IAPA Chapultepec Prize

Sunday, April 15, 2018

Thank you! Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I’m Scott Williams, the president and chief operating officer of the Newseum.

On behalf of all of us at the Newseum, I’m very grateful to the Inter American Press Association for honoring our work with the 2018

Chapultepec Grand Prize. The award is for outstanding leadership and educational work to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of a free press and the First Amendment…and that’s what we at the Newseum get to do every single day, seven days a week.

This is a very fitting time for me to get to share a little more about the Newseum with you as well, because the museum opened on Pennsylvania Avenue ten years ago, on April 11, 2008. Since that day, more than eight million visitors from around the world have experienced our exhibits, our programs and our education initiatives in person at our museum, while we’ve reached hundreds of millions online at Newseum dot org.

Those of you who have visited the Newseum know that, as you stand in front of our building, with the United States Capitol to the right and the White House to the left, you read the powerful words of the First Amendment on a 74-foot-tall stone tablet… “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

That tablet was on full display a few weeks ago as hundreds of thousands of people of all ages, led by the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, exercised their First Amendment freedoms and participated in the March For Our Lives.

The day before the march, five Marjory Stoneman Douglas students appeared in a panel discussion at the Newseum with Margaret Brennan, host of CBS News’ “Face the Nation,” to share their experiences as student journalists who covered the unfolding events for their high school newspaper, *The Eagle Eye*.

Inside our museum that day, like every day, visitors experienced the story of news, the role of a free press in major events in history, and how those core freedoms of the First Amendment — religion, speech, press, assembly and petition — apply to their own lives and in their own hometowns.

We execute our mission through exhibits, programs and education.

I thought I would quickly share a few examples of those so you can get an idea of how we do what we do.

First, exhibits. I’ll be sharing a video with you in a moment that will provide a short tour of the Newseum, but for now, I want to give you a peak behind the curtain, especially for any of you who have not been able to visit in person. Considered one of the most interactive museums in the world, the Newseum has seven levels with fifteen galleries and fifteen theaters. Permanent exhibits include the Nine Eleven Gallery, which displays the broadcast antennae from the top of the World Trade Center; the Berlin Wall Gallery, whose eight concrete sections are one of the largest displays of the original wall outside Germany; and the Pulitzer Prize Photographs Gallery, which features photographs from every Pulitzer Prize–winning entry dating back to 1942.

The Newseum’s Journalists Memorial pays tribute to reporters, photographers and broadcasters who have died reporting the news. Today, the names of 2,305 individuals from around the world are etched on the glass panels of the soaring, two-story structure. The memorial is rededicated each year to add the names of journalists who lost their lives on the job in the preceding year.

I’m often asked what makes the Newseum different from other museums. And one of the answers to that question is quite simple. Storytelling. There are many individuals who work on the different aspects of the exhibits visitors experience at the Newseum, and most of them have, in one way or another, journalism in their backgrounds. At the Newseum we always start with the story.

And there are hundreds of them at the Newseum.

In the News History Gallery alone, visitors experience stories that explore a variety of themes including media credibility and objectivity, technological advances, diversity in newsrooms, war reporting, the limits of press freedom and, added just this year, fake news.

This gallery tells the story of the people and the machines that spread the news and the context in which they did it. This gallery includes stories from Watergate to yellow journalism and muckrakers to Saturday Night Live and from The New York Times to Telemundo.

And the stories for visitors to experience at the Newseum change every single day, because each morning we receive around 1,500 newspaper front pages from around the world. Not only can some of them be viewed both inside and in front of the Newseum, they can all be found on our website at Newseum dot org and on our app.

Education is another important way we execute our mission. Our Newseum Institute is the education and outreach partner of the Newseum. The Institute includes the First Amendment Center, the Religious Freedom Center and NewseumED, an online learning platform for teachers and students. You can sign up for free access at NewseumEd dot org and check it out for yourself.

The third way we execute our mission is through our public programs. In 2017, the Newseum hosted more than 135 programs on topics including politics, civil rights, privacy, fake news, religious liberty, sports reporting, photo journalism, media and technology…and that’s just a few of the topics we explored. Recent special guests have included authors, celebrities, journalists, photographers, and those who work in public service, including several former presidents and vice presidents and a former first lady who was also a presidential candidate. I’ll let you figure out who that was.

As a non-partisan champion of freedom, the Newseum has become a convener where ideas can be heard, discussed, examined, debated and explored…something that is all too rare these days.

I truly hope all of you come to visit us at the Newseum as my guest so you can see how we use exhibits, education and programs to champion a free press and the five Freedoms of the First Amendment. Until then, here’s a 6-minute orientation video that takes you inside the Newseum and shows just a few of our exhibits.

Again, all of us at the Newseum are greatly honored and proud of this award and we’re grateful we can join you in promoting and protecting freedom of the press and the public’s right to be informed. Thank you.