

# Docents crucial to lifelong learning

Long gone are the days when museums were merely repositories of artifacts and fine art. Today, there is a great deal more significance placed on education.

The key word when talking about museums and education is “docent.” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of the term is simply “a person who leads guided tours especially through a museum or art gallery.” A docent’s role is not simple, though. The ideal docent is a vibrant, engaging and knowledgeable representative of a museum.

A good docent can bring the viewer’s museum experience to life. He or she acts as a bridge between the exhibition and the viewer; the relationship a docent builds between a viewer and the exhibition can continue to inspire a lifelong learner or spark the start of a new art enthusiast.

Education has always been important to The Brinton Museum. In 2003, its inaugural Illustrator Show featuring Gerald L. Holmes, artist and illustrator of John R. Erickson’s charming Hank the Cowdog children’s book series, was the first in what has become the institution’s annual



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Illustrator Show programs.

This year’s exhibit featured original picture book illustrations by award-winning fine artist Greg Newbold. Greg and his wife, Amy, collaborated on three children’s books, “If Picasso Painted a Snowman”; “If da Vinci painted a Dinosaur”; and “If Monet Painted a Monster.” You can guess where this theme is going. The illustrations are both clever and charming and are a great way to introduce art history and its different genres to school tours with the help of experienced, charismatic docents.

Beyond the illustrator shows, docents at The Brinton Museum are crucial to our educational programming for adults as well as students. For example, every spring when hundreds of fourth- and fifth-graders from Sheridan County tour the museum to study local and state history, our incredible docents share their knowledge and bring to life the material in classroom textbooks. The students’ enthusiasm for what they learn and experience is then shared with their families. Often, students return with their families and act as the docent. The cycle of learning, sharing and connecting is contagious, enhancing the value of a museum.

If you are interested in being a part of this inspirational cycle, reach out to us at The Brinton Museum. Every spring, the museum offers a docent training and orientation program, and we are always looking for more eager lifelong learners.

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**Greg Newbold’s piece “Picasso Snowman” is on display at The Brinton Museum in Big Horn.**