

**Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC) Meeting**  
**Tuesday, 16 July 2019**  
**Outdoor Café**  
**2:00 pm – 3:12 pm**

**Officers Present**

Heather Duchow	Chair/Photography
Jean Drzyzgula	Vice Chair/Desertarium

**Council Members & Volunteers Present**

Jean Bennett	Collections
Aldine Thornton	BHTM
Sara Langton	BHTM
Marge Trayser	Admissions/Membership
Steve Murray	BOP
Siobhan Sullivan	Newsletter
Jim Boehlke	Living History
Thad Grudzien	Naturalist Team
Jean Noosinow	Gallery Attendants and Silver Sage Store
Frank Graham	Chairperson-elect
Barb Wagner	BOP Attendant
Leota Shaner	Otter Attendant
Wayne Heuple	Volunteer

**Staff Present**

Shannon Campbell	Volunteer Coordinator
Gus Braden	Exhibits Technician
Dustin Cockerham	Chief Exhibits Preparator
Gail Hodge	Event Manager

1. The VAC meeting was called to order by the Chair at 2:00 pm in the outside area of the café.

**2. Staff Reports:**

a. Chief Exhibit Preparator Dustin Cockerham and Senior Curator of Western History Laura Ferguson are co-curating the upcoming Burning Man exhibit. It will be very experiential exhibit that will look broadly at the Burning Man event with a focus on aspects associated with the High Desert. This “big flashy” exhibit opens in late January 2020.

b. Gus Braden has a background in engineering and design work. He works very well creatively with Dustin. They have referred to the [burningman.org](http://burningman.org) site when designing the new exhibit. He talked about setting up the *Art in the West* exhibit. There will be an exhibit related to energy opening in mid-September followed by one on resilient landscapes. Gus and Dustin both discussed their interesting collection of personal vehicles that volunteers have spotted in the parking area.

c. Event Manager—Gail Hodge introduced herself to volunteers and discussed events hosted at the Museum. Events, Admissions, Silver Sage Gift Store, and the Café are all a part of the financial department. Events has six staff members and are looking to hire more. The job description is on the website. Hours are variable and schedules are flexible. Three volunteers currently work in Events.

Additional volunteers are needed to help with centerpieces for the *High Desert Rendezvous* event on 24 /August. More of the work for events is being done in-house, including beverage services. Last year \$13,000 was saved by having in-house staff and volunteers prepare and serve beverages.

Most of the events occur in the evening. There are 24 external events per year hosting organizations and individuals. The Truck Load Carriers Association event, with 200 attendees, was the largest external group hosted to date. The Museum hosts large multi-day events, such as those for Edward Jones, and more intimate events, such as weddings. There are about 72 internal events per year including lectures, workshops, and exhibit openings. Events also oversees *Little Wonders*, a program that gives memberships to low income community members.

d. Volunteer Coordinator—Shannon Campbell is looking for a date in mid September for the Volunteer Recognition event. Nominations for volunteer recognition will be accepted starting early August. Shannon will be encouraging staff and volunteers to participate in the vote. Even if you only know one or two volunteers to nominate, that's okay. Here's your chance to advocate for their recognition.

National Endowment for the Humanities funded the tribal advisory group. Thirteen representatives of tribes in Oregon and Washington are meeting to launch the planning of the BHTM renovation. Dana is very involved in these meetings and was unable to attend today's VAC meeting.

Two new staff members were recently hired. Sara Siestroom is the new Curator of Art and Community Engagement. Chloe Tibert is the new Grant Writer. She currently works with the Heart of Oregon Corps in Central Oregon.

Graphic Designer Steve Tosi is moving on from the Museum to pursue something different. He has worked at the Museum for six years and volunteers expressed fond memories of their interactions with him.

Coaching of interpreters has officially launched. Jon Nelson is working with Wildlife interpreters. Shannon will be coaching, beginning with a Wildlife volunteer, as will Jon Nelson, Assistant Curator of Education Kelsey Ward, Curator of Education Carolyn Nesbitt, and Curator of Living History Linda Evans. This coaching will involve supporting the volunteers by giving them input on their interpretation and audience connection, stemming from areas the volunteer has requested observation in. Volunteers will get informal, non-threatening, feedback. Thad Grudzien and Louise Shirley will be doing reciprocal coaching. She will do the bird talk and he will do the nature talks and fish talks.

There was a short discussion on visitors eating in various areas of the Museum. Volunteers need to find the right balance of giving visitors a good experience at the Museum while making them aware of the rules.

### 3. **Old Business:**

- a. The discussion on possible locations for nursing mothers seeking privacy continued. Several locations were suggested including: empty classrooms, the couch and chairs near the volunteer entrance, and the staff/volunteer bathroom with a bench located in the long hallway between the offices and the volunteer breakroom. A suggestion was made to reupholster the bench. There are

Mamava lactation pods specifically designed for privacy, but they run from \$12,000-20,000 and will likely not be considered.

