

When the Worst Happens (Session B), Community Classroom

Session Host and Moderator - Jessica Ruhle, Director of Education and Public Programs, Nasher Museum of Art

Margaret Sternberg, former Manager of Gallery Interpretation, MFA, Houston

Chuck Fleming, MSW, Program Administrator, Charles House Association

Maureen Adams, Gallery Guide, Nasher Museum of Art

Programs ≈ 10 years – just starting

Margaret:

“Looking together”/Houston

- Docent-run and not much training in place. Goals to grow program.
- Invited new group – turned out to be large group (15-20 people), later-stage with only 2 staff. Building difficult to navigate. One got very anxious and bolted out of the building while pushing other attendee, and headed toward street. MS was able to follow them and calm/deescalate the situation.

Learning: You can't expand without proper training for staff in advance. Was bad PR within staff before. Should have met with facility to discuss in depth before coming to site.

Maureen:

- A gentleman got so close he knocked a painting off the wall. Luckily, a guard caught the art.
- An attendee grabbed the “art” bottle of Southern Comfort.
- A Chatham County group came. By the end, one in a wheelchair had an incontinence accident. Fortunately, facility staff were on hand. Good program needs strong ABS:
 - o Awareness
 - o Backup staff/best practice
 - o Smiles

Chuck:

- You can't prevent everything. “Surplus Safety” can detract quality of life. Need to find the right balance. Put yourself in their shoes. If you can't see – how would you want to interact with the art.
- Charles house does 5:1 or 6:1 ratio.
 - o Held dance – onlookers thought the risk was too great. However, the gain outweighed the risk
 - o Communication with caregivers is key. Ask the family about the risks/rewards to get buy-in on approach to freedom levels.

Discussion:

Audience Member:

Person left museum and could not be found. Security quickly checked whole building. Probably waited too long to call police (approximately 20 minutes). Leader of facility/group made that decision. Person had gotten about two miles away. Police handled very well – friendly, offered him a ride back without fuss.

Safe Return Bracelet – not a national program. There is also emergency ID bracelets or other models – on shoelaces, etc. Some folks won't tolerate wearing a bracelet. Wandering generally happens during transition times. Scenario occurred when folks were getting on the bus.

IDEA: someone who watches the group during transition times, but that person must be trained – can't get distracted. When walking groups – always have one staff in front and one person always pulling up the rear. Allow freedom and dignity with someone keeping an eye on them.

Chuck: If anyone gets to the road and can't be turned around, the police are called.

Audience Member: During intake conversations, they always ask if someone wanders and if they're using a wander bracelet. It also is a cue this could come later.

Audience Member: How to handle participant who has no caregiver? What about identifying another organization that is already in that business.

Audience Member: Found volunteer pool and provide the training. City elder transport can help; potentially could come late, etc. Uber-like service geared toward the elderly: "Silver Rides." Could an aging-in-place organization be helpful? What about partnering with other caregivers already in the group. Ride-sharing also strengthens the social network. Carolyn Halpin-Healy said she's happy to share their intake form (she said she got it from MET).

Audience Member: How would you work under these scenarios?

- Jane Tygesson's website, "opening doors to memory and imagination," is loaded with training information in great detail.

Audience Member: Part of their training is a discussion with new staff about what they're most concerned about.

From the whiteboard

- Outing Alzheimer's diagnosis – unintentional disclosure
- Risk to art – proximity/touching/damage
- Liability around pairing lone member with "assigned" partner
- Physical injury
- Tornado warning (emergency scenarios)
- Wandering
- Losing someone who left museum