

*This month's Muse-ing comes from Melody Okapal, who recently graduated from the University of Delaware with a B.S. in Biology and a minor in Museum Studies.*

Many people believe that in order to get a museum job in this day and age, you need to go to graduate school. I have no intention of going to graduate school anytime soon, and perhaps not at all. I know that there are jobs and careers in the museum field for people like me.

I graduated in May of 2022 with a degree in biology and a minor in museum studies. Because of my background and education, I am applying to a range of jobs, from museum technician to interpretive park ranger to marine science educator. So far, I have applied to 17 different positions. I use websites such as USAJOBS and the Natural Resources Job Board from Texas A&M University. I also contact potential employers directly after seeing openings on their website. I keep track of my application status, job descriptions, pay and other benefits, and locations of the jobs in a spreadsheet.

I take time to fill out the applications with care. If the applications have attached questionnaires or surveys, I read them closely and fully answer every question. If one of my answers doesn't seem ideal, I try to frame it in a positive light. If they ask me about a specific set of knowledge that I lack, I may respond "I have no formal training in this topic, but it is something that excites me and I am an enthusiastic and quick learner." After that, I tailor my resume to the job description, and contact people who I would like to use as references. Don't be afraid to reach out to old professors or employers to ask for a recommendation.

Once I've applied for a job, the next big task is preparing for an interview. I write down questions that I have about the job in my notebook. I also review any and all experience that I have that relates to the job description, even if it was in a non-museum setting. Working in food service taught me customer service skills, working in data entry I gained an attention to detail and computer skills, and working summer camps and volunteering with Special Olympics I learned how to teach diverse audiences. Before an interview, it is also helpful to come up with some practice scenario-based questions and how you would deal with them. For example, if you're applying to be a museum educator who runs field trip programs, they may ask you if you have ever taught a diverse group of students or what you would do if a student repeatedly disrupts your lesson. Your goal is to prove that you can deal with situations that may arise during the job and that you're able to think on your feet.

I take every interview offered. I want to acquire as much information as possible and keep all doors open. After getting all of the information, I can decide what my answer will be should I get a job offer. If I get an offer and I no longer want the position, I write a short and sweet email that basically says "Thank you so much for this opportunity, and for taking the time to interview me. Unfortunately, I am unable to accept the offer at this time."

Most importantly, I've learned that even when you think you're perfect for the position, you may not get the offer. I got rejected from a place where I interned in high school. I never imagined

that they would reject me. I was flabbergasted. But I don't think rejection is necessarily a bad thing, it gives you practice in applying to jobs and may let you know what skills you need to work on. I asked if they had any advice for me, and used it as a learning opportunity. In the meantime, I'll be working at the Iron Hill Science Center honing my skills and applying to jobs that strike my fancy.