



FY 2017



# ANNUAL REPORT

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Chief of Department, FDNY

\* - Until February 16, 2017

\*\* - As of February 16, 2017

## MUSEUM STAFF

Sarah Strickland  
Executive Director†

Gary Urbanowicz  
Executive Director‡

Noemi Bourdier  
Assistant Director

Amanda Pietrzykowski  
Collections Manager/Curator

Ann Duckett  
Accountant

Alyssa Borger  
Gift Shop Supervisor/Birthday Party Hostess

John C. Bendall  
Gift Shop Associate

Eugene McCarthy  
Facility Manager

† - Until January 31, 2017

‡ - As of May 1, 2017



## OVERVIEW

The New York City Fire Museum continues its mission to collect, preserve and present the history and cultural heritage of the fire service while also providing fire safety education to the public, especially school children.

Following up on the awarding of an Absolute Charter in November 2015, the merger of the Friends of the New York City Fire Department Collection, Inc. into the new New York City Fire Museum corporate entity was undertaken. On March 13, 2017 the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York approved the merger. From that point forward, this required the conversion of all merchant and banking accounts, as well as an array of other relationships, to the new name. These changes began in FY2017 and continued into FY2018.

The Museum saw some management changes at the Board and staff levels during the 2017 Fiscal Year. Board President John C. Bower stepped down in February and Ted Grant, Jr. was elected to the Board presidency. Sadly, Mr. Bower passed away in May. Effective January 31, 2017, Executive Director Sarah Strickland resigned. Gary Urbanowicz was appointed Executive Director as of May 1, 2017.

Overall, revenue was slightly lower than the last fiscal year, but lower operating expenses resulted in a positive net income of \$71,077. Total assets increased from FY2016; \$671,762 versus \$661,391. Total number of visitors to the Museum was up by 18% although down in some categories, notably Fire Safety Education tours.

## VISITORS

The Museum hosted a total of 35,619 visitors during FY2017, up from 30,169 last year. Of these, 8,021 were school children who participated in the Fire Safety Education Program. The Museum's admission structure allows for groups of fifteen or more individuals to purchase tickets at a reduced rate. Four thousand seven hundred thirty-seven group tickets were sold at this rate. In total, door admissions (including tours and school children) generated revenue of \$158,631. This is five percent lower than visitor revenue in FY2016 and was impacted mostly by a decline in tours; revenue from which was down approximately 31 percent.

Free admission is extended to a limited number of eligible individuals. These include Museum members, members of New York City's uniformed services, members of the United States Armed Forces, participants in New York City's Cool Culture program, and participating institutions of the Museums Council of New York City. Annually, the Fire Museum participates in the Smithsonian Institution's "Museum Day Live" which offers free admission at participating museums for pre-registered individuals. In total, the Museum was visited by 1,570 complimentary guests during FY2017.

## COLLECTION



The process of cataloging and digitizing the collection continued with 1,827 items cataloged and 1,973 items photographed or scanned. We accepted donations of twenty-six items to the collection, including a Field Communication board from the late 1960's and a presentation badge given to Commissioner/Chief John J. McElligott in 1940.

On October 27, 2016 Firefighter James P. Lee, Jr. of FDNY Rescue Company 1 saved the life of an 81-year-old man from his burning fifth floor apartment at East 83<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan. As they slowly made their way to the ground, the rope was ignited by the raging flames only to break just moments after the duo landed safely. The Life Saving Rope used in this dramatic rescue, showing the burned and broken section, is now in the Museum's collection and is on display in the first floor gallery. This is an example of how the Museum works contemporaneously to preserve the history of firefighting in New York City.



Two items in the collection underwent restoration this year. This included the Steinway Hose Company 7 hand-drawn hose reel. The restoration was performed on-site by Lauren Paige Isaacs of Flying Pig Art Conservation. The hose reel was built in 1875 for the fire department organized to protect Steinway village in Queens, New York. The parade piece now looks like the day it was delivered to the original owners.

Ms. Isaacs was also engaged to restore a silk banner of the Exempt Firemen's Association of Long Island City. The beautiful piece will be returned to its place in the Romance of Firefighting display once completed.

These restorations were undertaken with a funding from American Express in the amount of \$25,000 received during FY2016.

Curator/Collection Manager Amanda Pietrzykowski assisted fifteen researchers on a range of projects from a children's book about Molly Williams, the first female firefighter in the United States, to the history of fire companies located at St. Paul's Chapel, for their 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We loaned several objects to be included in the *New York at its Core* exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York.

Under the leadership of Ms. Pietrzykowski, the intern program continues to thrive, with five new interns accepted and trained and one intern who continued on from previous years.

