



LA SALLE UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM'S VITAL ROLE IN LOCAL HEALTH CARE SHOWCASED IN NATIONAL REPORT

“Museums on Call,” New Report from American Alliance of Museums, Highlights Museums Providing Critical Health Services

WASHINGTON, DC (June 17, 2013) – Museums have long been essential pillars in America’s educational infrastructure. But increasingly, museums of all types and sizes – including La Salle University Art Museum – are integral to U.S. health care, supporting medical research and training, initiating therapeutic programs for those with memory loss, children on the autism spectrum and veterans with combat-related illnesses, and inspiring healthier nutrition and behavior.

La Salle University Art Museum’s initiative, in partnership with La Salle University’s School of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Department of Fine Arts in La Salle University’s College of Arts and Sciences, on Teaching Health Assessment with Art and other health-related enterprises on the part of American museums are documented in a new report, “Museums on Call: How Museums are Addressing Health Issues,” released by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

The full report, including a state-by-state appendix of examples, can be accessed at: <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/advocacy/museums-on-call.pdf>.

“This report showcases just one of the many ways museums have become essential community assets and service-providers,” said AAM president Ford W. Bell. “In addition to conserving and exhibiting our natural, scientific, cultural and historic heritages, museums also meet urgent community needs, and in today’s America health care is very much at the forefront of our field’s commitment to public service.”

Among the museums highlighted in “Museums On Call” is La Salle University Art Museum’s partnership with the La Salle University’s School of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Department of Fine Arts (art history) in the College of Arts and Sciences to teach health assessments skills utilizing artworks in the Art Museum’s permanent collection. The paintings chosen for this “scavenger

hunt” depict emotions such as compassion, pain, and health problems. Students discuss differences in the way anatomy is depicted and identify “incorrect” representations. They are asked to diagnose what is “wrong” in certain compositions. The lesson teaches students to read body language and facial expressions which helps them to better serve patients and their family members.

Director and Chief Curator of La Salle University Art Museum, Klare Scarborough, Ph.D., states that “We are thrilled to work with La Salle University faculty to develop educational programs that advance the health care field.” Curator of Art, Carmen Vendelin, notes that “As a university art museum, we are able to offer artworks as tools for teaching visual analysis and critical thinking skills in a range of disciplines, including nursing.”

La Salle University Associate Professor Pat Dillon, PhD., RN, Director of Graduate, RN to BSN and RN to MSN Nursing Programs, explains the twofold purpose of this interdisciplinary “scavenger hunt” assignment at the Art Museum: “The first and obvious purpose is to sharpen the students’ assessment skills by really looking, enhancing their observation and inspections skills, considering not only the patient, but all involved. Second, students often fail to realize the value of the core courses required as part of their professional development towards becoming a nurse; this experience allows students to view these courses in a different light. Students spend part of the first lab with a visit to LaSalle University Art Museum, discussing and reflecting on what they see. The experience has been well received by both students and faculty.”

Associate Professor of Art History Siobhan Conaty, Ph.D., adds that “While art and medicine may seem worlds apart, my experience as an art historian has shown that these two disciplines are natural companions. The basic skills gained in an art history course – a type of visual literacy that teaches a keen sense of observation along with social context and analysis – serves students in the medical field quite well.”

In addition, for the past four years the La Salle University Art Museum and PDDC's (Philadelphia Developmental Disabilities Corporation) Cultural Arts Center, which offers art instruction to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, have partnered on a program called Cultural Collaborations. Through this partnership the program participants learn about art in the Art Museum's

collection and create a visual dialogue with the artwork. Their work is then exhibited in the Art Museum's Community Art Gallery.

This report details ten aspects of the health care field where museums are making significant contributions. Specifically, they are:

- Alzheimer's
- Autism
- Disease Prevention
- Health Literacy
- Hospital Outreach
- Medical Training
- Mental Health
- Military and Veterans Health
- Nutrition and Wellness
- Visual Impairment

Moreover, the museums that have initiated programs addressing these issues represent the breadth of the museums field — art museums, children's museums, history museums and historic sites, natural history museums, science-technology centers, public and botanical gardens, zoos and aquariums.

“For too long, elected officials and other policy makers have viewed museums as amenities, rather than as essential community anchors,” Bell said. “This report is but a glimpse of the many public services provided by museums to our communities, all across the country. Health care is a prime concern for leaders and average citizens alike, and museums are clearly striving to meet those needs.”

For more information on the unexpected work being done by museums in the fields of education, social welfare and public safety, among others, visit the Alliance website at www.aam-us.org

About the American Alliance of Museums

The American Alliance of Museums is the largest museum service organization in the world, serving all types of museums, including art, history, science, botanic gardens, zoos, and aquariums. The Alliance helps museums serve their communities by developing standards and best practices, offering professional training and resources, and serving as the national voice of museums for the public, media, and elected officials. Working on behalf of 17,500 museums, 400,000 museum employees, thousands of volunteers and the visitors who come to museums 850 million times each year, The Alliance is dedicated to bolstering museums in promoting lifelong learning, celebrating cultural heritage, and inspiring the creative skills to compete in a global economy. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

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