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Michigan Museums Association Announces Annual Awards Recipients

Michigan museum professionals, volunteers, and supporters gathered at the Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores on May 12 to celebrate the Michigan Museum Association's (MMA) 50th Anniversary and present the 2022 member awards. At the awards celebration, 19 MMA members were recognized for special service to their communities, colleagues and others in 2022 with four different awards. "What better way is there to celebrate Michigan's museums than to recognize and honor those doing the good work? Museums provide learning and growth opportunities for communities around the state every day. As a leader in the tourism industry, museums are central to Michigan's economy and the health and wellbeing of our residents," 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 2022, MMA Board President Jason Dake selected Mark Heppner, President & CEO of the Ford House and former MMA Board member in recognition of his commitment and service to the profession. The award was presented by Jason Dake and Nathan Kemler (former MMA Board President).

Mark Heppner has been a long-time contributing member to the Michigan Museums Association community. Heppner is a fierce advocate for museums and in particular, a unifier for those in the arts and culture fields in the greater Detroit region. Heppner most recently served on the MMA Board of Directors for 8 years (2013-2021). During that tenure on the board, Heppner hosted an annual conference, opened his museum to numerous event and meeting opportunities, became the first MMA Partner member, and helped spearhead the recently created MMA Endowment Fund by securing the lead gift for MMA. Heppner always came through with his commitments and time and time again would answer the call, be that support, advocacy, encouragement, or leadership. Heppner's contributions to MMA are long-lasting and deeply appreciated.

Peninsulas Prize (2)

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. One 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 Phil Porter, retired director of Mackinac State Historic Parks (MSHP). He was instrumental in forming Mackinac State Historic Parks into the museum it is today, assisting with the opening of three MSHP structures, the reconstruction of Fort Holmes, the opening of two historical trails, and the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum. He has also served on several boards throughout the region and state, including the Michigan Museums Association board.

Porter agreeing to stay on as Director Emeritus for the 2021 season was a prime example of the type of leadership he offers. His 49 years of experience with the organization, in various levels, offered knowledge that cannot be matched within the organization. Porter offered to stay on in this volunteer role, and would lend his opinion when appropriate, step in when asked, and participate when needed. Porter could have easily overstepped his bounds and maintained a level of involvement similar to what he had before, but he stayed to the side and allowed the new executive team the freedom to manage. Porter's generosity with his time and knowledge while allowing the management team to operate were certainly noticed by the team.

The *Peninsulas Prize for DEAI* was presented to the Saugatuck Douglas History Center (SDHC) for its 2021 path-breaking exhibit, *A Century of Progress: 100 Years of LGBTQ History in Saugatuck-Douglas*. Covering over 100 years of history, the exhibit shares the stories of people living in the margins at the Lakeshore in a timeline format with local, state, and national LGBTQ developments included for context. Interpretive panels identify factors that have contributed to the diverse and inclusive nature of these two small Lake Michigan coastal villages alongside historical artwork and artifacts from SDHC collections. The exhibit displays not only the progress made by the LGBTQ community, but also the challenges it has faced and the setbacks it has endured. This work has garnered regional and national attention including several area museums contacting the SDHC for programming on LGBTQ History.

The award was accepted by Dr. Eric Gollanek, Director of the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center. "Local historical societies are the grassroots of public history and this is a courageous exhibit launched at a time when even saying the word "gay" has become the subject of political backlash", said Gollanek.

Colleague Champions

Finally, MMA members were invited to nominate colleagues they felt had done something particularly special this year. Those nominated did everything from supporting volunteers, conducting renovation projects, overcoming pandemic hurdles, bringing learning to the public, wearing many hats successfully, cleaning up collections, and being all around wonderful colleagues and leaders in their field. The 17 members presented with a Colleague Champion Award were:

- **Malcolm Cottle** - Frankenmuth Historical Society
- **Paulette Epstein** - Michigan Science Center
- **Jill Eastcott** - MMA Volunteer
- **William Hickey** - Michigan Military Technical & Historical Society
- **Megan Holtrey** – Dennon Museum Center
- **Melissa Horton** – Lakeshore Museum Center
- **Sarah Humes** – Grand Rapids Public Museum
- **Mark Mulder** - Zekelman Holocaust Center
- **Chelsie Niemi** – Dennon Museum Center
- **Katie Parks** - Zekelman Holocaust Center
- **Shannon Pinkster** – Historic Charlton Park

- **Elizabeth Ploog** - Michigan Military Technical & Historical Society
- **Nathan Seeley** - Frankenmuth Historical Society
- **Loren Stevens** – Holland Museum
- **Stacy Tchorzynski** – Michigan History Center
- **Aliza Tick** – Zekelman Holocaust Center
- **Lisa Worley** – Ford House

MMA is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary, which will culminate with the 2022 MMA Annual Conference that will take place at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, the site of MMA's first official conference in 1972. Learn more about the Michigan Museums Association and #50YearsTogether by visiting this link: <http://www.michiganmuseums.org/50YearsTogether>.

Photo credit to (c) Elayne Gross Photography.

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 60 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.