Making a Difference: Student Involvement

Part of the mission of Wylie House Museum is to support the academic mission of Indiana University. Toward that end, we have for many years offered IU students the opportunity to work as interns earning credit toward graduation and at the same time gaining valuable work experience. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement since these young people bring a great deal of enthusiasm, energy, and skill to the museum and have helped us complete important projects and develop special exhibits and programs. In addition to the interns, other students have worked with us as volunteers and as student hourly employees. We thought our readers might enjoy hearing what a few of them have had to say about their experience here.

Julie Smith Davis came to us as an undergraduate intern majoring in Anthropology. Her interest in museums attracted her to Wylie House. “I loved my time as a student working at the Wylie House,” Julie said. “I had the opportunity to work directly with the artifacts and take part in all aspects of managing a historic house museum.” After completing her internship, she continued here for another 4 semesters as a student employee.

Andrea Truitt was an undergraduate studying decorative arts when she volunteered at Wylie House. “I found volunteering at the Wylie House to be very empowering, especially as an undergraduate, because students are allowed to be proactive and more heavily involved with the functions of the museum.” Andrea helped catalog furniture and china from the Bradley bequest and she curated two exhibits of Wylie china that were installed in the Fine Arts Building and our museum. We were able to hire her on an hourly basis for her last semester here.

Another undergraduate, Andrea Short, was majoring in history when she volunteered to help us with some research projects at the museum. “The reason I decided to get involved with volunteering at the Wylie House was because I wanted hands-on experience with researching,” Andrea said. “In addition, I was interested in the history of Indiana University, and I knew I would learn a lot about that through Wylie House research. It was important to me to understand the history of the university that I was attending.”

We have developed a very good working relationship with the School of Library and Information Science in the past eight years that has brought us a steady stream of extremely capable graduate students. We’ve had a SLIS intern almost every semester, and for the past two years we’ve also had a Graduate Assistant from SLIS. Jennifer Fowle had this to say about her experience at Wylie House: “I found my internship at the Museum to be one of the most important educational experiences I enjoyed while attending Indiana University. It gave me the opportunity to apply many of the techniques only discussed in theory in my
From the Director……
It’s been a busy winter and early spring at Wylie House. This winter, our Curator of Education and Graduate Assistant spent their time working on two exhibits: The Monroe County Female Seminary: An Historical Retrospective was installed at the IU School of Education during Women’s History Month, and What Women Wore, an exhibit on 19th century women’s clothing, was installed in the museum on April 1 and will be up until the end of May.

Our Outdoor Interpreter, with the help of dedicated volunteers, must spend hours during the winter months conducting germination tests and then cleaning and packaging seeds from our heirloom garden. This year we broke all records at our annual Seed Sale the first weekend of March. Over 500 people attended and purchased seed! We sold out of the seed that had been packaged at that point, but Sherry has packaged more since then, so if you didn’t get what you wanted, come to the museum gift shop and see if it’s now available.

Our annual quilt show was also a huge success. We honored the Wylie House Quilters by showing their work rather than the usual antique quilts this year.

I continued my work with the Wylie family letters and supervised our student interns and employees who are working on a variety of projects. I also oversaw the on-going interior decoration of the museum, and am happy to report that we are nearing completion of that project. The last bedroom was painted and new window treatments have been hung. Come see!
—Jo Burgess

New Acquisitions
Last October I received an e-mail message that led to an exciting new acquisition for the museum. MaryLou Brown of Bloomington has loved and collected antique textiles for years, and has very generously donated some of those textiles to the Wylie House. One of her special interests is 19th-century handwoven coverlets, and as some of our readers are aware, the museum has a collection of such coverlets. Now, thanks to Mrs. Brown’s gift, that collection has grown by five coverlets that “fill in the gaps” in our collection. Mrs. Brown also donated several table cloths, a few items of children’s clothing, a woven carpet, linen towels and a few miscellaneous items.

course load while exercising my creativity with an amazing collection. I gained a better understanding of the ways in which library and archive skills can be applied to museums. It was a joy to spend a semester at Wylie House; it is truly one of the most unique and amazing resources at Indiana University. My experiences there will remain with me for the rest of my life as I progress in a field that is rapidly blurring the lines between archives, libraries and museums.”

Jennifer shared her enthusiasm for Wylie House with two of her friends in SLIS who became volunteers in the office. Nicole Woltersburger heard Jennifer talk about the Wylie family and came to investigate. “I had never considered working in a small museum-type setting before I visited the Wylie House, but once I saw the possibilities there I was intrigued. I saw a way to mingle my interest in libraries and museums with my deep appreciation and love for history in a hands-on situation. My work there gave me hands-on experience of a kind that I don’t feel I could have gained elsewhere, by allowing me to work closely with primary sources and to interact with them in a variety of ways.”

Miriam Nelson began volunteering after she had completed her SLIS degree. Here’s what she enjoyed about her experience here: “This is really focused work, focused material. I’m used to looking at the big picture, History (with a capital H) and the theories that link it to culture and cultural movements. It deals with those big important people whose lives help put those theories into a certain theoretical context. But the Wylies...yes, they are important to the history of IU and Bloomington, but they’re just people too, just ordinary people. A focus on a family like the Wylies is much more accessible.”

