

As the West Tennessee scholarship recipient for the 2017 TAM conference in Pigeon Forge, TN, I would like to begin my account of the conference by thanking the award committee for selecting me as one of the state-wide scholarship winners, and wish to extend a thank you to everyone that attended the conference this year, as your contributions and fees toward the conference afforded me the opportunity to experience my first museum conference and my introduction to the Tennessee museum community. Without this award, I wouldn't have been able to attend the conference, and so I express in all sincerity how much of an honor it was to be selected for the award and how grateful I am to have been given the opportunity from each of you. Thank you all, (also here read as y'all).

In my application for the scholarship, I stated that my intention in attending the conference was to connect the material I've learned in my courses and research to the happenings and practices of the real-world community. I am happy to report that this goal was quickly accomplished, largely due to the contribution of Brooke Mundy, whom graduated from the same Museum Studies program I'm a part of and also worked as a Grad Assistant in Chucalissa, as I am. Her presentation, *Career Development for New and Emerging Museum Professionals*, was very effective at bridging the materials I've been learning about to the community by first rehashing most of what I've learned in her introduction, and then adding new points, advice, and examples of her own experiences since leaving our school's nest!

The other session I found the most connecting to my studies was *Advocacy 101* by Rebecca Price of Chick History, and Bethany Hawkins of the AASLH. One of the most influential people I've learned from in my program, Dr. Robert P. Connolly, is a major proponent of advocacy in museums and has made the practice a major focal point in his past courses with considerable emphasis; and included in his accounts of advocacy the tools and strategies needed to do the errand effectively, (such as impact statements, data summaries, and engaging community leaders). Ms. Price and Ms. Hawkins confirmed Dr. Connolly's teachings, and went a step further by including information in how to contact particular offices in the Senate, Congress, and Mayoral levels of government. I was relieved to see the energy and attendance of the audience for this session, as I'm sure we all within the museum field understand what is currently at stake in the wake of President Trump's proposed Annual Budget removing the NEH and NEA. Strong and frequent advocacy for our personal museums and cultural and historical resource centers in general is something we all must understand and practice; and as the close of my review of the conference, I would like to extend the message of Ms. Hawkins and Ms. Price and ask that we all do what we can to produce strong and compelling tools to advocate for our missions and important work.