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Illinois State Museum Launches *Journal of a Plague Year: Illinois in 2020*

Rapid response exhibition features Illinoisians' COVID-19 experiences.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois State Museum (ISM) today announced the opening of the *Journal of a Plague Year: Illinois in 2020* exhibition, showcasing submissions from its COVID-19 collecting initiative and featuring the photography of local artist Zach Adams.

In April, the ISM launched *Share Your Story: Illinois in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, a collecting initiative asking the people of Illinois to share their pandemic experiences. To date, the ISM has received hundreds of submissions from people trying to make sense of a world turned upside down.

Journal of a Plague Year: Illinois in 2020, a dynamic exhibition, features highlights from the entries received and will reflect new submissions as they come into the Museum. The title, inspired by Daniel Defoe's 1722 book *Journal of a Plague Year*, was chosen to put the current COVID-19 pandemic in the context of historical pandemics, or "plagues," as well as allude to a common feeling, popularized in the media, that this year's pandemic and its fallout have made 2020 extraordinarily challenging.

Springfield-based photographer Zach Adams was one of the first people to submit to the ISM's collecting initiative. Initially, he began by documenting life at home with his daughter during the quarantine. He then expanded his subject matter to include images of local protests and rallies. The ISM's front porch serves as the backdrop for several of his images that document Springfield's demonstrations on equal justice. These images will be up through November 30.

Inside the ISM, visitors can view more than 20 selections of photos, artwork, poetry, and prose from the COVID collecting project. These submissions create a mosaic reflective of the people of Illinois' thoughts and feelings navigating a world changed by COVID.

The exhibition is showing through December 2020. The ISM continues to collect stories and images of the COVID pandemic at illinoisstatemuseum.org. Additionally, submissions from the Museum's collecting initiative are now available for public viewing on the Illinois Digital Archives website at idaillinois.org/digital/collection/p16614coll64/search.

About the Illinois State Museum

Established in 1877, the Illinois State Museum is a dynamic institution that inspires the exploration of Illinois' past and present to inform and enrich everyday life and promote stewardship of cultural and natural resources. Headquartered in Springfield with branch facilities in Lewistown and Lockport, ISM is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and a proud member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

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