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WKU's Kentucky Museum sees jump in attendance

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Jul 26, 2019

Kentucky Museum Director Brent Bjorkman works from a scaffolding on the Stickwork installation piece in October at the museum.

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Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com

Six months after a grant allowed the Kentucky Museum to eliminate admission costs, the museum at Western Kentucky University has seen a nearly 30 percent jump in visitors.

Museum Director Brent Bjorkman said in an email that the museum had 6,053 visitors between January and June, “an increase of 1,329 or 28 percent over the same period from 2018.”

In December, the Kentucky Museum received a grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, allowing it to offer free admission to the public for three years.

The museum’s 2018-19 report said the museum saw 11,596 visitors, including 4,786 adults, children and seniors; 900 tour groups and 3,521 WKU faculty, students and staff. The museum also reported a 163 percent increase in funds to support the museum.

Bjorkman said the jump in visitors can be attributed to more than just waiving admission. The museum's efforts to boost faculty and student involvement with the museum have also paid off, Bjorkman said. In many cases, the museum asked faculty to either add the museum's content into their lessons or contribute to exhibits themselves.

According to an annual report released by the museum Monday, the museum showcased 14 new exhibits this year. That includes Flora and Fauna, a large-scale installation created by art students in assistant professor Marilee Salvator's printmaking classes. Students in two classes were asked to print and cut out 30 impressions of their image on special paper and combine the images in a large-scale collage in the museum's Community Gallery.



Other exhibitions promoted community outreach, including a project by the Kentucky Museum and the university's Cultural Enhancement Series to host visiting artist Patrick Dougherty in October. Dougherty worked with faculty, students and community members to harvest saplings, strip them of their leaves and weave them into a large sculpture on display on the museum's front lawn.

"All these things kind of came together" to boost museum attendance, Bjorkman said.

– *The full report can be viewed with this story at bgdailynews.com.*

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.



WKU's Kentucky Museum sees jump in attendance
AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Jul 26, 2019

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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