

Gregg Tripoli, 57

Raising the profile of the Onondaga Historical Association Museum and Research Center

Q. Tell us a little bit about your background.

A. I grew up in Liverpool since I was 10 years old. I went to Hamilton College for my undergrad, then took a year off and went to the University of Pittsburgh for graduate school. Then I started my career in banking — in money management, cash management. A couple years on the East Coast, a couple on the West Coast, then I moved to Italy to be the special assistant to the minister of economic affairs for the Republic of San Marino. Then I began a career in management consulting for a very large multi-national conglomerate that was headquartered in the Middle East. Then I came back to Central New York.

Q. What brought you back?

A. The universe conspired. It was time to retire from that career. I was missing my family, who's all here. I've had a home here since 1987. I wanted to come to back to that, take some time to do all things that I wanted to do that I never had the time to do because I was working. That ran its course, and I got bored. And I wanted to do something productive — completely different than anything I'd ever done. I'd always been interested in arts and culture, considered myself sort of a creative sort in that realm. I thought nonprofit might be an interesting. I thought that my experience as a management consultant and from the for-profit world, I would be able to bring something to the table in nonprofit management — to bring a more entrepreneurial for-profit approach to nonprofit management.

Q. What are some of your

responsibilities as executive director?

A. I'm a nonprofit director so at any time you may see me with a paint brush in one hand and a toilet brush in the other. We all wear a lot of hats. But officially, I'm the CEO of the organization, so I manage all the aspects of the company.

Q. You are everywhere.

A. I'm ubiquitous. But that's what's necessary. Part of the reason why I was hired was to raise awareness and visibility, and so that's one of the ways to do it and get involved in the community. And I'm happy to do that because I love the community that we serve. I like to do a little bit of everything. I like to try my hand at kind of everybody's work. I do development work, do some research work, do some writing. I do a lot of the retail product development. Kind of a jack of all trades. Whatever's required. There's no such thing as "that's not my job" here.

Q. What's your favorite exhibit?

A. Of the permanent exhibits, I really have an attachment to Syracuse China, because that was the largest collection that OHA's taken on in its 150-year history, and it happened while I was here. And so I have learned a lot about it. The company was so fascinating. To learn the business, the marketing, the design, the actual manufacturing, the employee relations. I love our Heart of New York because it covers so much of the history. I wish we had room to do it five times as big as this because there's so much great

history. Right now my favorite exhibits are the temporary because they're the newest. I love Fashion After Five and the Culture of the Cocktail Hour.

Q. What are some of misconceptions that people might have about the OHA?

A. There's a lot of misconceptions about the OHA — that we're old and tired and boring and that we don't want to share our collections. That's all we want to do is share. We have about 30 exhibits out in the community. We write, we do film projects, we do television stuff, we do offsite exhibits, we do educational programming. We're everywhere. It's all about outreach to us, it's about bringing the stories — amazing stories — of Onondaga County out to a worldwide audience.

Q. What can our readers see in the future when they come to museum?

A. I can tell you — they can always see something new that's old. Because we're predominantly a changing exhibit museum, every few months we open up a new exhibit.



Gregg Tripoli is the executive director of Onondaga Historical Association Museum and Research Center.