In December 2016, she coordinated the painting of the second floor exhibit space and the associated dismantling and re-installation of the displays.

## SPECIAL EXHIBITS

In addition to our permanent exhibits, artifacts are periodically highlighted and displayed on a temporary basis. This year, two exhibits in particular bear attention.

In honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the fire known as "The 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Fire" which occurred on October 17, 1966, photographs and a helmet worn by Chief Walter Higgins were assembled in a commemorative display. Chief Higgins was one of the twelve firefighters who gave their lives in that landmark fire.

To commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the airship Hindenburg disaster on May 6, 1937, a unique artifact was displayed; the Lloyd's of London insurance policy on the Hindenburg and two other German dirigibles. The policy was acquired by the NYC Fire Museum as part of the Home Insurance Company collection. Thomas Tracy of the *NY Daily News* wrote an article about the exhibit that was picked up by the Associated Press and was carried by print media around the world.

## MUSEUM-SPONSORED EVENTS

A series of annual events were presented during the year. These included the Santa Rescue, Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Party, FDNY Cook-Off and the 9/11 Memorial Commemoration. Each drew audiences from around the City and beyond. The holiday-themed events are targeted toward children, are well attended, and generate positive community recognition along with modest income.

The Cook-Off is the Museum's landmark fundraising event with over 100 people in attendance this year. In support of the Cook-Off, donations are received from numerous sponsors ranging from prizes for winning chefs and raffle gifts to beverages (beer, wine and soda) provided for attendees. We were fortunate to once again enjoy the participation of three celebrity judges; Gabriele Corcos of the Tuscan Gun, his wife actress Debi Mazar and Food Network Chef Daisy Martinez. The event generated \$17,000 net income; a substantial increase over the FY2015 event which brought in \$10,856. We are greatly appreciative of the incredible level of support we receive from the chefs, judges, sponsors and attendees.



## OTHER EVENTS

The outstanding third floor event space continues to be a sought-after venue by individuals, corporations and production companies. For example, an artifact was filmed here in May for an episode of the Travel Channel series, “Mysteries at the Museum” in story entitled “Riker’s Island Rescue.” Other uses of the space during the course of the year included weddings, a casting call for Atlantic City Fashion Week, a motorcycle photo shoot, and receptions including New York Women in Film and Television and Heart 9/11.



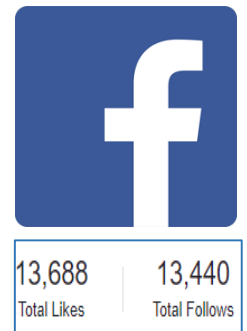
The Commissioner and staff of the FDNY along with numerous Department-affiliated organizations utilize the Museum as the venue for many of their functions. Over the past year, this has included the Commissioner’s Holiday Party, FDNY Calendar auditions, Medical Special Operations Conference reception, the Uniformed Firefighters Association Widows and Children Fund party and the FDNY Pride Celebration. On September 9, 2016 the FDNY accepted a life-size fiberglass bear at the Museum, from the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation. This group from Berlin, Germany offers support to the children of 9/11 victims.

Each year on the Sunday preceding September 11<sup>th</sup>, Mychal’s Message holds a Walk of Remembrance in honor of FDNY Chaplain Mychal Judge who was killed in the 2001 terrorist attack. The group, numbering several hundred, stop at the Museum on their procession from St. Francis of Assisi Church on East 31<sup>st</sup> Street to Ground Zero. The marchers access the Museum’s restrooms, view exhibits including Father Judge’s bunker gear, and rest before moving on.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to promote events and keep members and the general public apprised of activities, the Museum maintains a presence on various social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter. Postings to our Facebook and Twitter feeds are automatically re-posted and re-tweeted by the FDNY on their social media outlets.

The Museum’s website continues to evolve and be updated frequently. Not only are important events and announcements highlighted on the Home page, visitors can avail themselves of a number of services including on-line Gift Shop purchases, individual and group ticket sales, and history tour bookings directly. Researchers and interested parties can utilize a search feature to view cataloged items or simply browse the collections.



## BUILDING

Being quartered in a 1904 firehouse and hosting tens of thousands of visitors each year requires on-going maintenance to our physical plant. During FY2017 this included painting the second and third floors and the removal, cleaning, fireproofing and re-installation of the heavy drapes in the second floor gallery.

