

Sara Beilein Capen

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EDUCATION

Canisius College: Buffalo, New York

Master of Science in Secondary Education: August, 1998

- Additional coursework in Business Administration, History and Athletic Administration
- AmeriCorps service member through the Athletes in Service to America program

Michigan State University: East Lansing, Michigan

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science: May, 1995

- Division I Field Hockey Player 1991-1995
- MVP 1994, 1995
- Team Captain 1994, 1995

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Inc.: Executive Director

05/11-present

- Responsible for the daily operations of the National Heritage Area including heritage tourism product development, grant writing, outreach, marketing, programming, regional economic development and education programs
- Developed and implemented the **Discover Niagara Shuttle**, a hop-on/hop-off transportation shuttle that runs daily during the visitor season to over a dozen heritage destinations between Niagara Falls and Old Fort Niagara. Presently, it has serviced approximately 150,000 people over four seasons of operations. Led a local and statewide advocacy initiative to secure a coordinated 1% occupancy tax increase in the City of Niagara Falls, Lockport and Niagara County to sustainably fund the Discover Niagara Shuttle in 2019.
- Instrumental in the development of the **Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center** which opened in May of 2018 within the new Niagara Falls Train Station. Continues to provide ongoing support with development, advocacy, and long-term sustainability of the organization.
- Successful in seeking funding and public/private partnerships to develop the #NFMurals program, a series of murals along Main Street and Depot Avenue that expresses the history of freedom through the perspective of Black Americans within Niagara Falls.
- Developed and coordinated the Fridays on the Frontier program which provides access to students and teachers in Western New York to visit Old Fort Niagara on Fridays in October free of admission and with transportation scholarships. Since 2012, over 18,000 students have participated in this program.
- Initiated, developed, and supported other projects including the Freedom Crossing Exhibit Re-Design, NFNHA Website, NFNHA Brochure, Junior Ranger Program, the War of 1812 Classroom

Connection program, War of 1812 Trading Card Series, Long-Range Interpretive Plan, Grant Program, and development of the nonprofit organization

- Experienced in writing grants and leading efforts to secure successful grant awards. Examples include: National Park Foundation, New York State Health Foundation, WNY Regional Council, National Park Service, Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and more.
- Coordinates projects with fellow National Heritage Area's like the Ticket to Ride Grant, technical assistance funding, and the War of 1812 Trading Card Series
- Leadership Niagara "Leader of the Year" 2017
- Niagara-USA Chamber of Commerce Chairman's Award 2019: Discover Niagara Shuttle
- Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce Chairman's Award 2019: Discover Niagara Shuttle
- Niagara Beautification Commission: Chairman's Award 2019 for Heritage Arts Mural Project/#NFMURALS

Alliance of National Heritage Area: Chairperson

05/16-present

- Chairperson for the 501 (c) (6) organization comprised of member National Heritage Area organizations who partner and advocate for the long-term sustainability of the program
- Testified before the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee (Feb. 2019) and House of Representative Natural Resources Committee (April 2019) regarding the importance of the National Heritage Area program, stabilizing the program through passage of the National Heritage Area Act (H.R. 1049) and increasing funding.
- Leads efforts to restore funding following full elimination cuts to the NHA program, increase appropriations budget and pass program legislation to secure the NHA program.
- Led advocacy efforts to introduce the National Heritage Area Act in both the 116th and 117th Congress which presently passed the House of Representatives in both December of 2020 and February of 2021.
- Facilitates external partnerships that champion the program and the work of National Heritage Area's throughout the nation including those with the National Park Foundation, Southeast Tourism Society, and National Parks Conservation Association.
- Coordinate outreach efforts with National Heritage Area Caucus chairs, Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Rep. David McKinley (R-WV), House and Senate Appropriation Committees, House and Senate Authorization Committees

Niagara University: Adjunct Professor

01/15-01/19

- College of Hospitality: Tourism and Destination Development
- Facilitated classroom instruction on the development of tourism ventures and destinations through the lens of economic development, regionalism, public-private partnerships, historic preservation and urban revitalization.
- Students experience practical application of the tourism industry through targeted projects involving the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

Holley Central School District: Social Studies Teacher

08/06-02/09

- Facilitated classroom instruction in U.S. History for the 9th, 11th and Advanced Placement levels
- Recognized veterans within the community through student driven letters

Newfane Central School District: Social Studies Teacher Part Time

08/04-06/06

- Facilitated classroom instruction in Global Studies II
- Coordinated and served as the teacher advisor for students participating in the state wide oratory contest sponsored by the Newfane American Legion
- Accepted as co-facilitator for the **National Conference of Social Studies** conference in Washington, D.C. in 2007
- Requested as a facilitator for the national **Teach Teachers Vietnam Network** 2006 conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund**

Barker Central School District: Social Studies Teacher

09/99-06/05

- Experienced teacher of 8th and 11th Grade U.S. History, Global Studies I and II, Economics and Participation in Government
- Designed and implemented a thematic based approach to Global Studies curriculum that suits a two year looping program
- Experienced team teacher in inclusion classrooms
- Responsible for organizing speakers for Veteran's Day and Memorial Day ceremonies
- Created a Veteran's Day project that included oral history interviews and investigations that were linked to the National Archives Veterans History Project
- Assisted in the creation of the Barker's Veteran's Memorial Park which included fundraising activities and logistics for acquiring a M60 AP3 tank for the park
- Assisted in the organization, videotaping and interviewing of World War II veterans for use in the classroom, the Barker Free Library and the school library. Interviews were later published in the Niagara Falls Gazette.
- Coordinated consecutive Veteran's Day essay contests with high school social studies classes and the American Legion Veterans organization.
- Facilitated the necessary paperwork and activities for Barker to become a commemorative World War II and Korean War community
- Coordinated yearly projects involving Liberty Day, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Kindness and Justice challenge and empowering young students to become active within their communities
- Assistant varsity coach for field hockey
- Advised the Young Women's Leadership Club, Junior Class and the Spanish Club

Buffalo Bills, Inc.: Marketing Associate

05/96-01/98

- Responsible for the development of the Bills Express Train, the Buffalo Bills Kid's Club and the Buffalo Bills Experience on game days
- Organized and managed the West Palm Beach Hospice Charity Tennis Tournament and Silent Auction

- Responsible for selling advertising, club seats and matching marketing strategies to corporations

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

Memorial Center Advisory Board Member: 2004-2008

Teach Teachers Vietnam Network: 2002-2008

- Selected in a nationwide search for teachers to participate in the Teach Teachers Vietnam Network
- Facilitated dozens of presentations for school districts, veterans, and community organizations to promote awareness of the critical role education plays in the legacy of the Vietnam War, the efforts of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the Wall and contemporary veterans issues
- Designed and implemented community outreach projects that bridged students and educators with local organizations to preserve local history regarding the Vietnam War
- Assisted in founding a memorial fund to build a memorial in honor of all veterans in all wars for Niagara County
- Led a local effort with the national project Put a Face with a Name which is part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's Virtual Wall and allows communities to establish virtual memorials to the sons and daughters of the Vietnam War
- Selected to be a member of the United States delegation to Vietnam commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War

ORGANIZATON AND ASSOCIATION EXPERIENCE

- Town of Newfane Tourism Advisory Board
- Town of Newfane Planning Board
- Downtown Revitalization Initiative Planning Committee
- Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board
- Alliance of National Heritage Areas
- DeSales Catholic School Education Council
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Education Center Advisory Board
- Teach Teachers Vietnam Network
- Barker Alumni Association
- Eastern Niagara United Way
- New York State Council for the Social Studies
- National Council for the Social Studies
- Toastmasters