

2016 Year in Review

Transformation defined everything the Martha's Vineyard Museum did in 2016 and indeed will define its future as it becomes a renowned cultural center. New leadership, mission/vision, logo, branding, and fresh marketing material and advertising - truly the organization re-created itself in 2016. And our programs, exhibits, and the public responded very well in many, many ways.

With the new leadership and management of its Chairman, Stever Aubrey, and Executive Director, Phil Wallis, the organization focused on the essence of the museum, seeking to explore and discover every day how it could better achieve its new mission: *to inspire all people to discover, explore, and strengthen their connections to this Island and its diverse heritage*. No longer would the museum be singularly about passive collection and curatorship, but rather a call for engagement and involvement, for meaningful connection to community, to each other. In 2016, the organization embarked upon a journey with everyone on the Island, truly to define Our Museum, Your Museum. It called out to everyone to help in this exciting new journey to interpret the Island's history, all the people and places, so that together we might better shape our future. As our Director of Education, Ann DuCharme, is quick to state: *The Museum touches the past as it shapes the future*.

Education continued to lead the way as the Museum worked within each of the seven Island's public schools, bringing Island history to more than 900 Islands student, creating over 3,000 educational experiences. The Museum partnered with a diverse group of Island preschool providers including Headstart, Project Headway, Montessori and Martha's Vineyard Community Services, working with more than 100 pre-Kindergarten children, ages 3 to 5.

In the 2016 academic year, the Education team developed and implemented a new Education Strategic Plan, focusing curriculum on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) priorities, with a new *Cornerstone Class* concept. As well, the team started working directly with Brazilian students at the high school, pairing global history with art history to improve English Language Learning. The kids responded in surprisingly emotional ways to the global art as they also studied Island Art, even taking a field trip to the Granary Gallery - a wholly new experience for them. Museum Educators, Ann and Beth, were moved by the kids' powerful, personal insights about what it is like to live here as a non-native English speaking teenager.

In the summer, Discovery Days program continued to be an exciting "lab" of sorts, where we can explore all kinds of creative ideas for the academic year curriculum. For example, a small Heath Hen Habitat class which started last summer with a little shoebox as an art/culture project exploded into 15 grant funded classes that explored issues of sustainability using math, art and science.

Moving to the world of exhibits and programs, we explored a variety of dynamic material. In addition to the perennial favorite exhibit subject of whaling, 2016 was a great year for exhibits closely involving our Island community, hosting 66 programs/events across the Island. First, the museum invited four Island designers to create new fashions inspired by textiles and objects in the collection. *Re:Make* featured clothing, leatherwork, and ethnographic objects, which designers then created "modern day" comparable items, pairing their expertise and experience expressly for this exhibition. This attracted a whole new (and younger) crowd to our doors – fun was had by all. Then, in the fall, guest curator Sally

Pierce worked with the family of Edgartown fisherman Sandy Fisher to pull together an exhibit showing how the town looked between WWI and WWII.

Some of our most popular Spotlight exhibits and program talks focused on Black American culture. Featuring oral histories, photographs and text, the Museum celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Cottagers with a popular summer exhibit and program, and highlighted the Polar Bears group in an additional packed exhibit/program. Board member, Skip Finley, hosted an overflowing Library to hear his talk on his soon-to-be-published book on black whaling captains of Martha's Vineyard.

In collections, Jerome Fletcher donated a 5 1/2-inch fossilized Megalodon tooth found on the Island years ago. These giant shark-like monsters have been extinct for more than two million years. A donation from a more recent era is the New York *Spectator* newspaper from August 18, 1798, which reports both the authorization of the first Gay Head lighthouse and the establishment of the Marine Hospital Service. Significant additions to the collection also included eleven Jimmy Morgan weathervanes (currently on exhibit), two carved relief structures by Clifford Dugan, and six embroidery pieces made by Miriam D. Richardson.

Most impressively, the Museum, under the leadership of our Research Historian, Bow Van Riper, fielded over 230 research inquiries and worked with almost 400 researchers in the library.

The response from the public was tremendous in 2016, growing significantly even before our move to Vineyard Haven. The Museum expanded membership to over 1,500 members, making all donors members and offering free memberships at Marine Hospital Open Houses. We logged over 4,000 volunteer hours in various departments thanks to over 130 Museum volunteers. The Edgartown, East Chop, and Gay Head Lighthouses saw over 33,000 people visit. Our interactive website attracted over 30,000 unique visits to the *Laura Jernegan: Girl on a Whaleship*. Our prize catboat VANITY voyaged the waters of Edgartown for more forty sails in June, July, and August.

The funding response was equally as robust as support from many sources continued to rise. In grants, the Museum received over \$45,000 in CPC grants from the towns of Tisbury and Aquinnah, was awarded \$5,000 from the Permanent Endowment for a Local Immigrants exhibit (2017 exhibition), and \$1,000 from the Rotary Club for environmental monitors. We were also granted \$10,000 from the MA Cultural Council for school programs and \$5,000 from an anonymous donor for a new archaeology program *Hold History in Your Hands* (2017 implementation).

Our focus on the capital campaign achieved new highs, as we reached nearly \$15 million by year's end. Members and donors were, as always, our most important resource. Indeed, you are the reason for our funding successes. Without you and your support, your donations of time, talent and treasure, the Museum could not exist. As well, you entrusted us with your art, objects and manuscripts that tell Island stories. We can't thank you enough for trusting us to steward the Island's irreplaceable history.

With our capital campaign making solid progress, our museum, your museum has launched its transformation. We are On The Move together to create a successful and renowned cultural center for our island.