

Contact: Claire Johnston
Michigan Museums Association
michiganmuseums.org
cjohnston@michiganmuseums.org
Phone 313 334-7643
P.O. Box 5246
Cheboygan, MI 49721



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 20, 2020

Michigan Museums Association Announces Annual Awards Recipients

Michigan museum professionals, volunteers, and supporters gathered online on November 19 to celebrate the 2020 Michigan Museums Association (MMA) member awards. MMA typically presents awards for leadership and excellence in Michigan’s museums each fall at the annual conference, but this year called for something different. Many staff and volunteers in Michigan’s museums served in a special way during this unique and challenging year. At the awards celebration, 57 MMA members were recognized for special service to their communities, colleagues and others in 2020 with four different awards. “We have many individuals and institutions across our state who are providing important services to our communities every day. This year has presented us with unprecedented challenges and required an equally unprecedented response. Our members have answered this call with action, innovation, and leadership. The Michigan Museums Association is proud to celebrate these efforts and achievements, as we continue to move forward in our shared cause of supporting thriving museums so that we may have vibrant communities,” said Nathan Kemler, MMA Board President.

36 people were recognized as “Clean Up Warriors.” In the midst of a global pandemic, and on a holiday weekend, these MMA members pulled on their boots and masked up to help the Midland Area Historical Society and the Sanford Centennial Museum after two dams in the Midland area failed and the museums were flooded. Volunteers helped move artifacts and archival material to safety, began initial work to assess, and try to save items that were damaged. Others found or donated supplies or coordinated fundraisers.

- CMU Museum Studies Program (Jay Martin, Brad Collins, Alexandra Gamicchia, Haley Hill, Kristen Lehnert, Kaye Reimers, and Marc Van Horn)
- Kate Crosby, Tri-Cities Historical Museum
- Julia Gourley Donohue, Krasl Art Center
- Diane Gutenkauf, Ella Sharp Museum
- Craig Hadley, Dennos Museum Center
- Geoffe Haney, Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum
- Deborah Harmon
- Joseph Hines, Project Arts and Ideas
- Stephanie Hornyak, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Sarah Humes, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Christy Kincaid, Air Zoo
- Kelsey Laymon, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Connie Locker, Tri-Cities Historical Museum
- Megan McAdow, Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

- Jim McCabe, The Henry Ford
- Susan McCabe
- Megan McCullen, Gordon L. Grosscup Museum of Anthropology
- Robert Myers, Historical Society of Michigan
- Erin Pilarski, Tri-Cities Historical Museum
- Thor Rasmussen, Saginaw Art Museum
- Jen Richmond-Ananbeh
- Emily Shirilla
- Monica Taylor, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Hannah Thoms, Motown Museum
- Michelle Tomasek, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum
- Rachel Veramay, Ella Sharp Museum
- Jake Van Wyk, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Larry Wagenaar, Historical Society of Michigan
- Holly Waldenmeyer, Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Brittany Williams, Kalamazoo Valley Museum
- Jared Yax, Tri-Cities Historical Museum

The Pivot! Award recognized museums in Michigan that quickly reacted to the mandated shutdown of museums last spring due to the pandemic. Museums all over Michigan found a way to fulfill their missions despite being closed. Five museums in particular were nominated for this award.

