

Alexandria Times

Denise Dunbar
Publisher & Executive Editor
ddunbar@alextimes.com

Margaret Stevens
Director of Sales & Marketing
mstevens@alextimes.com

Sydney Kodama
Managing Editor & Reporter
skodama@alextimes.com

Jim McGrath
Sports Reporter
jmcgrath@alextimes.com

Julia Gwin
Reporting Intern
jgwin@alextimes.com

C.J. Hanauer
Photo Intern
chanauer@alextimes.com

Kehinde Hopkins
Reporting Intern
khopkins@alextimes.com

James Libresco
Reporting Intern
jlibresco@alextimes.com

Chloe McCann
Social Media Intern
atsocials@alextimes.com

Elona Michael
Reporting Intern
emichael@alextimes.com

SALES & MARKETING

Margaret Stevens
mstevens@alextimes.com

Marty DeVine
mdevine@alextimes.com

Patrice V. Culligan
pculligan@alextimes.com

Tina Franco
Business Operations Manager
tfranco@alextimes.com

DIRECTOR OF ART & DESIGN

Jessica Kim
graphics@alextimes.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Gayle Converse, Kim Davis,
Mark Eaton, Mark Edelman,
Thompson Eskew, Kim Gilliam,
Erin Shackelford,
Hannah Shiblaq

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Alexandria Times
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Alexandria
COMMUNITY MEDIA

A summer of history for Alexandria's Junior Docents

In 2009, Gadsby's Tavern Museum launched its Junior Docent program. The inaugural class had 15 students. One now works as a part-time Museum Educator for the Office of Historic Alexandria.

The program has grown to 50 students this year, allowing the Junior Docents to staff activity stations, including Historic Chocolate Making and the Material Culture and 18th-century Clothing Station. Students stationed at the MCC undergo a separate, intensive training to prepare them to talk about social class and the use of clothing and accessories to communicate wealth and status.

This station focuses on artifacts found by archaeologists and what those objects can teach us about the past. One of the items you can learn about at this station is a jaw harp. Travelers and tavern musicians enjoyed the jaw harp as a cheap and easy-to-carry entertainment. It makes the same sound as Tigger's bounce from "Winnie the Pooh." Stop by the station to hear a jaw harp

rendition of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Junior Docents have also brought back the popular Trivia Wheel Station that debuted last year. It will test visitors' knowledge of questions that appear on the U.S. citizenship test – for prizes. New this year, the interpretation of Gadsby's Tavern Museum's 1792 ballroom has expanded to include a brand-new demonstration of peacock feather balancing, which was a common 18th-century entertainment.

Thankfully, Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society has once again funded paid internships for experienced Junior Docents who serve as Head Chocolatiers, supervising the station and the younger Junior Docents' interpretations and demonstrations of ancient chocolate-making techniques and tools. Stop by and learn about the important role of sipping chocolate in eighteenth-century Alexandria and why it was considered a "patriotic" beverage of the Revolutionary era.



PHOTO/GADSBY'S TAVERN MUSEUM

Head Chocolatier Madi Rumness stands between Chocolatiers Clara and Athena as Athena instructs a young visitor on how to properly winnow cacao beans to remove their shells. Rumness began volunteering with Historic Alexandria in 2021 and is now a paid intern, supervising the Historic Chocolate Making Station.

Having the Head Chocolatiers' help with Family Day Sundays gives these young people work experience doing something they love, and helps museum staff expand the program in exciting new ways. Several older, more experienced Peer Mentors have opted to serve as greeters at another of Historic Alexandria's sites – the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum – and they are ecstatic to share what they are learning

this year.

These fabulous new Apothecary greeters will also help direct Apothecary Museum visitors to Gadsby's Tavern Museum and encourage them to catch the Junior Docent program, which is 2 to 5 p.m. every Sunday from now through Sept. 6.

*Out of the Attic is
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