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3/30/2021

Building Better Museums One Professional At A Time

Press Release

For Immediate Release

May 1, 2021

North Carolina Museums Council (NCMC) Recently Announced Award Recipients

The North Carolina Museums Council recently announced its 2021 award winners. Winners were selected through a process of nomination and peer review and represent the best of North Carolina's work to promote and share our unique stories. The North Carolina Museums Council Awards program provides a vehicle for promoting excellence in North Carolina museums and related institutions. Award recognition can also reinforce the quality of a museum's initiatives and accomplishments in grant proposals and other documents. Several awards were bestowed this year in the following categories: Special Recognition, Professional Service, William T. Alderson Lifetime Achievement, Excellence, Dennis T. Lawson Memorial, and new this year, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion.

Awards of Special Recognition

This award honors an individual, group, or business affiliated with a museum in North Carolina who has demonstrated significant interest and support in the programs, goals, and policies or made significant contributions of time, money, or ideas to a museum in the state.

Rocky Mount Mills and the Rocky Mount Event Center, was nominated by the NCMC Board for their willingness to work with us when we had to cancel our 2020 conference and then schedule, re-schedule, and then cancel our 2021 conference! We look forward to eventually getting out to Rocky Mount and exploring their vibrant and informative city at the NCMC 2022 Annual Meeting and Conference!

Hannah Crowell, an exhibit designer and multitalented artist from the Mint Museum, is the second recipient of this award. Her latest work at the Mint has won accolades for design and presentation and her colleagues nominated her for this award because of her willingness to collaborate, be creative, and do all things necessary to create inspired exhibits, theatrical designs, and more.

Professional Service Award

The Professional Service Award is presented to an individual currently employed at a North Carolina museum, distinguished in the museum field and/or and who has professionally advanced the role of museums or that of the North Carolina Museums Council.



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Corinne Midgett, has faithfully served as the registrar at the High Point Museum since 2008. In that time, she has honed her professional skills by eagerly seeking out professional networking and development opportunities. She often finds creative solutions to challenges, including skillfully developing programs to benefit the museum's collections and docent educators during the pandemic shutdown. In addition to her contributions to the High Point Museum, Corinne is very generous in sharing her knowledge and expertise with others in the Museum field. She has remained consistently active in several professional organizations in North Carolina and the Southeast, serving on the NCMC board, presenting at conferences and serving in other leadership roles.

William T. Alderson Lifetime Achievement Award

This award was established to recognize retired museum professionals for a lifetime of service to demonstrate NCMC's respect and admiration for the body of work they accomplished in their career.

Leisa Greathouse, spent her career in museums and historic sites sharing her love of history, costumed interpretation, archaeology, and grassroots community outreach. Leisa has served in a variety of capacities, from interpreter to curator. She has been innovative in planning educational outreach opportunities, special events, and major community programs. Always a team player, Leisa contributed to statewide educational planning committees for the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for both museums and historic sites. Leisa's contributions to North Carolina's museums are extensive and her spirit and dedication to creating an equitable space for learning is felt far and wide.

Award of Excellence

The Award of Excellence is intended to honor exhibits, publications, or programs that exemplify excellence in the museum field. This competition showcases the best in our profession and in doing so promotes excellence and professionalism across the state. Nominations for the Awards of Excellence must have been completed during the 2020 calendar year. This year, three Awards of Excellence were presented for online educational programs that quickly adapted to COVID restrictions and at-home learning models.

Eileen Miller, Director of Community Engagement, and the *North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences* is recognized for their great work to take their Natural Sciences Classroom face to face programming online to provide an interactive and informative series of programs to inspire children and families through games, photographs, video clips, and sounds to engage different learning styles, and encouraged to share comments and questions in the chat box.



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Kristi McMillian and her team at Asheville Art Museum pivoted their in-person Summer Art Camps to make them a virtual experience, complete with video tutorials, art kits, and daily Zoom meetings with live instructors to develop a deeper understanding of the elements and principals of art and to reinforce curriculum goals.

Körner's Folly is recognized for their Victorian Time Traveler program, an at-home, immersive virtual program, as an adaption of their on-site programs. The program integrates history and STEM activities in a package of instructional videos, hands-on activities, and a compelling narrative exhibit for an immersive and holistic educational experience.

Dennis T. Lawson Memorial Award

The award was created in 1987 in honor of Dennis T. Lawson, director of the High Point Museum and Historical Park, a respected and admired colleague who died suddenly and unexpectedly during the preceding year. This award was created to honor deceased members and supporters of the museum profession in North Carolina.

Mr. Robert E. Wiley, Jr. of the Mint Museum is this year's honoree. Staff at the Museum were full of wonderful stories about Robert and his dedication to the museum and the Dallas Cowboys, along with quick wit and awesome cooking skills. Robert will be missed by his colleagues. "Robert was part of a special group of people I count on here at the Mint," says Katherine Steiner, the Mint's chief registrar. "I always knew that he'd be there to help me with anything I asked, but more than that, I counted on his warm smile. I counted on his presence. He was one of those solid people that warm your heart just by being there, by being constant."

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Award

New this year, to reflect the Board's dedication to the principles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) across the museum field, a new award program has been developed for 2020. This award seeks to celebrate organizations and programs advancing the museum field in these areas, both internally through workplace culture and programs and externally through engagement with museum audiences and communities.

Carol Hart and the Greensboro History Museum is recognized for their work to respond to their local community through their "History Happening Now" documentation initiative, and their work pivoted in June 2020 to become "Pieces of Now: Murals, Masks, Community Stories and Conversations," a DEAI project focusing on issues of racial reckoning and social justice. The end result was a moving exhibition, purposeful active collections focus, and associated programming.



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“We began actively collecting and programming around our community’s response to the murder of George Floyd.” says staff. “This included material culture related to the protests and large murals that went up downtown Greensboro following looting. As we collected the murals and talked to protesters, artists, and business owners, it was clearly important to our African American community they see these items on exhibit in the city’s history museum as soon as possible.”

Angela Thorpe, Director of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission. Under Angela’s leadership, the AAHC has grown its outreach and programming to reach a variety of museums, historic sites, and communities through programming, outreach, and educational endeavors. As a result of her tireless work, the AAHC has developed learning materials for teachers and students, traveling exhibits and community outreach events, and fostering new research and work to understand the full scope of our state’s diverse past. At any given time, for any given opportunity, Angela is willing and ready to partner with institutions large and small to advance their goals of improving diversity and inclusiveness in programs, outreach, staff development, and an untiring devotion to professionalism and respect for all who enter her sphere.

The North Carolina Museums Council awards are typically presented at their annual conference but because of the COVID19 pandemic, the Council recognized the winners during their online conference.

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The North Carolina Museums Council (NCMC) is a 501(c)(3) serving institutions of all sizes within the State of North Carolina. Building better museums one professional at a time is reached through enhanced public education by improving the administrative, interpretive, and collections practices of museums, historic sites, science centers and related facilities in North Carolina. NCMC promotes goals of encouraging the continual improvement of standards and practices of all professionals in museums, historic sites, science centers and related facilities across the state; stimulating public support and understanding for the work performed by those facilities; providing a forum in which Council members can exchange ideas, as well as foster cooperation and improved communication amongst themselves, as well as with the communities they serve; and promoting North Carolina museums throughout the state, the region, and the nation through its members and activities.

For more information on awards, visit ncmuseums.org or contact LeRae Umfleet, Awards Chair at awards@ncmuseums.org

For more information on communications, visit any of the social media channels or contact Rebekah Dunn, Communications Chair at communications@ncmuseums.org. NCMC can be found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.