Museum brings voice to Washington, D.C.

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Former Massillon Museum Executive Director Christine Shearer was instrumental in giving the Massillon Museum a national voice. She helped to establish relationships with local representatives and worked through organizations such as the Ohio Museums Association to advocate further and louder than before.

Advocacy efforts by all museum staff members have helped to provide the Massillon Museum and the community with funding for historical, preservation and educational opportunities.

According to Nicholas Coon, past advocacy and networking have led to funding from the Institute of Museums and Library Services. That funding allowed the Massillon Museum to renovate the third floor and to expand the significance of some photographs in its collection through the Faces of Rural America project.

In addition, five years of financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts has provided the museum with support for its annual Big Read initiative and Ohio Arts Council funding has helped to back exhibitions and projects for the museum as well.

"We have been so fortunate to receive a really sizable amount of federal support," Nicholas Coon said. "We hope they continue the funding available for the Museum."

This week Nicholas Coon was hoping to impress upon the legislators the diverse roles the Massillon Museum plays in the communities that surround it. It's more than art exhibits, she said.

It's the Big Read and serving Tiger striped ice cream after the community pep rally at the start of football season.

It's educational classes that allow adults and children to explore the arts and the Massillon Remembers group that brings residents together to chat and connect.

It's partnering with the schools to prove that arts and history can take education to new levels and offering regular concerts as part of a Rhythms concert series.

The Massillon Museum, Nicholas Coon said, is all of that and so much more.

"I hope it sticks," Nicholas Coon said. "I hope the information we present helps (legislators) to realize that we are so multifaceted in our mission."

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Massillon Museum executive director to testify on Capitol Hill

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Staff Report

Massillon - Alexandra Nicholls Coon, executive director of the Massillon Museum, will travel to Washington, D.C., next week to take part in Museums Advocacy Day as more than 350 museum professionals from across the country will descend on Capitol Hill Tuesday to make the case for federal support of America's museums.

The case Coon will be making is rooted in compelling research. For instance:

Museums invest more than $2 billion in education programs each year;

Museums provide more than 55 million school children each year;

Museums receive more than 850 million visits annually, more than all professional sporting events and theme parks combined;

A U.S. Council of Mayors study found that, for every $1 invested in museums, $7 is returned to local coffers in tax revenues;

In direct expenditures alone, U.S. museums inject more than $20 billion into the U.S. economy.

While in the nation's capital, Coon will also present research that she has prepared about "The Painter of Presidents," William T. Mathews (1821–1905), and a large Mathews oil painting of Abraham Lincoln, that currently resides in a private collection. The portrait, which was exhibited in 2005 at the Massillon Museum in the Rediscovering William T. Mathews Painter of Presidents exhibition curated by Coon, is being restored by conservators in Washington, D.C., under the supervision of L'Enfant Gallery owner Peter Collasante. The painting will be the focus of an exhibition on Lincoln and other historic Civil War artifacts in D.C. this fall.

The Massillon Museum was solicited for its expertise on Mathews, a Navarre native, as MassMu owns the largest known collection of paintings and drawings by the nineteenth-century portrait artist.

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