

IN THE SWING

HEATHER CAMPION, the first female chief executive of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library Foundation, brings an American legacy up to date.



ON THE HEELS OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

of the passing of JFK, native Bostonian and former White House staffer Heather Campion was recruited to help take the JFK Presidential Library and Museum to its next phase. “While my predecessors were focused on building this institution and magnificent library and museum here in Boston, my goal is more outward,” she says. Campion served on the JFK Library Board for 10 years before taking up her current post, and now works to connect John F. Kennedy’s vision and ideals to today’s world.

Located on Dorchester Bay, the museum teaches visitors about the leadership and significant influence of President John F. Kennedy, from the space race to progress in civil rights to the establishment of the Peace Corps. “Learning about President Kennedy informs all of us for the future,” Campion says.

“There are now only 20% of Americans with a living memory of President Kennedy,” she says, “and yet he remains the most popular modern American president.” Still, relaying historical heritage to today’s tech-savvy audience is no easy feat. The museum was built with more traditional displays featuring very little technology, and Campion has worked to amp it up with interactive exhibits and a digital archive of enhanced films, photos and documents. These upgrades allow the museum to tell JFK’s inspiring story in a way it has never been told before.

Campion’s efforts aim to share JFK’s legacy in different ways, and reach new audiences, both online and off. The library recently launched the Twitter feed @JFKsaid, which posts a new quote every day from President Kennedy relevant to what’s happening in the world today. It currently has more than 34,000 followers.

Special to the museum this summer, President Kennedy’s golf cart is on display for the first time in 50 years. This temporary exhibit—Presidential Getaway: JFK on Cape Cod—gives unique insight into Kennedy’s love of life at his Hyannisport retreat. Visitors can see his authentic golf clubs and golf balls, and even learn Arnold Palmer’s opinion of JFK’s back swing.

“President Kennedy never wanted to be filmed playing golf,” Campion reveals, “but he

JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Columbia Point, Dorchester, 866-535-1960, jfklibrary.org

allowed himself to be filmed once.” He wanted to send film of himself to Arnold Palmer for pointers, but Palmer never saw it until recently. “In 2011, the film was shown to Palmer and he analyzed JFK’s swing. We have that film, and those comments are in the display as well.” With brand-new ways to get to know President Kennedy, it’s exciting to see how the JFK Library is evolving. —Samantha DiMauro