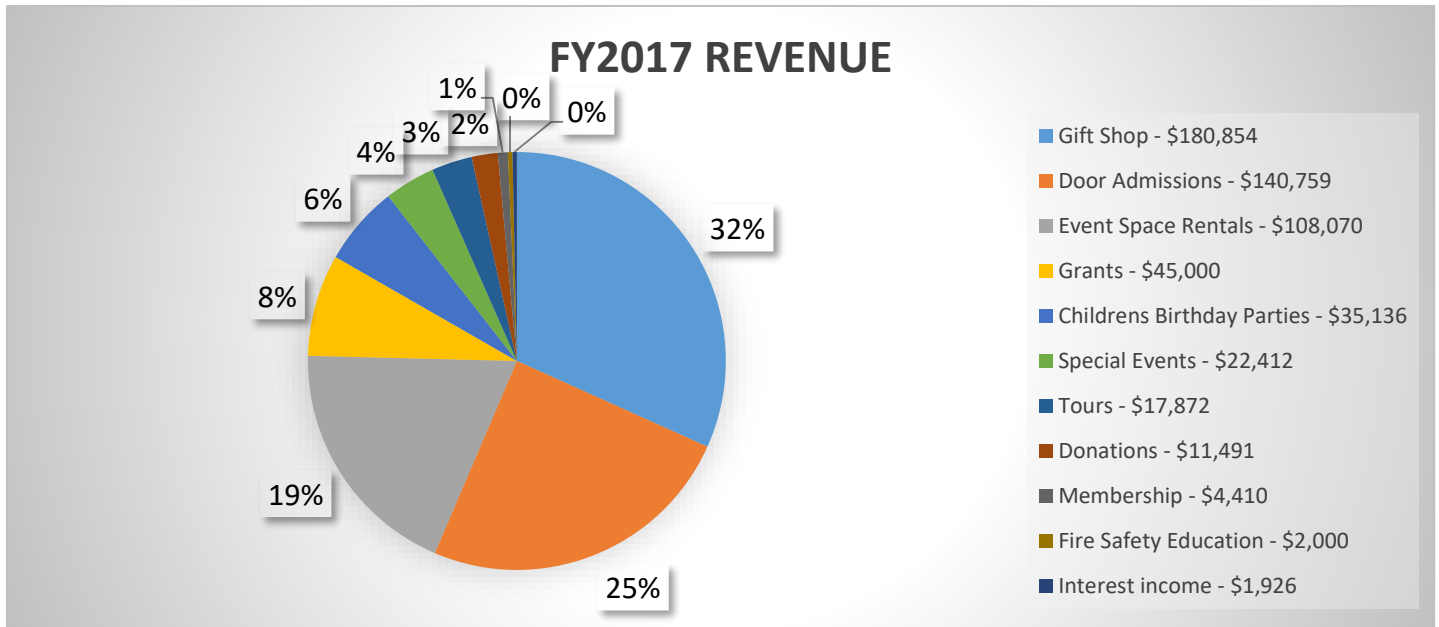
The most aggressive project to the physical plant is the renovation of the Fire Safety Education “mock apartment.” A significant portion of the proceeds from the capital campaign launched in FY2015 were earmarked for this. On December 23, 2016, Turner Construction Company stepped forward and committed an in-kind donation of the complete physical re-building of the space. This will include a new roof, interior walls, electric service, waterproofing, flooring (including new sub-floor), ventilation, etc. The funds raised through the capital campaign, as well as grant funding, will provide the various accoutrements to enhance the realism of the experience. This renovation and upgrade will facilitate the use of the space by individuals and families without the need for a tour guide. School groups will still go through the residence under the guidance and tutelage of a Fire Safety Educator.