#### 4. Team Lead/VAC Representative Reports:

a. BHTM—Sara Langton mentioned how the wardrobes of the three digging women mannequins are still being worked on. Things are going well in general.

b. Living History—Jim Boehlke said attendance has been good. They are still adjusting to the new presentation style in Spirit of the West. Interpretive talks are now limited to 20 minutes in length and are focused on one specific theme. Themes are usually announced at the beginning of the talk and include topics such as jobs, business, resources, and clothing. Frank Graham said visitors can be told the talks are “a thematically based tour through 100 years of exploration and settlement in the High Desert.”

c. Admissions/Greeters—Marge Trayser noted that the Museum has been packed with visitors every day. On 5 /July, the Museum had 1,200 visitors. The *Raptors of the Desert Sky* program sells out fast with most tickets gone by 10:15 am.

The five dog kennels available for temporary use in the Museum parking area were discussed. They are secured to trees and under the shade of a canopy. Visitors must come in to Admissions and fill out a form that includes their phone number. If they do not return the key for the kennel, they can be fined.

The sign for the High Desert Ranger Station was moved to a more visible location near the entrance. Attendance increased after relocating the sign.

d. Gallery Attendants—Jean Noosinow commented on the high number of attendants working with the otters.

e. Silver Sage Gift Store— Jean Noosinow showed several items from the store. It has been a busy place. VAC members sampled delicious huckleberry-flavored licorice whips available for purchase at the store. New hats and a hoodie are also being featured. A small moon ball toy is for sale as well.

f. Desertarium—Jean Drzyzgula mentioned how appreciative the team is of the new snake pegboard made by volunteer Burt Douglass. This pegboard works well because the snakes can't see the ground through it and tend to stay on it. A Desertarium volunteer has been working with the blue tongued skink in doing target training and it's going well. They have a new ball python, donated by a volunteer. This non-native snake may be used in the future for educational purposes. The rattlesnake baby is now one year old.

g. Newsletter—Siobhan Sullivan said the team is having a meeting/get together on 25/ July. The team will take the next two months off.

h. Collections— Jean Bennett said they have been very busy. Their space has been crowded lately with the three digging women mannequins and the mounted fox. They had visitors during two vault tours that included tribal elders working on updating the BHTM gallery. The Archaeological Society of Central Oregon also visited recently. They were really interested in everything they saw. The one

hour scheduled tour turned into a two hour visit that included information on cataloging, cleaning, etc.

i. Birds of Prey— Steve Murray said the *Raptors of the Desert Sky* program is going well. The Birds of Prey area is well staffed and the raptor programs are more crowded than they have ever seen them. Aaron Rubin has been working with the birds on display. The substrate in the burrowing owl exhibit space was changed from sand to gravel, which the birds prefer. Work on the mews continues. Jon Nelson has been posting updates on the eagle he is working with to release back into the wild. Two Pacific lampreys, from the tribes, are in the exhibit space near the otters. The sucker tank is now open again. There are Foscett dace fish and sucker fish, native Central Oregon species, in the tanks.

There was a brief discussion on toddlers attending the *Raptors of the Desert Sky* program. The 30-minute program may be too long for their attention spans and they may misbehave. Visitors are reminded that if they must move spots or leave the program, they should do so between birds.

j. Photography—Heather Duchow said the next team meeting is on 6 /August at 1:00-2:00 pm.

k. Naturalist Team—Thad Grudzien reported all is well with the Naturalist Team.

#### 5. **Kudos - Something Nice to Say about Someone or Something:**

a. Frank Graham thanked Patrick Johnson and the rest of the Facilities crew for the great job getting carpet laid in SOW and in some of the office areas.

b. Frank Graham said the gallery guide about the *Art of the West* exhibit was done quite well. <https://highdesertmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Art-in-the-West-Gallery-Guide.pdf>

c. Jean Drzyzgula gave kudos to Heather Duchow for being the Chair of VAC for the past year.

d. Jean Drzyzgula thanked Frank Graham for stepping up and taking on the Vice Chair position for the VAC.

e. Noah Wahl, in Facilities, was thanked by Sara Langton for being quick to clean up a sticky spill in BHTM and his help was appreciated.

f. Marge Trayser thanked Gail Hodge for her amazing work with Events. She is so organized and has everything all mapped out at events. She's "really good at her job."

g. Curt Belshaw, in Facilities, is the longest tenured employee at the Museum. He is appreciated for getting to the Museum early in the morning during winter months to clear snow. He was also thanked for his quick work fixing the penny machine when it broke on the morning of Free Day.

6. Reminder: **There will not be a VAC meeting in August.** The next meeting will be on 17 /September at 2:00 pm in the Board Room.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12 pm.

Siobhan Sullivan, Temporary VAC Secretary