**Museums Advocacy Day 2017**

**Publicity Tools**

**Education Op-Ed**

 Our region boasts many fine educational institutions, including [insert names of local universities, community colleges, excellent high schools, libraries, etc]. But perhaps you do not immediately think of our museums–including [author’s local museum], the one for which I serve as [position]–on that same list as key educational assets of [name of city, region or state]. Here’s why you should.

 Museums everywhere are pillars of the nation’s educational infrastructure. Nationally, museums invest more than $2 billion each year in educational programs, serving Americans preK through life. Of course, the bulk of that investment is in our preK-12 students. Each year, there are some 55 million visits to museums by schoolchildren, according to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Recent research proves that museum field trips aren’t just a break from class; they really work. According to a study published in Education Next, an education journal at Stanford University, students who attend a field trip to an art museum experience an increase in critical thinking skills, historical empathy and tolerance. For students from rural or high-poverty regions, the increase was even more significant.

 At the [name of your organization] we [Insert local education impact and activities]. [See the Alliance website for a [template](http://www.aam-us.org/advocacy/resources/educational-impact-statement), and samples such as these from [Maymont](http://www.aam-us.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/maymont-economic-education-impact-fact-sheet-2014-final.pdf) in Richmond or the [C.H. Nash Museum](http://www.aam-us.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/chucalissa-education-impact.pdf) in Memphis].

 In addition, museums—from art museums to zoos and everything in between—are a major source of experiential learning, so critical to so many students. In science centers, natural history museums, zoos and aquariums, concepts difficult for some learners to grasp in the classroom become easily comprehensible once experienced firsthand, in real time at a museum. And of course, any parent that homeschools can testify to the importance of museums in their children’s education.

 Our museum’s educational impact is not limited to school-age students. We also [Cite educational programs for other age groups.]

 And museums are embracing the notion of education in all its facets. Across the nation, museums are stepping up to fill social service gaps, working with children on the autism spectrum, Alzheimer’s patients and their caregivers, and veterans bearing the physical and emotional scars of war.

 For these and many other reasons, museums’ role in American education is critical to our nation’s continued competitiveness in an increasingly globalized economy. That’s why museum leaders from across the country are traveling to Washington, D.C. on February 28. We will meet with members of Congress and their staffs, communicating about the vital work museums do, and our role as educational and economic assets.

If you or a family member have ever been entranced by a work of art, enlightened by a museum program or lecture, or fascinated by a living or fossilized specimen, I urge you to join this effort. Visit the Advocacy section of the American Alliance of Museums’ website ([www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org)/advocacy) to find messages that you can personalize and send to your members of Congress with just a few clicks.

Museums such as [name of author’s museum] and others educate and inspire, while making life richer for our community. Lend your voice to our cause, so that we may provide you and your family even more illuminating experiences in the years ahead.