## Advocating literacy achievement through access, the Cole Museum begins its new Kindle Fire Initiative

### By: Marisa Higgins

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Bangor, Maine—This year the Cole Land Transportation Museum began its newest program to improve children’s literacy skills and enjoyment of reading. “The Cole Land Transportation Museum Kindle Fire Initiative” will distribute 1000 Kindle Fires between area schools as tools to help students learn to read—a goal that has been important to the Cole Museum and family for generations.

Inspired by memories of the Bookmobile program, the Kindle Fire Initiative is expected to be a cost-effective way for rural-Maine’s students and teachers to access books and educational materials. And with open-access material becoming easily available through programs such as Amazon’s Whispercast and the Open eBook application through President Obama’s ConnectED initiative, this access potential is growing by the day.

“While math, science and other fields are of the utmost importance, especially in today's society, one can't begin to learn those subjects if they can't read,” says Kristin Cole Vogell, Program Committee Chair and granddaughter of the Cole Museum's founder, Galen Cole, “A child can't be expected to solve a math problem or finish a science experiment if that child can't read the problem or instructions. Helping a child learn to read does more than just the actual act of being able to read, the child now has more confidence and a higher self esteem.”

Encouraging children’s aspirations—especially those in adverse circumstances—is a key component of the Cole Museum’s and Cole family’s community outreach. Sue Cole (Galen Cole’s wife) has long been passionate about literacy programs because of their positive effects on Maine-children’s futures. For this reason the museum has supported the University of Maine Reading Recovery Program since 2001 and has been involved with the Literacy Volunteers of Bangor since 2008.

“The long term vision [for the Kindle Fire Initiative] is to help small rural schools improve literacy with the target student population of K-4,” says Robert O’Leary, Education Coordinator for the Cole Museum. “The earlier that we can intervene to help students develop a lifetime interest in reading for knowledge and pleasure the more complete and rounded their lives will be.”

While the museum suggests the tablets be a communal resource, the schools are encouraged to fit them into their unique circumstances. At the Veazie Community School, Principal Matt Cyr is expecting to use the Kindle Fires as part of the iXL program in the younger grade levels, where individual tools (such as laptops) are not available.

150 primary schools within a two hour drive of Bangor were originally contacted to participate on a first-come-first-serve basis; so far 27 schools will receive tablet allotments with 18 others waitlisted. As with the museum’s previous technology-donation programs (i.e. Apple TVs, SMART Boards, and Ladibug Projectors), the tablets are allocated to the school only after making an age-appropriate reservation to visit the Cole Museum.

### About

The Cole Land Transportation Museum preserves and displays a selection of Maine’s land transportation equipment in hopes to inspire today’s generation through their predecessors’ triumphs. The museum also supports a number of programs aimed at lifting the aspirations of Maine's youth—especially the underprivileged—so they may be a credit to themselves, their families, and their communities. This support includes scholarships to local colleges and universities, as well as funding for youth and adult development programs.

The museum is opened May 1 thru November 11, seven days a week 9 am–5 pm, and children under 19 are always free admission. More information can be found by visiting [www.colemuseum.org](http://www.colemuseum.org) or calling (207) 990-3600 ext. 13.

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# Contact

To learn more about the Cole Land Transportation Museum Kindle Fire Initiative, please contact

Jim Neville, Director of Operations  
405 Perry Road Bangor, Maine  
(207)990-3600  
jneville@colemuseum.org