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# Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye Receives 2026 NEMA Excellence Award

ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS— Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye, Ph.D., of Housatonic Museum of Art has received a General Excellence Award in the 2026 New England Museum Association (NEMA) Excellence Awards, recognizing strengthening community college museums and building connections among museum professionals and communities. The award was presented Friday, November 6, 2026, at the Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa in Groton, Connecticut, before approximately 300 museum colleagues.

Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye has expanded the visibility and reach of community college museums, including helping build a national network for their professionals. Through partnerships that connect art, students, and surrounding neighborhoods, she has advanced the role of these museums as accessible community resources.

“It is an incredible honor to be recognized by NEMA through this General Excellence Award. I have been a member of NEMA throughout my museum career in Connecticut and it has been an incredible resource and network,” said Dr. Reynolds-Kaye. “I am grateful to the NEMA awards committee for recognizing the critical role that community college museums and galleries play on their campus and for their community.”

NEMA received more than 35 nominations from its museum community for the 2026 Excellence Awards. A four-member selection committee selected ten recipients for their contributions to museums and the communities they serve. Jennifer DePrizio, NEMA’s new Executive Director, presented the awards at the November 6 ceremony. DePrizio began leading the association in October 2026.

The ceremony was part of NEMA’s three-day 2026 Annual Conference, “Undercurrents: Pushing Against Expectations,” held November 4–6 at the Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa. The conference brought together more than 750 attendees, including museum leaders from all six New England states, for professional learning, exchange of ideas, and connections across the field. Seven off-site events gave participants opportunities to visit museums and cultural sites throughout the Mystic region.

## About the New England Museum Association

For more than a century, the New England Museum Association (NEMA) has served museums and the people who work with them across Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. NEMA inspires and connects people engaged in the museum field, offers tools for innovative leadership and professional development, and supports museums in sustaining their essential roles in their communities. Its work includes professional learning, peer connections, and opportunities for museums to share ideas and practices. Learn more at www.nemanet.org.

## Media contact

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# OTHER 2026 NEMA EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS

The following nine honorees were also recognized at the 2026 NEMA Excellence Awards ceremony:

**Meghan Gelardi Holmes | Colonial Dames of Massachusetts — General Excellence**
Recognized for bringing LGBTQ and disability histories into museum interpretation, mentoring colleagues, and advancing inclusive approaches to historic places.

**Matthew Marshall | William Benton Museum of Art — General Excellence**
Honored for accessible museum education, creative programs, and lasting school and community partnerships that foster belonging.

**Krystal Rose | Mystic Seaport Museum — General Excellence**
Honored for leadership in collections stewardship, collaboration across maritime history and environmental research, and generous support of colleagues.

**Alexisjacqueline Martinez | The Wadsworth — Specific Excellence**
Recognized for a participatory Día de Muertos ofrenda that invited community members to honor loved ones and share memories.

**Bill MacMillan and Jeffrey L. Forgeng | Worcester Art Museum — Specific Excellence**
Honored for a decade of conservation and curatorial collaboration bringing the Higgins Armory Collection to the museum and creating its new Arms and Armor Galleries.

**Kristin Parker | Boston Public Library — Specific Excellence**
Recognized for leading “Revolution! 250 Years of Art & Activism in Boston,” an exhibition about activism and resistance that engaged more than 90,000 visitors.

**Maine Historical Society — Specific Excellence**
Honored for bringing its original 1776 Dunlap Broadside of the Declaration of Independence to all 16 Maine counties.

**Penhallow-Cousins House Team | Strawbery Banke Museum — Specific Excellence**
Recognized for sharing the history of the Black Cousins family through research and descendant collaboration, while preserving a flood-threatened historic house.

**Who Gets to Remember? Team | Stanley-Whitman House and Farmington High School — Specific Excellence**
Honored for engaging 288 ninth-grade students in a collaborative exploration of Tunxis and African American histories, evidence, and whose stories are remembered.