

Institution Impact on Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

Overview and Purpose

This panel will focus on how community institutions, such as museums, historical sites, cultural landmarks, and science centers (children science centers, but also zoos and aquaria), contribute to student learning. Panelists, listed below along with their biographies, will share insights about the learning opportunities such institutions afford students and schools in the community. Two primary questions will frame the conversation:

- 1) If and how does their work connect with local school districts?
- 2) What challenges do they encounter through their work in educating students about history or deepening student understanding of science? How do they address these challenges? What successes have they enjoyed?

Additionally, the discussion may elicit panelists' reactions to [recent research which quantifies](#) the impact of museum experiences on student knowledge of the arts and history and what they want education leaders to know about the nature of student learning in their institutions.

Tonya Matthews, Board member, Charleston host, and president and CEO of the International African American Museum, will moderate the panel.

Panelist Biographies



Rex Garniewicz, President and CEO, Coastal Discovery

Since starting as President and CEO of the Coastal Discovery Museum in July 2014, Rex Garniewicz built a new Discovery Lab on the 68-acre property, renovated multiple buildings, became a Smithsonian Affiliate, built a \$2m reserve fund, and doubled the operating budget of the museum. Coastal Discovery now serves 125,000 visitors and provides 10,000 student experiences per year. It ranks third out of the top 10 museums in South Carolina and is one of the top three attractions on Hilton Head Island.

Prior to joining the Coastal Discovery Museum, Rex was Deputy Director at the San Diego Museum of Man, and Vice President at the Indiana State Museum. He holds a degree in Environmental Science from Wesleyan University and a PhD in Archaeology from Indiana University, and has been an adjunct professor at Indiana University, Butler University, and San

Diego State University. Rex has served on multiple boards, including the AAM's Curator's Committee, the Stone Age Institute, and the Santa Elena Foundation.



Kevin Mills, President and CEO, The South Carolina Aquarium

Since 2006, Kevin Mills has led the formation of the Aquarium's strategic and master plans, helped retire its original \$12 million debt, and overseen the realization of a \$25 million Watershed Fund initiative to extend the Aquarium's award-winning education programs, deepen its conservation footprint, and enhance its position as the number one travel destination in the Charleston region.

Prior to joining the Aquarium, he was Vice President, Marketing and External Affairs for the Saint Louis Zoo, rated "America's #1 Zoo" by Parenting magazine and the Zagat Guide. He is an active leader in the zoo and aquarium profession, serving on the board of directors of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Animals Inc., and as chair of AZA's Aquarium Affairs Committee. Kevin also spent ten years as a sales and marketing executive for Cunard Line, Ltd., directing the passenger loyalty program for the luxury cruise line. He began his career with the Museum of Modern Art, New York and worked in the publishing and advertising industries.

He's a native of Kansas and a graduate of the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas.



Jeff Neale, Director of Preservation and Interpretation, Middleton Place Foundation

Since retiring from the United States Marine Corps in 2004, Mr. Neale entered a new career in the field of Public History. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in Public History from North Carolina State University and received a Bachelor's Degree in History from Appalachian State University. During both his post-grad and graduate studies, he completed internships at the North Carolina State Archives; at Fort

Defiance, an 18th century historic house museum; at the James K. Polk Historic Site; at the Joel Lane House Museum; and at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

In 2009, Mr. Neale accepted a "front-line" interpreter position at Middleton Place as the site's resident potter in the Plantation Stableyards and subsequently served as the Plantation Stableyards Volunteer Coordinator and Interpretive Manager. In his current role, he has developed a quarterly

training session for the Foundation’s staff and volunteers; developed and overseen numerous reenactments and historic events; designed and supervised the construction of the site’s Outdoor Education Center; researched and implemented numerous “hands-on” activities for school groups and visitors; assisted in writing the documentary presentation *Beyond the Fields: Slavery at Middleton Place*; researched and wrote such annual costumed events as *Grand Illumination: Christmas 1782* and *Christmas on the Battery*; oversaw the site’s first annual Juneteenth Celebration in 2019; and directed the research, design, and implementation of the Middleton Place House Museum’s “Moment in Time” exhibit, which focuses on the daily interaction and relationship between slave owners and those they held in bondage.

Zelda Quiller Waymer, President and CEO, South Carolina After School Alliance



Since 2019, in her role as President and CEO of the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance, Zelda has led the efforts of a team committed to transforming South Carolina by investing in children and youth beyond the school day.

Zelda became the first executive director of the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance and is responsible for partnering with key decision-makers and local providers to develop, lead, coordinate and drive the network’s initiatives. In her capacity at the Alliance, she led the planning and implementation of a professional development system, proposed inclusion of afterschool in the court’s ruling for school funding and expanded the organization’s connections with local programs and partners across the state. In 2021, Zelda partnered with Governor Henry McMaster to invest \$4 million in afterschool to reconnect and reengage middle and high school students in underserved, underrepresented areas through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund.

Zelda has held multiple state and national leadership positions including service on the Boards of Together SC, Social Emotional Learning 4 South Carolina, Clemson’s South Carolina Coalition of Mathematics and Science at Clemson University, and the National Advisory Committee of the White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellowship of the Riley Institute at Furman University.

Zelda holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and a minor in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina, pursuing a Masters of Education in Education Leadership and Policy at American University; and is a graduate of the Riley Diversity Leadership Institute at Furman University.