

Meet the NDSC 2019 Education Grant Recipients

Five NDSC Education Grants were awarded for the 2019 National Docent Symposium in Washington, D.C. These grants were awarded to first-time Symposium attendees Teresa "Tess" van Groll of the Textile Museum, Toronto, Canada, Molly Mullin of the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina, Berlanti "Lola" Rizkallah of California's Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Ranch and Gardens, Susan Fraelich of the University of Michigan Museum of Art, and Sandra Mowatt of the Joslyn Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

"As an NDSC Educational Grant recipient and first-time attendee to the Washington 2019 National Docent Symposium, I was both honored and humbled. The experience was beyond what I had imagined! The Symposium was absolutely amazing - the learning opportunities and the interaction with fellow docents and staff continued for four days.

The showcase of ideas was thought provoking. The breakout sessions, given by docents and staff, were truly a learning experience. The museum tours were awesome; and the lunch and dinner speakers were outstanding! I learned so much by interacting with other docents who share a love of art and history. I am so excited about sharing my experiences with my fellow docents and guests at my beloved Rancho Los Alamitos.

After receiving the prestigious grant, many members of the Council leadership reached out to me. They were absolutely kind, welcoming and considerate individuals. They encouraged me to apply for a position on the Council, and I was honored to be appointed to a position that will allow me to best serve the NDSC by ensuring the continued financial sustainability of the Council."

Lola Rizkallah, Docent, Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Ranch and Gardens, Long Beach, California, NDSC Director

"The 2019 National Docent Symposium was an exhilarating experience. I can only speak about it in positive superlatives. I had the opportunity to learn new approaches and techniques to help any docent conduct a better tour. I still teach at the university level. I have now incorporated into my classroom practice some of the techniques that I learned at the Symposium.

I also had the opportunity to meet docents from all over North America. It was a pleasure to interact with so many bright interesting people involved in supporting a cultural institution in their area through volunteering their time and services. I am looking forward to Kansas City. I have told all of our docents that we all need to go to Kansas City!"

Tess van Groll, Docent, Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto

"As a retired teacher, being a docent allows me to use skills I developed in my elementary school career and connect students with works of art in our incredible collection. As a lifelong learner, I am always seeking ways to learn more about art, children and innovative ways to engage them in our museum. When I heard about the National Docent Symposium grant, I knew this opportunity was for me! I applied for a grant at the beginning of 2019 on the chance I would be selected. I didn't think I could afford the registration fee, hotel cost and airfare but knew I would love the experience! Lucky for me, I was selected.

Attending the National Docent Symposium was the highlight of my year. Every aspect of the Symposium exceeded my expectations. Dr. Gus Casely- Hayford, Director of the Smithsonian Museum of African American Art, was the keynote speaker at the opening dinner. His scholarly and articulate remarks reminded me of why I became a docent, and his celebration of volunteer docents was inspiring and uplifting.

From the amazing breakout sessions, delicious meals, memorable trips to an incredible variety of art museums, galleries and outdoor sculpture, I savored every minute. One particularly memorable highlight was a docent-led Monuments by Moonlight tour on a balmy evening. I will never forget the exhilarating feeling of hearing the story of the Martin Luther King, Jr. monument by a knowledgeable and entertaining docent. I was reminded that storytelling is a powerful tool to use in connection to works of art and I have vowed to use in more in my museum practices.

I returned to Ann Arbor with renewed enthusiasm for my docent work, knowledge to share with my UMMA colleagues and plenty of Michelle Obama portrait magnets to give to my family and friends. I remain grateful for this opportunity to help me become a better docent."

Susan Fraelich, Docent, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor

"Attending the 2019 National Docent Symposium was an outstanding experience, and I am beyond grateful to the National Docent Symposium Council for awarding me a grant to cover my registration. This opportunity allowed me to grow and improve as a docent at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's campus art institution, the Weatherspoon Art Museum, where I have volunteered for five years. Coming from a relatively small team of docents attending the Symposium made me feel connected to something bigger. Meeting docents from across the country and learning from presenters from a wide range of institutions energized me. I came away feeling proud of being part of such a dedicated, talented, and committed network of people.

The takeaways from the Symposium that I will apply to my work at WAM are numerous. Among the best practices and techniques that I was introduced to and have incorporated are using additional resources on an iPad to enrich and enhance my tours. I also gained insight in how to most effectively tour time-based media. Videos, digital art, and multimedia installations are increasingly ubiquitous components of the contemporary art work that the Weatherspoon

collects and exhibits. I now have strategies to employ to share these works with our tour groups and visitors.

The other docent from WAM who attended the Symposium and I created a slide presentation based on the ideas we got from our sessions and on the big-picture themes that we were exposed to during the guest speaker keynotes. We were provided time at one of our docent training sessions to share this presentation and to highlight the next Symposium in Kansas City.

I wish to reiterate my gratitude for being able to participate in the Symposium. It broadened my horizons, made me feel connected to something bigger and reenergized the way that I approach visitors and groups on my tours."

Molly Mullin, Docent, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina