

SHAKER MUSEUM | MOUNT LEBANON

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shaker Museum Annual Benefit to Honor Local Shaker Scholars Jerry Van Grant and Sharon Duane Koomler

(NEW LEBANON, NY) March 20, 2018 - Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon will honor Shaker scholars Jerry Van Grant and Sharon Duane Koomler at the museum's 2018 Annual Benefit. Grant and Koomler have been selected for this honor for their innumerable contributions to the study of the American Shakers and their many years of service to the museum. The benefit, which will be held on the grounds of the historic Mount Lebanon site in New Lebanon, NY on the evening of August 18, 2018, is the organization's largest fundraising event of the year. An Honorary Committee, which is composed of Martha Clarke, Senator Kathleen Marchione, Frances McDormand, Eileen Myles, Rick Rector, Suzzy Roche, Colleen Teal, Alfred Uhry, and Kate Valk, is united in encouraging others to attend what promises to be a magical evening. Invitations will be mailed in June, but interested supporters can make a donation now in order to join the Benefit Committee and ensure their seating at the event.

Upon making the Board's announcement, Board Chair Paul Cassidy stated, "Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon would not exist in its current form without the many years of dedication of these two incredible individuals. Jerry and Sharon are central pillars of the local, museum, and Shaker communities. We are proud to honor them, and we anticipate an overwhelming response from so many individuals who have been touched by their generosity over the years."

Jerry V. Grant has been serving as the Director of Collections and Research at Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon (formerly Shaker Museum & Library) since 1987. His interest in the Shakers began in the mid-1970s when he began researching and replicating Shaker oval boxes. Prior to his joining the museum, Grant served as an historic interpreter, oval box maker, librarian, and administrator with Hancock Shaker Village. Grant holds an undergraduate degree from Michigan State University in history, anthropology, and secondary education, a Masters of Library and Information Science from the State University of New York at Albany, and has additional coursework in rare book librarianship at Syracuse and Columbia Universities. Grant is author of *Shaker Furniture Makers* (1989) and *Noble But Plain: The Second Shaker Meetinghouse at Mount Lebanon, New York* (1994) and a contributor to *Shaker: Function – Purity – Perfection* (2014). He has lectured on Shaker topics for 40 years.

Sharon Duane Koomler received a Bachelor of Arts in Folklore and American History from Indiana University and a Master of Arts in Folk Studies and Historic Preservation from Western Kentucky University. She served as Director of Education at the Shaker Museum at South Union, Kentucky; Curator of Collections at Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield Massachusetts; Curator and Director of the Museum at Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York; and has consulted at Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky and Canterbury Shaker Village, New Hampshire. Sharon has lectured widely on Shaker material culture and life and published numerous articles and books on facets of Shaker history.

On being selected as this year's honorees, Grant and Koomler remarked: "We are humbled and pleased



Jerry V. Grant and Sharon Duane Koomler in their printing press studio, Grant House Press, in New Lebanon, NY

to be chosen as honored guests at this year's Gala and to be part of an institution that preserves and shares the contributions made by Shakers to American social history and society. Our life's work has been learning about Shakers and it's a privilege to work with Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon.”

Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon is dedicated to preserving the history of the Shakers, including their furniture and architecture as well as their values of inclusion, innovation, integrity, and conviction. It stewards the historic site in New Lebanon, New York, which is open year-round for recreation and self-guided tours, and offers tours, exhibitions, and public programs seasonally. The museum also has a campus in Old Chatham, New York, open year-round by appointment, where the administrative offices, collections, library, and archives are housed. The museum's collection of over 56,000 Shaker items is the most comprehensive collection of its kind in the world. Please visit shakerml.org for more information.

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