

## Training Future Museum Leaders

As the name implies, VMFA's Museum Leaders in Training (M.LiT) program teaches students about the inner workings of the museum—from planning exhibitions to conserving works of art. However, the skills learned in this program have a far wider application than just working in a museum.

"We want students to leave feeling confident in communicating with their superiors and knowing that their voices are valued. We want them to be able to commit to a project, manage difficult schedules, and follow through," says Jessica Bauserman, Youth and Family Programs Educator, who oversees the program.

For 8th- to 12th-grade students in the Richmond area, this program alternates between two curricula: conservation and curatorial/exhibition design. During the intensive 12- to 14-week program, students work together, and with VMFA staff, to complete a project that mirrors actual work done within the museum.

In 2014, students conceptualized and curated an exhibition of student artworks for the Memorial Foundation for Children Teaching Gallery. Last spring, M.LiTers (as the students are known) studied conservation through a series of labs. Working with curators and educators, the students produced microsites with conservation stories about 10 objects in VMFA's permanent collection, including the Caligula statue and the Worsham-Rockefeller Bedroom. This year they are working on an exhibition using prints of actual works in the collection, which will be displayed in the Art Education Center.

It's "an interactive experience that includes behind-the-scenes information about the museum that gives you real-life skills," says one past participant.

The impetus for M.LiT came from members of the museum's Teacher Advisory Council who expressed a need for programs for secondary students who are interested in art but not necessarily artists. Launched in 2010 with support from Walmart, the program attracted only a small group of students that first year. But as these newly minted leaders returned to school and told their friends about their experience, M.LiT, which is now sponsored in part by Wells Fargo, grew by leaps and bounds. The acceptance



M.LiT students gain valuable experience that helps prepare them for museum careers and the future.

process is now highly competitive for the 30 to 40 spots open each session.

Clayton Storm Hall, now a senior in the Fashion Design Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, attended M.LiT in 2010 and 2011. "It really sets you apart from others because you already have some form of professional experience that a lot of your peers don't have," he says. Using the skills he learned in the program, Hall now works as a contractor in VMFA's Education Department while he finishes his degree. VMFA also hires four interns from the M.LiT program to work in the Education Department each summer.

Though students reap important benefits from the program, Bauserman explains, they also give a great deal back. "Because we want the museum to feel more accessible for that age group, we talk to the students to see how they, as an audience, would like to be served by a museum," she says.

While M.LiT's primary mission is to mold museum leaders, the program is achieving something even more important: Empowering students with leadership skills they can use in every aspect of their lives.

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## CHINAFEST

The Chinese New Year is based on the lunar calendar and begins anywhere from January 21 to February 20. This year, the Chinese New Year is Monday, February 8, and VMFA celebrates *ChinaFest: Year of the Fire Monkey* on Saturday, February 13, from 11 am to 3 pm. Here are some activities you can enjoy at home.

### Red Ribbon Dance Instrument

An integral part of many festivals in China is the Red Ribbon Dance. The movement of the ribbon flowing around the dancers emulates rainbows or a flying dragon. The red color represents good luck, passion, and happiness.



Create a red ribbon dance instrument of your own and practice this ancient art form!

Materials: Wooden stick or dowel rod, about 8 inches long; red ribbon, 3 feet. or longer; double-sided tape or glue.

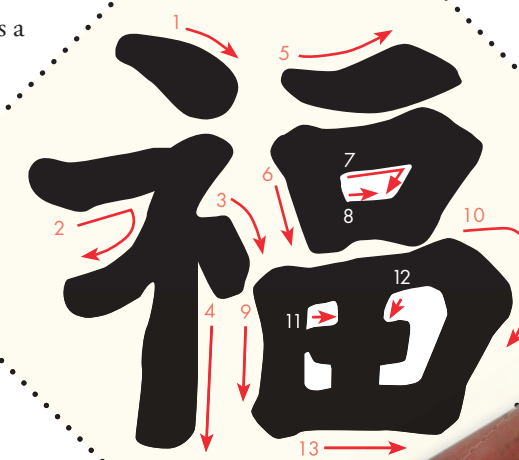
Tape or glue one end of your ribbon around the circumference of the dowel rod on one end and roll the ribbon up so that it wraps around the end of the dowel. Then, hold the other end of the dowel and wave it in the air so that the ribbon unfurls. Try making shapes by waving the ribbon above your head.

### New Year Banners

Displaying banners and signs with messages of good luck and fortune is a longstanding tradition for Chinese people during the Lunar New Year. One of the most popular Chinese characters is the character *fú*, meaning good fortune. It is often shown in gold on a diamond-shaped red background and hung upside-down.

To create your own banner, take a blank, square piece of paper and turn it on a diagonal. Use the brushstrokes shown to the right as a guide to create the Chinese character *fú*, using a pen, pencil, or even a bamboo brush and ink. Cut out your finished square and post it upside-down in your room for good luck and happiness in the New Year!

For more activities, visit VMFA's *Beyond the Walls* interactive website or download the mobile app.



ChinaFest: Year of the Fire Monkey Family Event is sponsored by