## GRANTS

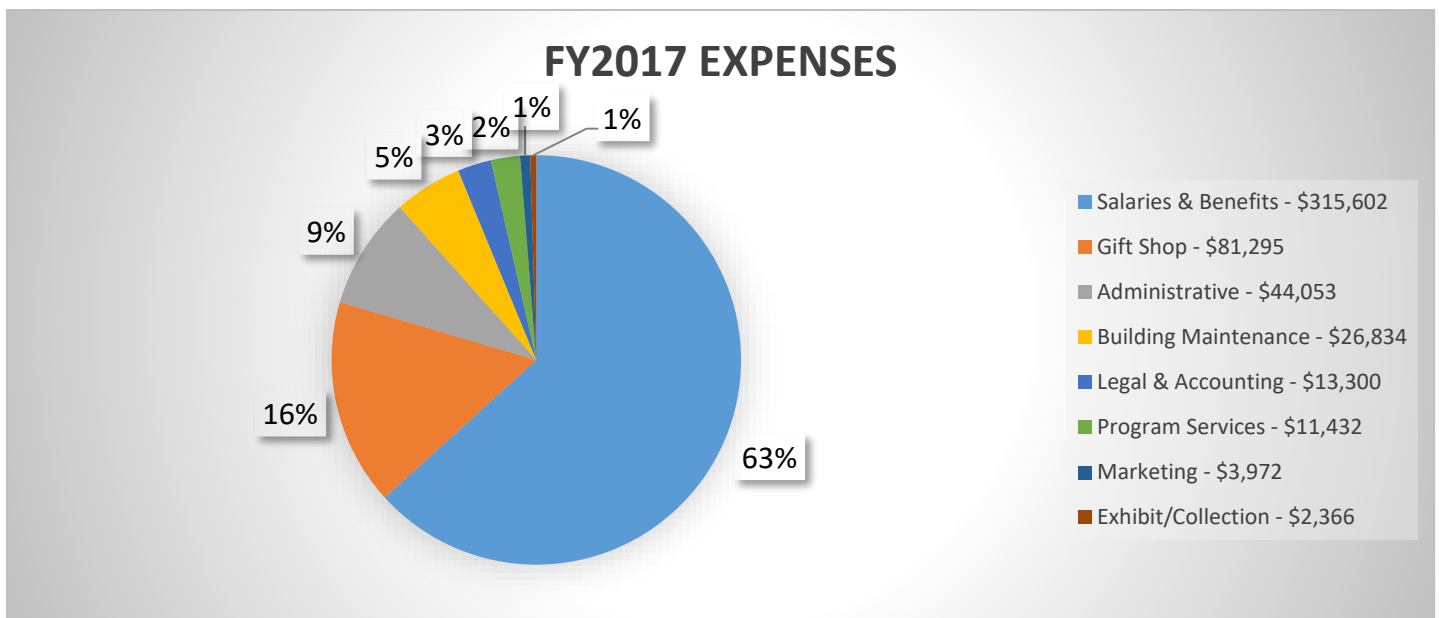
To support the Museum's on-going proud tradition of preserving and displaying artifacts to document the history of the Fire Department of the City of New York and to provide fire prevention and safety education to the public, grant funding is essential. During FY2017, the Museum was the recipient of a \$25,000 grant from New York Community Trust to support the work being undertaken in the Fire Safety Education mock apartment. An additional \$20,000 was received from New York Community Trust for general operations.

Turner Construction Company's in-kind grant is of an unspecified amount for the renovation of the Fire Safety Mock Apartment. During the current year, all necessary pre-construction work ranging from construction drawings to building permits were pursued. Physical work will begin in FY2018.

## INCOME



## EXPENSES



## GIFT SHOP

Like most museums, the NYC Fire Museum has a gift shop. Items can be purchased on-site or via the Museum's website. Sales of gift items generated revenue of \$175,354 in FY2017. This was up 8.0% over FY2016. Merchandise includes FDNY-licensed products, several items specifically designed for the Museum by Hooks & Irons and other Museum-branded souvenirs. The latter category was expanded this year to include a magnificent tee-shirt designed in-house by Assistant Director Noemi Bourdier and Collection Manager/Curator Amanda Pietrzykowski which has proven to be a very popular item.



## COMMUNITY

The neighborhood around 278 Spring Street is ever-changing. Formerly considered the printing hub of the city, the area was re-branded as Hudson Square in 2009. The Hudson Square Business Improvement District has overseen major improvements to the area's appearance, which enhances the Museum's presence. In FY2017 two large residential buildings brought families to the district. The current population<sup>1</sup> is approximately 58,000 (18% of the households have children) is projected to grow to over 10,000 in the near future. Overall, an estimated 61,000 people are in Hudson Square daily, many of whom avail themselves of our iconic presence. The NYC Fire Museum is an active member of Hudson Square BID, keeps abreast of its developments and participates in community activities, all with the goal of increasing our visibility while being a good neighbor.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The first mention of a museum for the FDNY was in the December 1, 1870 issue of the *New York Times*. It was located in Fire Headquarters at 155 Mercer Street, just a few blocks away from our current location. To say the least, since then the presence of the Museum has ebbed and flowed, no more so than when the collection was merged with that of the Home Insurance Company and took up residence at 278 Spring Street in 1987. After September 11, 2001, the tragedy brought more attention to the FDNY, prompted the establishment of the 9/11 Memorial, and brought a surge in visitors to the Museum. Now, the Board of Trustees and the staff are developing plans for the next wave of growth; the goal of which is to raise the visibility of our presence among other cultural institutions in New York City. It is our mission to increase the number of visitors who come to see the exhibits, enhance the utilization of the third floor event space, increase participation in the Fire Safety Learning Center and attract increased philanthropy.

We look to the future with enthusiasm.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Point 2 Homes for USPS Zip Codes 10013 and 10014; date unknown