We Can Do It! History Center’s New Exhibition Explores Pittsburgh’s Impact on World War II

The 10,000-square-foot exhibit will bring the 1940s to life as the nation commemorates the 75th anniversary of the start of WWII.

PITTSBURGH, April 25, 2015 – The Senator John Heinz History Center, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, examines how Pittsburgh affected World War II – and how the war affected our region – as part of the major exhibition, We Can Do It! WWII.

The 10,000-square-foot exhibit explores Western Pennsylvania’s incredible impact on the home, industrial, and battle fronts during World War II.

Visitors to the We Can Do It! exhibit will learn about the development of the jeep, a uniquely American invention produced by the American Bantam Car Company in Butler, Pa., and hear the stories behind “Rosie the Riveter” and the local Tuskegee Airmen whose contributions helped to turn the tide of the war.

Featuring more than 275 rare artifacts, four jeeps, stunning photography, interactive displays, and immersive museum settings, We Can Do It! brings the 1940s to life as the nation commemorates the 75th anniversary of the start of WWII.

Exhibition highlights include:

- A powerful “Hall of Industry” display featuring artifacts produced for the Allied forces by a variety of Western Pennsylvania companies, including Westinghouse, U.S. Steel, Dravo, Alcoa, MSA, Heinz, American Bridge Company, Zippo, and many more;
- Several artifacts and images on loan from the Smithsonian, including “Gramps,” a 1940 prototype Bantam Reconnaissance Car (BRC) that is the oldest known jeep in existence and a Curtiss-Wright Airplane Propeller, courtesy of the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum;
- A U.S. Army Air Corps uniform jacket worn by Jimmy Stewart, the legendary actor and Indiana, Pa. native who became the first Hollywood star to enlist in the military;
- Immersive museum settings including a recreated living room from the outset of WWII when Pittsburgh families would gather to hear President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s popular radio addresses known as “fireside chats;” and
- A special Veterans Voices room featuring recordings from Western Pennsylvania WWII veterans and 7,000 recreated dog tags suspended from the ceiling.
The History Center partnered with several organizations to develop the exhibit, including the Smithsonian Institution, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, Veteran’s Voices, Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Fort Pitt Chapter, the Tuskegee Airmen of the Western Pennsylvania Region, Zippo/Case Museum, Butler County Historical Society, First Frontier Mechanized Cavalry, and more.


The We Can Do It! WWII exhibit is included with regular History Center admission: $16 for adults, $14 for seniors (age 62+), $6.50 for students and children (age 6-17), and free for children (age 5 and under) and History Center members.

The exhibit opened on April 25, 2015 and will close on January 3, 2016.

For additional information, photos, public program listings, and much more, please visit www.heinzhistorycenter.org.

The Senator John Heinz History Center, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and the largest history museum in Pennsylvania, presents American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection. The Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum is a museum within a museum, comprehensively presenting the region’s remarkable sports story through hundreds of artifacts and interactive experiences for visitors of all ages. The History Center and Sports Museum are located at 1212 Smallman Street in the city’s Strip District, and are open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The History Center’s museum system includes the Sports Museum; the Fort Pitt Museum in historic Point State Park; and Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, a National Historic Landmark located in Avella, Pa. in Washington County. More information is available at www.heinzhistorycenter.org.
The History Center's We Can Do It! WWII exhibit explores Western Pennsylvania’s incredible impact on the home, industrial, and battle fronts during World War II and features three jeeps, including “Gramps,” the oldest known jeep in existence, on loan from the Smithsonian.

The We Can Do It! WWII exhibit features several immersive displays, including this special Veterans Voices room featuring recordings from Western Pennsylvania WWII veterans and 7,000 recreated dog tags suspended from the ceiling.