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**Volunteer Awards Essential Reading 2018**

This award scheme is a chance to highlight how important volunteers are to museums, showcase the range of roles volunteers undertake, and show the diversity of the people who offer their time as volunteers. In addition, through these awards, SHARE will highlight best practice in both volunteering and volunteer co-ordination.

The Awards are funded by Arts Council England through their Museum Development

programme, managed in this region by SHARE Museums East.

**The Awards will be presented at during National Volunteers Week – this year 1st – 7th June. All volunteers nominated will be invited to this event as a thank you for all their hard work and dedication.**

**Who can you nominate?**

**You can nominate anyone who has volunteered in an Accredited, East of England region museum over the last year, including volunteer Trustees**.

* Nominations are welcome from museums of all shapes and sizes but the museum must be Accredited or be actively Working Towards Accreditation (or meet the equivalent schemes within national heritage organisations)
* Museums can nominate once in each category, and may not nominate the same team/volunteer for more than one category.
* If you are a museum or museum service with more than one site, you can treat each site as a separate museum.

**What will the judges be looking for?**

Successful nominations will evoke one or more of these thoughts in the judges’ minds –

“I wish I’d thought of that.” - “That’s really made a positive difference.”

“What amazing commitment.” - “This group/person really understands what their museum needs.” - “I wish we had more groups/people like this in the region” - “We can easily use this project/result to inspire others.”

Some thoughts to help you from Bridget Yates – the previous Chair of Judges:

*The Judges are enthusiastic supporters of volunteering in museums and heritage organisations. They recognise that volunteers are a critical part of the museum workforce, people who work with dedication and enthusiasm for organisations that they believe are a ‘force for good’ in their communities. The Judges are always astonished, and humbled, by the achievements of volunteers in the East of England.*

*The Judges would like to see nominations from as wide a range of museums as possible from the smallest volunteer run museum to a large museum service with many staff. They would also like to see nominations that cover the whole spectrum of tasks that are undertaken by volunteers from cleaning the public spaces to accessioning and from gardening to leading school visits.*

*The Judges are not looking for applications that are great works of literature, but here are a few hints and tips to make your application stand out:*

* *Please read the criteria of your chosen category very carefully – the Judges do and they cannot make an award, however meritorious, to a nomination that does not meet all the criteria of the award!*
* *Try to tell a coherent story about the volunteer or team and their successes. The Judges really warm to a good story – they are humans too!*
* *Try to be consistent throughout the nomination. Don’t tell us in Part A that the volunteer is working on their own and then in Part B describe the team they lead!*
* *Start from the basis that the Judges will know nothing at all about your museum, and please believe that they really will want to be told the most important aspects of its work.*
* *Tell us (tactfully) if individuals or teams have overcome challenges in their lives or if they have used their volunteering experience as a way to change their lives or the lives of others.*
* *If you are submitting more than one nomination from the same museum double check to ensure that you give the same background information. If two nominations contradict each other, the Judges might think the museum doesn’t know what it’s doing! This is especially important if nominations are compiled by different people.*
* *Remember the awards also reward good practice by the museums themselves. The Judges are very unlikely to make an award where the nominator states proudly that ‘despite the fact that no training was given, the volunteer did an excellent job’.*
* *Give yourself plenty of time to complete the form. Try not to make it a last minute job. It is really important to the volunteer or team and to all their colleagues that you represent them as well as you possibly can.*
* *Keep within the word count but remember to tell the Judges the most important things first, don’t run out of space before you have told them why your volunteer or team should receive an award. Bullet points are acceptable.*
* *Before you submit the nomination it is a good idea to ask someone else to check that it is as easy to read and understand as you can make it.*
* *Please do not assume that the Judges will understand all acronyms or abbreviations. Spell it out the first time you use the term, putting the abbreviation in brackets. For example: Museums Association (MA). Also, try to be very careful about jargon and ‘museum speak’ – is it a word or phrase that ‘lay’ people will understand?*
* *You might like to include quotes from other people in support of the nomination. For example, if you are nominating a team leader some enthusiastic comments from members of their team can be really helpful. It also tells the Judges that the nomination is widely supported by others in the museum.*

*Good Luck! – Bridget Yates, Former Chair of the Judging Panel*

**How to nominate?**

**We welcome nominations for individuals or teams in the following 8 categories:**

1. **Digital Volunteering Award**

**New for 2018, we want to recognise some of the newer roles volunteers undertake in museums.** Do you have a volunteer/team who offer a great service to the museum by setting up, or operating the museum’s social media accounts, or keeping the website up to date, or workimg on digital museum projects. They might help the unitiated, undertake this work sensitively where needed, or provide new ideas and ways of working.

1. **Outstanding Young Volunteer Award**

**Specifically for volunteers under the age of 25 who have excelled in any of the categories or who have achieved something else exceptional**. This is your opportunity to recognise those who really stand out. They may have contributed to a museum project or developed an innovative way of working while at the museum as well as being a positive ambassador.

1. **Volunteer Leadership Award**

**This may be someone who provides informal leadership of volunteers, an official volunteer team leader, or co-ordinator, or a paid member of staff carrying out this role.** Do you have someone in mind who does this really well? Do they motivate, innovate, communicate well with others? You will know their skills and attributes - please tell us about them.

1. **We Couldn’t do Without … Award**

**You may have a volunteer/team who doesn’t fit into a category?** They may empty the bins, act as a general fixer, or think of innovative ways to solve problems which have persisted for some time. Whenever they or their team is needed, they are already there! The principle is that your museum couldn’t flourish as well without them.

1. **Learning Award**

**For volunteers who are enthusiastic about developing and delivering inspiring and engaging learning activities using their museum collections, grounds and buildings.**   They may support family learning, or more school/college based work but whatever they are doing it will be inspiring.

1. **Visitor Experience Award**

**For volunteers who give visitors a good first impression of the museum.** This might be through excellent maintenance of the site or grounds, or by having a good knowledge of their museum and giving visitors just the right level of help and information whilst they are on the site. They may have shown themselves to be tactful and diplomatic, or gone the extra mile in some other way to enable visitors to get the most out of their visit.

1. **Trustee Award**

**This award recognises outstanding contributions from Trustees (or unpaid governors) who set strategy and direct the work of our museums.** Without appropriate leadership serious problems might have arisen, or great opportunities not been taken. Do your trustees give outstanding service to your museum? This is the only category in the scheme where volunteering over a longer period than the 2017/18 year will be considered.

1. **Collections Champion Award**

**For volunteers who are committed to developing their museum’s collections and making them accessible to diverse audiences.** Collections may be moveable objects, or in some museums, the buildings and grounds themselves. They may work on the museum’s catalogue, help with conservation cleaning, or assist with displays and exhibitions.

Nominations need to be submitted by someone who has some form of working relationship with the nominee in question, e.g. supervisor, volunteer co-ordinator, team member/leader, trustee or museum director.

Please nominate using the nomination form, which can be downloaded at

[**www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/volunteer-awards**](http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/volunteer-awards).

**The deadline for nominations is Friday 16th March 2018.**

Nominations should be sent in electronic form to [**volunteerawards@norfolk.gov.uk**](mailto:volunteerawards@norfolk.gov.uk)