



NEWS RELEASE:

08/18/2008

CONTACT:

Matt Serino
Marketing Manager
Hermitage Museum and Gardens
7637 North Shore Road
Norfolk, VA 23505-1730
ms@thfm.org

Phone: (757) 423-2052 x 208

**Volunteers Speak Up About *Docent Program* Rewards:
Docent and Volunteer Open House at the Hermitage Museum, September 18th**

Norfolk, Virginia - The Hermitage Museum and Gardens will hold its next *Docent and Volunteer Open House* Thursday, September 18th. Those interested in joining *The Core* volunteer program at the museum can visit the Hermitage between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. to learn more and speak with staff and current volunteers about the program.

Volunteer opportunities include but are not limited to the following positions: Museum Docent, Garden Docent, Greeter and Reception Attendant, Garden Team, and Exhibitions Assistant. While the Hermitage welcomes volunteers to fill all positions, the need for Museum and Garden Docents is highest at this time.

The Hermitage's new *Docent Training Program*, unveiled in 2007, has been a huge success. The first two classes have graduated and are currently providing tours and educational programs of the museum and wetlands to the public. One of the program's newest graduates, Sheila Jamison-Schwartz, had this to say about the program: "I saw joining the Docent Program as a chance to learn more about this place that has intrigued me for years and years. I love the professional atmosphere, the dedication, and the excitement of everyone I've met at the Hermitage."

The key role of Museum Docents is to lead tours through the Hermitage, focusing on both the history of the site and Sloane family, as well as a world renowned art collection that spans over 5,000 years. Garden Docents continue to focus on the Hermitage's recently restored Wetlands, providing tours and programs for both school and community groups.

With ever increasing public request for tours, the Hermitage needs community involvement to meet that demand. Becoming a Docent gives individuals the opportunity to gain and share information about art, art history, and horticulture and to meet others with similar interests. Additional benefits include free admission to the Museum, free admission to Museum sponsored lectures and programs, and advance notice of Museum programs, workshops, and classes.

For more information on the *Docent and Volunteer Open House* or *The Core* volunteer program, visit www.thfm.org, or contact Beth Usry, Tours & Events Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, at 757-423-2052 x 300 or bu@thfm.org.

The Hermitage offers 45-minute guided tours, on the hour, of fifteen galleries filled with the Sloane family world-wide art collection, furniture, and history. The Visual Arts School houses classrooms, a complete ceramics studio, and darkroom photography facilities. Open daily 10-5, Sundays 1-5—closed Wednesdays. Free for Museum Members, children under 6, and Active Duty military. Admission: \$5 for Adults, \$2 for ages 6-18, and \$3 for students. For more information on the museum and membership offerings call 757-423-2052 or visit www.thfm.org.

DOCENT INTERVIEW WITH ANNE MANN

Anne Mann is one of several volunteers who have recently become a part of the Hermitage's *Docent Program*. Curator of Collections, Kristin Law, spoke with Anne to gather her thoughts on the program and the Hermitage:



Anne, when did you first visit the Hermitage?

Can you believe that I first visited the Hermitage after inquiring about being a docent? I had seen the ad in Port Folio Weekly for the docent training that started in March. I went online and visited the Hermitage website and was intrigued. I had been a docent at museums in Louisiana and New Mexico for years when I lived there. After four years in the Norfolk area, I wanted to become a part of a program that was not so large that it would become overwhelming.

What made you decide to join the *Docent Program* at the Hermitage?

Even with a full-time career in real estate, I always find time to volunteer. It keeps me focused and in touch with myself. What really impressed me on my first visit to the Hermitage was the amount of preparation and appreciation the staff and experienced docents had for training new docents.

Anne, you have given tours and taught art for many years: what is it about the Hermitage that makes you want to share it with others?

The Hermitage has been here for over 100 years, and anyone interested in Norfolk history should not miss visiting the home and gardens. The noteworthy art collection reflects the Sloane's interests, and the Arts-and-Crafts architecture is one of a kind. It's

amazing that the Hermitage is still evolving, which keeps it exciting! It's definitely not a static place. I think the Sloane's would be pleased.

“It's amazing that the Hermitage is still evolving, which keeps it exciting!”

What has been your experience so far in the *Docent Program*, and would you recommend it to others?

In the few tours that I have given, I have already met visitors inquiring about becoming a docent. I really think a visit to the Hermitage or, as in my experience, a visit to the website, is all that's needed to spark interest. I work full time outside of volunteering and I find the Hermitage staff extremely helpful in working with my schedule.

To learn more about the *Docent Program* and to help us fill our 20 volunteer slots, contact Kristin Law, Curator of Collections, at 757-423-2052 x 204 or kl@thfm.org

DOCENT IN TRAINING

Sheila Jamison-Schwartz, Hampton Roads native and long time Hermitage supporter, is currently completing her training for the newly introduced *Docent Training Program*. Curator of Collections, Kristin Law, had the opportunity to sit down with Sheila to discuss her experiences with the program thus far:



Sheila, how long have you been coming to the Hermitage?

It's hard to recall, but I remember taking my parents there in 1980 and I must have been there at least once before. I was living in Virginia Beach at that time. As you know, I love to take house guests there and I've also taken many friends who are native to Norfolk and the surrounding area - and I'm taking them there for the first time. The Hermitage is truly one of Norfolk's best kept secrets, but I do believe that more and more people are aware of what a gem we have in the Hermitage.

What made you decide to join the *Docent Program* at the Hermitage?

I actually surprised myself when I went to the information meeting for docents and volunteers. I saw joining the *Docent Program* as a chance to learn more about this place that has intrigued me for years and years. I love the professional atmosphere, the dedication, and the excitement of everyone I've met at the Hermitage.

Sheila, you have often brought your guests to the Hermitage for tours and now you will be giving tours to our visitors: what is it about the Hermitage that makes you want to share it with others?

There's nothing like the Hermitage in our area! The Sloanes had such a vision for our community in enlarging their summer home to become the house and museum for all to enjoy. New York, Chicago, and larger cities have many such places that were private homes that have now become museums, but the Hermitage is unique to Norfolk.

What has been your experience so far in the *Docent Training Program* and would you recommend it to others?

Each training session has been different from the others. As time passes we've been led by various people connected with the Hermitage and each of them has shared their knowledge and leadership of this museum with us. I would highly recommend joining the *Docent Training Program* to others. One thing I've learned is that I have much, much more to learn about this place and the Sloanes.

To learn more about the *Docent Training Program*, contact Kristin Law, Curator of Collections, at 757-423-2052 x 204 or kl@thfm.org.