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**Michigan Museums Association Announces Annual Awards Recipients**

*Twenty-four Awardees Recognized at Ceremony in Grand Rapids*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan**: Michigan museum professionals, volunteers, and supporters gathered at Grand Valley State University Seidman College of Business Center in Grand Rapids on May 11 to present the Michigan Museum Association’s (MMA) 2023 member awards. At the awards celebration, twenty-four MMA members were recognized for special service to their communities, colleagues, and others in four different award categories.

“Michigan is home to over 625 museums who provide jobs and support communities. They educate children and engage families and groups. They preserve and share priceless works of art and historic artifacts and promote scientific exploration and a better understanding of our shared Michigan culture. The individuals honored at this year’s MMA awards ceremony represent the thousands of people in our state who are passionate about their work in museums, and are well deserved,” said Jason Dake, MMA Board President.

**President’s Award**

The President’s Award is bestowed annually to one individual, company, or organization by the current MMA Board President. The award recognizes exemplary support of MMA, service to the Michigan museums field, a career of distinction or for any other criteria deemed appropriate by the MMA Board President. For 2023, MMA Board President Jason Dake selected George Moroz, Special Assistant to the President at The Henry Ford in recognition of his commitment and service to the profession.

George Moroz has been a long-time advocate for The Henry Ford, and the museum community on the local, state, and federal level for over a quarter-century. In addition to being invaluable to The Henry Ford organization, Moroz has shepherded dozens of museums advocates through the halls of Congress and has brought the Michigan Museums Association opportunities to promote the value of museums in new ways. Moroz has participated in Museums Advocacy Day, led by the American Alliance of Museums, since its inception in 2009, and has mentored numerous Michigan delegates. He is quick to explain the nuances of the relevant issues and is adamant that everyone has a voice at the table. Moroz was also integral in connecting MMA with the Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan (TICOM), first as part of their advocacy committee and now as a general member. MMA anticipates that our relationship with the tourism industry will strengthen and develop even more over the next several years, and we credit George with being the catalyst for this growing and important work.

**Peninsulas Prize**

The two Peninsulas Prize awards support MMA’s mission and professional development goals and objectives by providing visibility for individuals and organizations that strive for excellence and best practice. The first award recognizes an individual who has provided strong leadership to their colleagues, organization, or the museum community. The second award recognizes a museum project or program that addresses issues related to social justice in museums and diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.

The ***Peninsulas Prize for Leadership*** was presented to Katie Trzaska-Miller, Senior Manager of Community & Group Engagement, with Midland Center for the Arts. In that role, she

works to build external relationships and learn how the community interacts with the center as well as develops and supports programming and works to make connections in the region. Trzaska-Miller also serves in leadership roles for many arts and cultural organizations, including the Michigan Presenters Network as its President.

Her nominator, Regina Schreck, had this to say about her: “[Trzaska-Miller] has made a huge impact on the Midland Center for the Arts. [She] believes it is important to be reflective on what stories we are telling and who still needs to be served by our museum. She has asked everyone one of us at the museum to look through a new lens and be more cognizant of stories that we haven't told and who still needs to be invited to the table. [I]t is truly amazing how she has put her entire heart and soul into making DEIA a priority at our museum and I'm proud to call her a colleague."

The ***Peninsulas Prize for DEAI*** was presented to the Holland Museum for its work over the last several years to expand its relevance beyond that of its traditional local audience of white Hollanders of Dutch ancestry. Two exhibits from the last year-plus demonstrate a deep commitment to DEAI. *Contemporary Portraits of Native Americans by James Cook* explored the varied lives of Native Americans in the modern-day through the lens of photographer James Cook. A second exhibit*, United for Progress the LAUP Story* explored the LAUP’s (Latin Americans United for Progress) history as a driving force for change in the Holland community, how they’ve evolved, and how they continue to serve the Latinx and greater Holland community to this day.

The Cultural Lens Series, established in 2020, has highlighted the Holland community through the scope of DEAI. It features speakers both in person and via Zoom, who have a connection to the area and tell a story that is not currently told by the museum. Other examples of the Holland Museum’s efforts with inclusivity include translating its temporary exhibits to Spanish and providing large print options for visitors. The museum has also worked to promote DEAI within the organization, striving to diversify its board and its staff.

**Colleague Champions**

Finally, MMA members were invited to nominate their colleagues to acknowledge special service, excellence in their work, or some other contribution to the museum field this year. This year’s awardees were nominated for a multitude of reasons, including helping with museum and exhibit renovation projects, advocacy work, fundraising efforts, community engagement, collaboration, making exhibits and institutions more accessible, and for being helpful colleagues and leaders in the field. The twenty-one members presented with a Colleague Champion award were:

* **Alison Christensen** – Grand Valley State University Art Gallery
* **Ashley Ross** – Michigan Humanities
* **De’Andrea Matthews** – Detroit Zoological Society
* **Dr. Cory Redman** – Grand Rapids Public Museum
* **Emily Sullivan** – Edsel & Eleanor Ford House
* **Erin Crison** – Grand Rapids Children’s Museum
* **Harry Smith** – Zekelman Holocaust Center
* **Heather Lehman** – Kalamazoo Valley Museum
* **Jamal Dawson** – Grand Rapids Children’s Museum
* **Jamie Wise** – Zekelman Holocaust Center
* **Jen Peters** – Troy Historical Society
* **Karen Kreuze** – Kalamazoo Valley Museum
* **Katie Gigliotti** – Kids ‛N’ Stuff Children’s Museum
* **Liz Pingtella** – Zekelman Holocaust Center
* **Mark Mulder** – Zekelman Holocaust Center
* **Nathan Seeley** – Frankenmuth Historical Association
* **Nicole Webb** – Grand Valley State University Art Gallery
* **Nicole Zeiler** – Dennos Museum Center
* **Patti Montgomery Reinert** – Michigan Maritime Museum
* **Renee Saba** – Ruth Mott Foundation
* **Sharlet Alagia** – Kalamazoo Valley Museum

To view additional photos of the event and learn more about this year’s awardees, visit <https://michiganmuseums.org/2023-Awards/>.

**About the Michigan Museums Association:** 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 sixty 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. For more information about the Michigan Museums Association, visit [www.michiganmuseums.org](http://www.michiganmuseums.org) or call (313) 334-7643.

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Editor’s note: Photo credit to © Jess Furrow Photography. Attached are five photographs:

* George Moroz of The Henry Ford with the President’s Award
* Katie Trzaska-Miller of the Midland Center for the Arts with the Peninsulas Prize for Leadership
* Ricki Levine and Michelle Stempien of the Holland Museum with the Peninsulas Prize for DEAI
* Awardees Katie Trzaska-Miller, Ricki Levine, Michelle Stempien, and George Moroz pose with their awards.
* The 2023 Colleague Champions pose together following the conclusion of the awards ceremony.
* Michigan Museums Association logo