Docents in Museum Education
The Fairfield Museum and History Center is a non-profit educational institution chartered in 1903 as the Fairfield Historical Society by the State of Connecticut. Our new facility was created in 2007 and features engaging exhibitions, a research library, education center, and meeting hall overlooking Fairfield’s historic Town Green.

The Fairfield Museum’s vision is to use history to strengthen community and shape its future.
What is a Museum Docent?

The word **docent** comes from the Latin word **“docere”** to teach.

Docents are trained volunteers who provide education programs to museum visitors.

Fairfield Museum docents serve as a host, ambassador and educator.
Docents are ...

**Fairfield Museum Ambassadors:** Provide a welcoming atmosphere to visitors and serve as host/helper for the Museum’s programs.

**Interpreters / Educators:** Give visitors a better understanding of the history of Fairfield, our state and region in order to appreciate our role and place in the world.

**A Docent:**
- is a lifelong learner
- has a love of history, learning and exploring
- has good communication / public speaking skills
- is flexible and adaptable to visitors’ questions
- has a tolerance and respect for everyone’s point of view
Docents teach …

What Makes a Community? Walking Tour

Students from 2nd grade in Fairfield visit in the Fall to learn how a place can adapt to the needs of the community, beginning with Native American settlement and the English colonists.

On the tour, we explore the Town Green, the 1804 Academy Schoolhouse (shown above and at right), the 1780 Sun Tavern (1780), the Old Burying Ground and other historic sites that surround the Green.
What Makes a Community? & Town Green Walking Tour

Walk by the houses that survived the Burning of Fairfield by the British in 1779.

See the Town Hall, the location of the Fairfield County Seat, where lawyers and the accused awaited judgment and settled disputes.

Stand in front of the 1780 Sun Tavern, where George Washington visited.
Docents teach …

**Colonial Life**

**Town Green Walking Tour**

These tours for grades 4 – 8 emphasize Fairfield’s role in the American Revolution. Most groups visit in the spring.

Students view a portion of the *Creating Community* gallery and a map of Fairfield’s original four squares.
Docents teach …

Colonial Life Program

Some schools visit for an extended day, including Weston 5th Grade, Newtown 7th Grade and schools from Bridgeport and Norwalk.

Docents conduct the Colonial Life Walking Tour. Students also participate in other activities in the Fairfield Museum and in the Old Burying Ground, led by Education Staff.
Docents teach and assist …

The 1750 Ogden House

This saltbox house, owned by the Fairfield Museum, was built in 1750 for David Ogden at the time of his marriage to Jane Sturges. For the next 125 years it was home for the Ogden family in the farming and coastal shipping town of Fairfield. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 1750 Ogden House was restored in the early 20th century and provides a glimpse into the life of a middle-class colonial family in the 18th century.
The 1750 Ogden House

In addition to school tours, the Ogden House is open to the public on Sundays from June – September from 1pm – 4pm.

The house is used for Summer Camp and other programs such as Candlelight at the Ogden in December, CT Open House Day in June and Honey Day in September.
The 1750 Ogden House

The Fairfield Garden Club maintains the kitchen garden with period correct plantings. The Garden Club also initiated a honey project, installing beehives nearby. Honey from the Ogden House is collected, jarred and sold in the Museum Shop.
Events & Programs

Docents and other volunteers also assist with presenting the Burning of Fairfield Walking Tour in July, Legends & Hauntings Walking Tours in October and other museum events, exhibit openings and programs.
What is required? What is the commitment?

In order to remain active and informed, docents must make every effort to regularly attend meetings and training sessions. In addition, docents need to:

- Be physically capable of walking and standing for length of tours
- Read and study materials on history and education
- Commit to conducting tours for at least one year
- Be an active and engaged learner!
Training

Training consists of workshops, tours of the historic buildings and properties, readings and discussions. All of our docents love to learn and to share. Docents are encouraged to share any news, books or readings at our regular meetings.

After the workshops and reading materials are read and reviewed, docents-in-training shadow other docents for either the Walking Tours (Fall and Spring) or the Ogden House Tours (Spring and Summer).

Docents-in-training shadow other docents and practice giving tours by taking sections. The docent and docent-in-training work as a team to conduct the tour. Training also includes how to manage groups, keeping your group engaged and other tips on presenting a successful tour.
Field Trips

In addition to training, docents also participate in yearly field trips, which have included:

- The Tenement Museum, New York City
- Litchfield Historical Society
- Guilford, CT Historic Sites
Professional Development

Docents are also invited to ongoing professional development workshops and lectures.

Summer Institute:
The Witchcraft Trials in CT
July, 2014

Teaching about Slavery in New England, February 2014
Allegra di Bonaventura, assistant dean at Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, author of
For Adam’s Sake: A Family Saga in Colonial New England.

Teaching Civil Rights in a Global World, January, 2013
Dr. Yohuru R. Williams, Associate Professor of African American History, Fairfield University.

Fairfield Museum Education Programs serve over 5,500 students from Pre-K through Grade 12, adult learners and educators from throughout region.

We hope that you join us!

For more information, contact Christine Jewell, Director of Education at 203-259-1598.