

# 'Museums tell stories'



The Grove Museum will be celebrating its fifth anniversary with Grove Day 2022 on Saturday, March 12. PROVIDED

## For Grove Day, new museum director opens conversation

**Amanda Sieradzki** Council on Culture & Arts

The Grove Museum's new executive director, Amanda Hamon has worked in museums for over 20 years. As the museum gears up to celebrate its fifth anniversary with Grove Day 2022 on Saturday, March 12, Hamon is ready to open a new chapter of community engagement and partnerships.

"I see museums as town squares for conversation where people can share ideas and develop new ways of thinking," says Hamon. "It's about understanding the value of places and objects. We can be a very text-based society when it comes to lifelong learning and knowledge, but there are so many different ways to engage with learning. I think that architecture, buildings, and objects are all a part of those stories."

Hamon has been digging up history and marveling at its rare objects and fossils since she was a young girl. A Kansas native, she grew up among scientists. She accompanied her parents on field research trips since she was in a bassinet. Hamon's father was a paleontologist and served as the curator for the Natural History Museum at University of Kansas.

### 'I grew up in museums'



**Hamon**

and uncovered a prized ammonite shell the size of a grapefruit.

"My dad really gave me a love for objects and researching and discovering things," says Hamon. "He was an amazing person and I'd have to give him credit for this museum path that I've taken. I grew up in museums."

Hamon's path to museums was through art history. She earned her degrees in art museum education and art history from the University of Kansas, and is currently earning her Ph.D. at Florida State University in museum education and visitor-centered curations.

In her past positions she's served in both education and administration for art mu-

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Grove Day is set for March 12 at the Grove Museum off Monroe Street, and will feature plenty of fun and games on the grounds.

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# Grove Day

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seums, and most enjoys the opportunity to engage with visitors. Her focus on facilitating experiences has led to dynamic dialogues that can focus on anything from art to science to literature, all as a means for deepening an appreciation for history.

## 'Listening and responding'

"Often museums have a reputation for telling you what is right or correct or what you should know, but really museums tell stories and ways of thinking about things," says Hamon. "Museum education is about helping people to understand what they bring to those stories and that the questions they ask are meaningful and valid. It's about listening and responding to what you hear and learn to help them discover more and have those conversations."

What drew Hamon to The Grove Museum was the interpretive plan that looks at history from a holistic perspective. She was inspired by the virtual programming the museum undertook in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how the museum staff worked with one another to recognize the people in the community who have brought forward information and stories to contribute to the historic home's history.

In her first seven months as executive director, she has gotten a chance to do a little bit of everything — from planning gallery events and managing collections to maintaining the 10.5 acres and its programming.

"I'm so fortunate to have a staff that is so passionate and dedicated to the work that we do," says Hamon. "Grove Day has always been a wonderful, fun day of activities at the museum, and it's going extra special this year with performances and music that brings the site to

life."

## Special events for Grove Day

Lofty Pursuits, Frother's Daughter and Caribbean Cuisine will provide refreshments along with giveaways of free ice cream and drinks for the first twenty people in line at Lofty Pursuits and Frother's Daughter respectively. The morning will begin with a children's performance by The Runaway Biscuits that will include entertainment and audience interaction for all ages.

Misty Penton, Bio Archeologist, Muscogee/Creek Storyteller and Tradition Keeper, and Education Director of the Fred George Museum will share stories of the native plants and animals on site alongside "Backyard Discovery: Archaeology."

Former Grove executive director, Johnathan Grandage, will provide nature walks throughout the afternoon.

"We're happy to have him here that day because he deserves a lot of credit for laying the foundations for all the work we're doing at the museum," adds Hamon.

While the outdoor toys, games, and blankets will all be provided for visitor use on Grove Day, Hamon hopes to let the community know that these are year-round resources. She emphasizes that the Grove Museum belongs to the state of Florida and the Tallahassee community, and is looking forward to the next chapter of the museum's growth.

"We really want people to feel like The Grove is a place that you can come and spend time with friends and family and enjoy the space, and I would like to see that happening whenever we're open," says Hamon, who cannot imagine a world without spaces like museums. "History gives you hope to do better and gives us a chance to celebrate our accomplishments. It contributes to a better world."

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts.*