truly "close to home." As CoSA explains, in many localities these invaluable documents are being lost. Some records suffer from simple neglect, stored in leaky basements or attics when office space becomes crowded. Those created or stored electronically are vulnerable when hardware and software upgrades make files unreadable in only a few years. Local government officials, whose time and resources are often limited, may be pressed to implement effective records management procedures that could help identify records of long-term significance and ensure that they receive the archival protection they deserve.

The Close to Home Project is determined to find practical and effective strategies for preserving archival records that can be adopted by localities nationwide.

Lisa Johnston, assistant city clerk of Artesia, brings records from City Hall to the museum and they become artifacts.

Johnston and Dunn realize the importance of keeping track of archival material and preserving it for future generations.

They urge all Artesians to take care of their possessions. In an example given by Johnston, she explains that if someone's house were to catch fire, the first thing most people would grab would be their pictures and irreplaceable items. She said if those are so important, then why not take time to protect them instead of leaving them in a spot where the items can be easily damaged.

Another example, Johnston said, is people who store papers and other important items in a cardboard box in the basement. She asks what would happen if a person's basement were to flood. Their papers would be ruined and they would be faced with the difficulty of recovering those lost documents.

Dunn and Johnston recommend the book "Saving Stuff" By Don Williams and Louisa Jagger. The book explains how to preserve pictures, heirlooms and other prized possessions.

Dunn and Johnston also ask people to consider as they weed out old keepsakes, such as pictures and programs from their child's play 10 years ago, if the items might have value for archival purposes. If there is a picture of a person that's not very good, but the background shows a house or a street clearly, Dunn and Johnston recommend calling the museum. It might be something to help develop a timeline of Artesia through the years and may help build a pictorial history.

One project aimed at building Artesia's history through pictures is The Centennial Photo Project. Dunn asks the public to bring in their historic photos from Artesia's past to be scanned into the archive.

Dunn and Johnston say anyone with questions can feel free to call them. Anyone with a question about preservation techniques or who has items that might help build Artesia's history is asked to contact Dunn at 748-2390.

Anyone with question about items that the City of Artesia might be interested in may contact Johnston at 748-2122.