



Press Release  
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### **Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC) Announces Award Recipients**

The Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC) is proud to announce the winner of the 36th annual James R. Short Award, the most prestigious recognition of service to the museum profession in the southeast. This year, SEMC will also confer the Outstanding Service Award, Emerging Museum Professional Award, and the Distinguished Contributor Award. Winners were chosen from a wide range of entries across the Southeastern United States. The SEMC Awards Committee, co-chaired by Julie Harris, Catherine Pears, and Robin Reed, honors outstanding colleagues who have helped shape the world of museums.

#### **James R. Short Award**

**Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller**, PhD, Founding President & CEO Emeritus, The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, LA, is one of this year’s recipients of the **James R. Short Award**. An inspired builder and educator, Nick has been essential to the founding and steady development of America’s National WWII Museum. Beginning in 1990, Nick partnered with his friend and fellow historian Stephen E. Ambrose, PhD, to create a nonprofit organization with a mission to plan, design, and operate a D-Day museum honoring Americans and other Allied forces that stormed the shores of Normandy in 1944. Over the years, Nick’s leadership and ability to build support around the country—the Museum now has roughly 147,000 members with representation in every state—helped the Museum overcome several daunting challenges, including Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The institution and now attracts nearly 700,000 visitors each year.

Prior to opening the Museum in 2000, Nick earned a stellar reputation as a history professor, administrator, and creator of new programs—including a celebrated international summer school program—at the University of New Orleans, where he made his mark as a popular teacher, dean, and vice chancellor.

**Charles W. Morris, III**, State Museums Director, West Virginia Division of Culture & History, Charleston, WV is also one of this year’s recipients of the **James R. Short Award**. In the 40+ years he has served the State of West Virginia, Mr. Morris played an essential role in preserving and celebrating West Virginia’s heritage through heirlooms, artifacts, and fine art pieces. Charles’ dedicated history with the State Museum began in 1976 when he joined the staff as a part-time student, and has since served as a guide,

assistant, and director of collections and exhibitions. He has managed the conservation program, maintained budgets, developed the management system, created an accession register, and inventoried museum exhibits. With this experience and vision, Charles leads an innovative staff at five museums: West Virginia State Museum, Grave Creek Mount Archaeological Complex and Research Center, West Virginia Independence Hall, Museum in the Park and Camp Washington-Carver, with each site telling a unique story about the state's prehistoric and historic heritage with permanent and rotating exhibits.

The **James R. Short Award**, established by SEMC in 1981, recognizes individuals who have given a lifetime (20+ years) of service to the museum profession, with a significant portion of that service at a museum within the SEMC region. It is the most prestigious recognition of service to the museum profession in the southeast.

### **Outstanding Service Award**

**Bob Beatty**, President, The Lyndhurst Group, LLC, Franklin, TN is this year's recipient of the **Outstanding Service Award**. Mr. Beatty has spent almost twenty years as a leading advocate for museums and historic organizations in the Southeast. Since 2007, he has led groundbreaking initiatives for the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), a sister organization of SEMC. Among Mr. Beatty's accomplishments are his position as editor of *History News*, AASLH's quarterly membership publication that includes critical articles on how to make the business of history relevant to the public as well as technical assistance for museum and history professionals; as well as the implementation of the Standards and Excellence Program (StEPs) that has provided a way for small museums and historical organizations to meet industry-wide standards; and providing oversight for the AASLH annual meeting, one of the leading professional development conferences in the museum industry.

Since 2016, Mr. Beatty has taken all that he has learned through his various positions with AASLH and created his own consulting firm, the Lyndhurst Group. The firm prides itself on community-focused engagement strategies, taking the accepted standards of the museum and history industry to make it relevant to communities and interested stakeholders. The firm focuses on all aspects of the industry including strategic planning, fundraising, and exhibitions.

Initiated in 1999, the **Outstanding Service to the Museum Profession Award** recognizes a leader with 10 or more years of service to an allied or affiliated professional organization. Such a leader will have assisted the museum profession in areas such as program organization and long term cultural development.

