

## **Hiram H. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Michelle Briggs**

Ms. Briggs has demonstrated the highest levels of creativity and originality in her practical approach to improve interpretation efforts at the Soo Locks Visitors Center. Working on her own, with limited resources, she created a multi-phased plan to overhaul the entire Soo Locks Visitors Center bringing exhibits, activities and films up to the highest interpretive standards of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Ms. Briggs used her own writing and designing skills and made use of existing service agreements for visual information services through ACE-IT to complete much of the work that would normally be contracted out to a design firm helping keep costs extremely low. Plans for future additions to the Visitors Center will follow the same pattern, doing much of the preliminary work through existing service agreements and with most of the writing and design work being completed in-house.

The interpretive approach Ms. Briggs used is multi-layered using bold headlines, eye catching graphics and clear text to reach visitors at various levels of learning, interest and ability. More detailed information is provided on individual floor displays and future plans call for the addition of computer kiosks with interactive photos, maps and databases to meet visitors' varying levels of interest and knowledge. Ms. Briggs has also prepared scopes of work for interactive exhibits featuring a lock model, a ships pilot house and a lock operating panel to provide hands-on learning experiences for children and adults.

Ms. Briggs also makes extensive use of the Detroit District's social media platforms to interpretively inform and engage the public about the work of the Soo Area Office and the mission of the Detroit District and the entire U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

