



Volunteer Case Study

Megan Cullinan



How long have you been a volunteer?

I volunteered from February to August 2009.

Why did you decide to volunteer at the Quilt Museum and Gallery?

I had started my MA in Cultural Heritage Management and one of my classmates had been given a placement at the Quilt Museum for the first semester and I was intrigued by this unique museum. I wanted to meet new people outside of university life and I also wanted to gain invaluable experience in a museum environment. The skills that I acquired have been of real benefit to me since leaving university.

Describe your role at the Quilt Museum.

I was initially a Gallery Steward but I was also given the opportunity to work with the Education Officer on many community projects and assisted the Curator during exhibition changeovers. I spent most of my time as a Gallery Steward talking to visitors and gaining a lasting enthusiasm for all textiles! I was also a member of the original Hall History Team, where we were tasked to create and lead a tour of St Anthony's Hall, showcasing the vibrant history of the 15th Century guildhall.

What new skills have you gained from being a volunteer?

I gained invaluable hands on experience of examining and handling what are often delicate materials. I learned how to talk to visitors about the collections, and researched the different techniques and histories behind the quilts.

Would you recommend volunteering with us?

Absolutely! The advantage of the small size of the Museum is that volunteers can get involved with as many aspects of the Museum as they wish. You also get to know the staff extremely well and you are made to feel very much a part of the museum. The special nature of the collections draw people with a passion for all things quilts and they bring with them their knowledge and

experience that enhances the museum. The museum has a real community spirit and everyone is so open and welcoming.

What did you take away from your experience at the Quilt Museum and Gallery?

Did it help you to get a job or a place on a course?

I have taken away a renewed love of sewing and knitting, a hobby that can be taken anywhere and that I have used it to open doors and meet new people since leaving York. The unique museum experience that I developed has also helped me find my first job with the National Trust. The most important thing that I took away with me was the confidence to volunteer with other organisations, to not be afraid to put myself out there and use my talents to help others.