

It was a great honor to receive the East Tennessee scholarship for the 2018 Tennessee Association of Museum conference. It was a privilege to attend such an event, in which I had the opportunity to connect with emerging and experienced professionals in the field. Networking opportunities such as this gives people a better understanding of the museum field and knowledge of best practices in their discipline. I am thankful that such an association acknowledges the importance of providing scholarships to their annual conference to encourage networking and continuing education.

The variety of informative sessions each day was one major benefit of the conference; being able to choose which sessions relate to your field or the field you lack knowledge in is great. Each session was well structured and organized with a variation of topics and presenters from many different work and educational backgrounds. This allowed for diverse content and conversation. Discussions throughout the conference were filled with diversity and unity, which is extremely important to discuss when dealing with public history today. Mainly attending sessions relating to collections and curatorial topics, I can certainly say that these presentations were extremely helpful to my career. Topics included important issues of partnerships, grants, crowdsourcing, tourism, interpretation, and advocacy. The Collections and Curators Roundtable session allowed everyone to have the floor to discuss their thoughts on diversity and unity. We spoke about the shortcomings in the museum field and how to make positive changes as we move forward.

My attendance at TAM this year also presented me with the opportunity to hold a meeting for the Eastern Tennessee Emerging Museum Professionals chapter that was greatly supported and encouraged by TAM board members. Through their help and announcement, the meeting was a success and was joined by West Tennessee Emerging Museum Professionals. Allowing a place for the chapter to meet was a great start to the conference by way of introductions and conversations to get to know fellow attendees.

Other highlights of the event included hearing from the guest speaker, Cheryl Wills and the enriching local museums. I was especially impressed with the Contraband Camp, Tennessee River Museum, and Cherry Mansion just to name a few. The days are well structured to provide time to learn but also time to visit great cultural resource centers that you might not have the chance to otherwise. Each location was rich in representing local history and culture.

Conference opportunities are extremely beneficial for many career fields but certainly the public history field. It was not only a time of professional development but also a time filled with networking and engagement with other encouraging and welcoming museum professionals. For emerging museum professionals, attending this conference is a step toward meeting people who are willing to help and encourage you with advice and conversation. This scholarship has allowed me to understand the benefits of returning to this conference year after year.

I can now put a face to many organizations and look forward to working with them as we move forward. Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity. I'll be seeing you all next year for the 2019 TAM conference!