When historian William Cronon stood to present his first speech as president of the American Historical Association in 2012, he spoke about the importance of storytelling in history. He argued that what makes the study of history important is the stories we tell and how we tell them. That same philosophy is present at the Heinz History Center, where a commitment to powerful storytelling is just one of the many features that draws thousands of members to the museum every year.

Still, members like Suzanne Kapusta will tell you it’s not just the ability to tell stories that members love; it’s also the desire to get together and listen. Members play a vital role in supporting the History Center’s exhibits, programs, field trips, and award-winning publications, but most importantly they form a community dedicated to celebrating the history of Western Pennsylvania.

Suzanne grew up in Squirrel Hill and, although she moved to Greensburg in the 1970s for work, she still maintains that Pittsburgh is her true home. Like so many History Center members, Suzanne loves the museum because its exhibits tell stories that she was a part of. “This is my history also as a Pittsburgher,” says Suzanne. Artifacts like the streetcar in the Great Hall bring back personal memories and the “steel mill accents are special because,” as Suzanne explains, “my father and many of my relatives worked in the mills.” Suzanne also finds that it is “exciting to discover some new event or item each visit.”

Suzanne became a member at the History Center after seeing the special exhibit *Vatican Splendors: A Journey Through Faith and Art* in 2010. “I was an artist in the St. Vincent Catholic Exhibition for that year and the connection with the two prompted me to join,” she says. Since then she has made a point of coming more regularly because, “each time I find something of interest.”

In addition to unlimited access to the History Center, the Fort Pitt Museum, and the Meadowcroft Rockshelter & Historic Village, members also get invitations to unique members-only events including exhibition previews, picnics, private tours, and more. “The History Center has the nicest perks and treats for members,” says Suzanne. “Everyone enjoys the preview nights before an opening; you can socialize with members from all over the area.” The History Center’s members-only events are a great opportunity for people to get together and exchange their own stories about what the History Center and life in Western Pennsylvania has meant to them and, as Suzanne points out, “I have noticed no one leaves these events without a smile!”

Perhaps the best part of membership for Suzanne is that being a member reminds her to bring guests and explore—guests like her granddaughter, who loves to play in Kidsburgh, the fun interactive two-tier playplace for the history fans of tomorrow. “I never knew the children’s area was so extensive,” says Suzanne. “My granddaughter Avery loved the big green slide.” Bringing guests allows Suzanne to share her stories and the History Center with others. As Suzanne explains, the History Center “is a wonder to out of town visitors and a special hall of memories and emotions for people like me.”

The History Center is very fortunate to have dedicated members like Suzanne. Membership makes a great gift, as well. To give the gift of history or upgrade your membership, visit www.heinzhistorycenter.org or contact Shirley Gaudette, Membership Manager, at sgaudette@heinzhistorycenter.org or (412) 454-6436.