### **Emerging Museum Professionals Award**

**Martha Tye**, Director of Marketing and Online Media, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA, is this year's recipient of the **Emerging Museum Professionals Award**. Martha began her tenure at the Atlanta History Center in 2013 as an intern in the marketing and communication department, and has since grown within her role and talents to become the Director of Marketing and Social Media. In her elevated leadership roles through the years, Martha has made contributions to the History Center, the surrounding community, and in turn supported the roles and relevance of Southeast museums. Over the years, Martha has participated in the development of several community partnerships and increased the History Center's presence in new and exciting ways. She has been instrumental in serving as co-chair of the Party with the Past committee, a young professional initiative engaging millennials with Atlanta's rich history as well as a major proponent in launching Hidden Midtown, the Atlanta History Center's community outreach initiative.

Additionally, Martha's role in supporting the History Center's rebranding project included leading the project management, and in turn the development of a completely newly rebranded website. The task required working across multiple internal departments, and external stakeholders, to bring all together for the common vision of the Atlanta History Center's new online presence. In conjunction with the launch of the new brand, she was tasked with leading the development and execution of a complete social media strategy that has gained more than 18,000 new and engaged followers across core social media platforms within the past year.

The **Emerging Museum Professionals Award**, initiated in 2007, recognizes emerging professionals who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in museum activities at their institutions, within the museum profession as a whole, and especially in the southeast region.

#### **Distinguished Contributor Award**

**Frank Watson III** (posthumously), President, Charlotte Van & Storage, Charlotte, NC is the recipient of this year's **Distinguished Contributor Award**. An exhibitor for many years at SEMC and numerous state museum annual meetings, Frank was adored by his museum colleagues for his sincere warmth, good humor, kindness, and generosity. Frank's father founded Charlotte Van and Storage Co., Inc. in 1955, with Frank serving as President of the family business from 1981 until 2011. Frank's generosity extended to many organizations, with his obituary comprised of an extraordinary list of philanthropic, civic, and educational organizations he served, often as a leader: he was President of the NC Movers Association, President of the Carolinas Carrousel Parade, President of the Executive Association of Charlotte, President of the Dilworth Rotary Club, President of the Downtown Rotary Club, member of Lancaster Rotary, member of Rotary International, a Paul Harris Fellow, Rotary Foreign Exchange Service, a Salvation Army Volunteer, Board Member of Discovery Place, Board Member of Presbyterian Hospital, Board Member of Mission Air, MS Bike-a-Thon, Myers Park Methodist Disaster Relief, volunteer at Lancaster SC Second Baptist Sportsman Banquet, Board Member of Presbyterian Hospital.

Frank was truly valued by the museum community across multiple states, and was honored by the North Carolina Museums Council this past March. He is remembered for his "good cheer, inescapable and memorable." As Nathan Moehmann noted, "Frank just made you *feel good*."

Initiated in 1999, the **Distinguished Contributor Award** recognizes a non-museum professional who has contributed his or her leadership expertise, financial support or collections support over a period of 20 years or more to a museum or to the museum field in the SEMC region. The nominee has shown distinction in leading/moving an institution or museum-field organization to a recognized position of leadership in collections, programs, and/or exhibitions in the SEMC region.

The **James R. Short, Museum Leadership, Outstanding Service to the Museum Profession Award**, **Emerging Museum Professional**, and **Distinguished Contributor** awards will be presented during the **SEMC Annual Meeting Awards Luncheon** September 12, 2017, at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Orleans.

The Southeastern Museums Conference is the major regional networking organization for museums and their staff in the southeastern states as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A non-profit membership association with almost 1600 members, SEMC strives to increase educational and professional development opportunities and improve the interchange of ideas, information, and cooperation.

For more information, visit [SEMCDirect.net](http://SEMCDirect.net) or contact Jessica Keys, Manager of Communication and Member Services at 404-814-2047 or [jkeys@semcdirect.net](mailto:jkeys@semcdirect.net)

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