

Puneet “P\$” Kumar

Professor Matt Petras

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**Jonathan Sharwarko of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History**

Philanthropy and education are true passions of mine. There is nothing more rewarding than helping people and positively impacting society. I hope to one day work for one of them because I want to make an honest living and help people. There are 3,187 registered nonprofit organizations in the Greater Pittsburgh area, but not many as recognizable and respected as the Carnegie Museums. These include the Carnegie Science Center, the Andy Warhol Museum, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Their mission: “To preserve and expand the resources of art and sciences as agents of personal growth and social advancement in Pittsburgh and beyond.” I believe in their mission and am interested in how they operate.

I was very fortunate to interview Mr. Jonathan Sharwarko. He is director of Member Services at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, located in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is 38 years old, originally from Chicago, Illinois, and has been with the museum for 12 years. He has a BA in Anthropology from Southern Illinois University. He later earned his MA in Public Administration from Pitt. He is a very charming, likable, personable, and affable gentleman. He was an accommodating and convivial host, welcoming and enthused to grant me this interview. He met me the same day I called the museum at their Fossil Fuel Cafe and spent over 40 minutes answering all my questions. He exudes passion for his work, the museum, education and humanity overall.

Mr. Sharwarko primarily oversees the customer service line, sales, memberships, and a telemarketing staff of 3 full-time employees. They are primarily responsible for fundraising and member outreach. The Carnegie Museum of Natural History has over 30,000 members and an extremely diverse staff. He is responsible for hiring and training new employees and people from all sorts of different backgrounds apply for jobs there. Depending on the job posting, he gets between 50-60 applicants per month. Some of the museum's current and past employees have had a wide range of education and work experience including scientists, musicians, artists, economists, teachers and even construction workers. When I asked him about some of his employees, he answered, "We have a guy who can repair imperfections in marble as if it were never damaged in the first place. We have some of the best skilled laborers I've ever seen. We need artists to help us plan and assemble exhibits. Some of our curators are scientists. I even like to hire people with restaurant and retail experience because of their customer service skills. Basically, if you're qualified and have a passion for education, we would love to have you."

Sometimes they do work that they weren't specifically hired to do or went to college. He said, "We have a guy who is a musician, but we hired him to do maintenance work. Because of his connections and involvement with local musicians, he was able to get us musicians to play for us at museum events." Musicians often perform at the museum for charity fundraisers and his inside knowledge of the industry and his connections with local musicians turned out to be a helpful and valuable resource.

Overseeing such a diverse group of employees, the nature of the work and having members and visitors from all over the world ensures that his job is never monotonous. The Carnegie Museum of Natural History accommodates more than 300,000 visitors every year, not including private events. Many are in the area because of conferences at Pitt, CMU, UPMC, for

Pittsburgh Steelers games, and a variety of other reasons. Many often decide on a whim to visit the museum. Many arrive for school field trips, with religious organizations, with tour groups, and for corporate sponsored events. People can also host private events such as art viewings, wedding receptions, private tours, charity events, conferences, musical performances, and even cocktail parties.

Employing such an eclectic staff and interacting with so many different types of people are parts of why Mr. Sharwarko finds his job rewarding and fulfilling. Watching people of all walks of life enjoy the museum is another rewarding aspect of his job. From young children unable to contain their excitement after viewing dinosaur skeletons, to senior citizens visiting from a retirement community intrigued by the Egyptian artifacts to Pitt students visiting in their spare time or for a quiet place to study. These are all intangible benefits of working for a renowned and respected museum like the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. He and his staff don't necessarily contact people to conduct surveys, but they receive feedback and input from a variety of sources. The overwhelming majority of responses are positive. Visitors like to compliment the quality and variety of exhibits. They admire the cleanliness, size, and tranquility of the museum. They marvel at the paintings on loan by famous artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Georges Seurat, Claude Monet, and Pablo Picasso.

Another positive aspect of working for a respected museum is the enthusiasm and altruism from donors. Some donate simply for tax deductions and benefits, without much emotional investment. However, many are lifelong members who sometimes donate rather large sums of money in their last will and testament because of their love and respect for the museum. Gift giving and donations are significant and critical aspects of a successful nonprofit organization. A museum as large as the Carnegie Museum of Natural History simply cannot

survive on the admission fees and profits from the gift shop and restaurants alone, which only make up roughly 35% of their overall revenue. It needs a combination of those funds, along with donations, gifts and sometimes government grants to fulfill all necessary expenses.

Mr. Sharwarko said that there are numerous challenges involved with the daily operations of a museum. “We have limited resources. While we would like to have a huge, immersive experience for everybody, we can’t necessarily afford it and it’s not really our goal... We’re an educational facility. We’re not here to give “Wows!” even though we often do. We must walk that line carefully.” He said that because visitors often have skewed expectations and perhaps expect more of a “Theme Park” experience rather than one that is educational. Visiting a museum does not have to be a dry and dull experience. However, it is unrealistic for visitors to expect thrills as if they were at Kennywood Park or Dave and Buster’s.

Visitors often do not realize that the Carnegie Museum of Natural history is a nonprofit entity, that it is a charitable, educational organization, and that their memberships are charitable gifts. Like any entity that interacts with the general public visitors, members, and guests sometimes have unrealistic or inconsiderate demands. Many don’t realize that the employees do not have high salaries and could make more money elsewhere. That they choose to work there because of sincere passion for the organization, its mission, and the nonprofit sector overall. Visitors sometimes complain about trivial issues like the prices or payment issues. Sometimes visitors complain about things that the museum employees have no control over, such as the traffic in Oakland, and parking availability.

The pay is another one of drawbacks of the nonprofit sector. In many nonprofits, the salary and benefits are comparable to those in the private sector or government jobs. However, salaries in Mr. Sharwarko’s department start around \$40,000 per year and roughly double that

for those in senior or directing roles. The benefits and PTO are generous, but it isn't exactly a lucrative career. Most of the employees who apply and maintain lengthy employment with the museum do so because they are passionate about their careers at the museum and believe in its mission.

Interviewing Mr. Jonathan Sharwarko was an honor. He was a wonderful interviewee and further reinforces my own interest in the nonprofit sector. It is extremely rewarding to help people while also being able to make a living with a career that you are passionate about, rather than trying to make as much money as possible in a career that you simply tolerate. It was uplifting to meet someone in the field who is so passionate about their organization and his role in its operations. That is what is most important for me in my career aspirations. Material wealth is important to me in the sense I want my needs and basic desires to be fulfilled. Beyond that, material wealth simply is not important to me. If I won Powerball, I would give 90% of it away to charity and entities like the Hindu Jain Temple, where my family had been members since I was a toddler. If I had the resources, I would love to build water treatment facilities in India and other places of need. Due to my physical limitations, I would be honored to inspire others living with disabilities and to advocate for disability rights and accommodations. There is so much greed, hatred, indifference, etc. in the world and it is my life's mission to make a positive and lasting impact on society to combat the abundance of negativity in society.