- The Air Zoo – In the spring of 2020, the Air Zoo debuted Launchpad to Learning, a free resource that shares videos with information about the Air Zoo’s collection, and offered at home educational experiences families could recreate. Following up on that success, 2020 Virtual Summer Camps provided kits of supplies so that students could do experiments from the safety of their home with live virtual guidance from Air Zoo Educators.
- Berrien County Historical Association, Inc. – The shutdown and a variety of grants allowed the Berrien County Historical Association to tackle much needed maintenance projects to expand community offerings and led to more financial support from Berrien County. They also installed temporary exhibits, created stay at home projects for kids and adults, replaced permanent exhibits, added new interpretive signage, and took care of behind the scenes projects that were long overdue and will have long-term benefits.
- Harbor Springs Area Historical Society - Adapted its biggest annual fundraiser to a socially distant boat parade. It was the only community event around the July 4 holiday and replaced the annual parade, bringing the community together for the first time since the stay home, stay safe order. Local businesses hung nautical flags, media outlets covered the event and 160 watercraft participated in the parade.
- Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center – Although still closed to the public and with staff working remotely, in person tours were replaced with webinars. Annual events like Law Day, Constitution Day, and Exploring Careers in Law were redesigned as asynchronous resources or live webinars and staff also created videos with judges, justices and court staff. An e-newsletter was started, staff collaborated with other local organizations, and reorganized the website.
- Sanilac County Historical Society – Wrote grants for instant hot water heaters and eight touchless hand sanitizers, and received donations of hand sanitizer. Created self-guided tours and Pop-Up wedding packages. The wedding packages included all details and supported several local businesses that provide wedding services. New outdoor events were instituted as well.

Several MMA members responded to the pandemic by helping address needs in their local communities.

- Edsel & Eleanor Ford House – Staff gathered N95 masks, nitrile gloves, protective aprons, and other cleaning supplies to donate to Detroit Hospitals at the start of the pandemic. They hung ribbons and signs of support for essential workers along the main road near the institution and dug up thousands of tulips from the Tribute Garden. These tulips, as well as gourmet suppers, were distributed to essential workers. Supporting Detroit and the valued essential workers during a crisis is part of the legacy of Eleanor and Edsel Ford.
- Christy Kincaid – Christy took to her sewing machine and pumped out masks to give to healthcare professionals when everyone was low on PPE. She also kindly made masks for her friends when they were all scrambling to protect themselves and their families.
- Tobi Voigt – Tobi sewed masks and donated them to front line workers. She also volunteered at the Capital Community Services food bank.

Finally, MMA members were invited to nominate colleagues they felt had done something particularly special this year. During the awards celebration, nominators were invited to share a few words about the individuals they nominated. Those nominated did everything from retooling programs and putting together new resources to researching COVID-19 safety measures and reopening plans. The 16 members presented with a Colleague Champion Award were:

- Theodore J. Bornhorst, A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum at Michigan Tech
- Kayla Chenault, Detroit Historical Museum
- Malcolm Cottle, Ruth Mott Foundation/Applewood
- Steve Crawford, Kalamazoo Valley Museum
- Christian Greer, Michigan Science Center
- Sara Gross, Michigan History Center
- Tom Howes, Kalamazoo Valley Museum
- Nheena Ittner, Upper Peninsula Children’s Museum
- Andrew Kercher, Port Huron Museums
- Felicia Konrad-Bevard, Edsel & Eleanor Ford House
- Dean Nasseridine, Detroit Historical Museum
- Katie Ponsetto, Historic Charlton Park
- Katherine Prichard, University of Michigan Museum of Art
- Sarah Schleicher, Cranbrook Institute of Science
- Nancy Swords, Cranbrook Institute of Science
- Brittany Williams, Kalamazoo Valley Museum

“The Michigan Museums Association is always proud to honor those in the state museum community who have achieved successes or served their communities in a significant way,” says MMA Executive Director Lisa Craig Brisson. “But this year, especially, there were so many examples of the generosity, resilience, and commitment from the community, it felt important to acknowledge as many as possible.”

The Michigan Museums Association is a catalyst for advancing Michigan’s museum community through shared learning, advocacy and collaboration. MMA has been supporting the work of Michigan museums for over 60 years. Our members include the institutions, professionals and volunteers of the Michigan museum community who believe that strong museums help us better understand ourselves and our world. Every type of museum is represented and

welcomed, including art, history, science, military and maritime, and youth museums, as well as aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, arboretums, historic sites, and science and technology centers.