Aimee Rose Formo was our SLIS graduate assistant last semester. When asked about her experience here, she said: “I’ve spent a lot of time since high school volunteering or working in museums, and I’ve never had such variation. Working at Wylie House has been a fantastic opportunity because it has truly allowed me to experience everything museum work has to offer, from solitary cataloging to costumed interpretation. I hope that whatever I end up after graduation can live up to my experience here.”

Suzanne Ingalsbe is our current SLIS GA. Here are her comments: “Wylie House provides learning opportunities for SLIS students that can be duplicated few other places, if anywhere, in the Indiana University Bloomington system. In addition to work with rare books, specialized cataloging, and indexing, SLIS students at Wylie House have the chance to conduct
Volunteer Appreciation: Garden Volunteers

Wylie House has a dedicated corps of garden volunteers who help make our heirloom garden and annual seed sale successful. It takes hours of labor year-round to accomplish this. Early last spring, Barbara Roberts, Martha Tarbah and Lee Ridge removed old garden debris and weeds, preparing the beds for planting heirloom seeds and starts. Daniel Williams, a history major at IU, spread bark mulch on garden paths and cleaned seeds on days when the weather was not conducive to working outside. Barbara, Martha and Lee continued to maintain the gardens throughout the season, contending with heat, drought, and poison ivy. By mid-summer, the plants had matured and seeds had ripened. Pods were collected right up to the first killing frost. Next came the task of cleaning seeds to prepare them for packaging. Pat Glushko, who needed community service hours to fulfill her Grow Organic Educator Series obligation, spent many tedious hours separating seed from chaff. Finally, the clean seeds were ready for packaging. Floyd Richards, master gardener, was instrumental in completing this step, counting out the desired number of seeds and placing them in a seed envelope along with an instructional sheet for each of 80 varieties of seed grown on site.

Seed packaging complete, more volunteer help was needed to sell the heirlooms. Ross Hill, master gardener, found Wylie House seeds to be quite popular at the Elnora Antique Tractor Show. He spends the entire weekend promoting Wylie House and the heirloom seed project at that annual event every year. For our own annual seed sale, volunteers acted as cashiers, greeters and counters. Eve Schultes-Ridge, Sidney Bolam, Martha Tarbah, Pat Glushko and Floyd Richards gave invaluable assistance in running this year’s record-breaking sale.

Why do so many gardeners donate their valuable time (over 400 hours total last year) to Wylie House? According to Floyd, heirlooms are extremely important to us in this age of genetically modified crops. He feels it is well worth the time and effort it takes to ensure their survival. Barbara, who moved to Bloomington to be near her family, lives in a condo with little outdoor space. After years of intensive gardening, she needed a place to put her talents to work and continue to pursue her passion for gardening. She can take a weedy mess of a garden and turn it into a neat, tidy place. She says she enjoys “the process of gardening as much as the product.” Lee, who is interested in early Bloomington history, found that he could treasure-hunt and get some exercise while working on the Wylie House grounds. Luckily, Lee is not even allergic to poison ivy! Sidney, Martha, and Pat all attended heirloom gardening and seed saving classes. Volunteering at Wylie House gives them the opportunity to experience and learn about heirloom gardening firsthand. Sidney and new volunteer Roseann Dodds both love history and gardening. Working in the museum setting is the perfect way to connect with living history, growing plant varieties that are links to times past. Sidney and Roseann will also train as docents this year.

Another heirloom garden season has begun. Once again volunteers, including are busy cleaning beds, weeding, and sowing seeds. We offer a sincere and heart-felt “Thank you!” to all of our volunteers!

—Sherry Wise, Outdoor Interpreter

research in support of museum initiatives, to develop exhibits and other public programs, and to practice web design skills. Students may also explore digital initiatives and database applications. The value of being able not only to discuss but also to participate in implementing solutions for challenges libraries and museums face cannot be overstated.”
Volunteering

- Do you like history, antiques and a pleasant, tranquil setting? Learn to be a docent at the Wylie House.
- Have limited time? Help with special events at the museum.
- Do you prefer to spend your time in the garden? Lend a hand in our heirloom garden.

If you live in the Bloomington area and would like to become more actively involved with the museum, please call and chat with us about the opportunities.

**DOCENTS, VOLUNTEERS, AND INTERNS:**

Susan Baker, Eric Bartheld, Sidney Bolan, Jane Clay, Roseann Dodds, Anthony Eller, Mary Emison, Anne Fierst, Aimee Rose Formo, Jane Harrett, Margaret Jensen, Naomi Lawlis, Mary Anne Miller, Miriam Nelson, Sarah Noggle, Sarah Patterson, Patsy Rahn, Andrea Short, Cindy Smith, Carla Williams, Nicole Woltersburger

**GARDEN VOLUNTEERS:**

Sidney Bolan, Roseann Dodds, Ross Hill, Lee Ridge, Floyd Richards, Barbara Roberts, Eve Schultes-Ridge, Martha Tarbah

**QUILTERS:**

Marjorie Clayton, Diamond Mather, Virginia Miller, Ellen Pittman