



The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
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Donors Sustaining, Advancing Colonial Williamsburg During Pandemic

Foundation Experienced Fundraising Successes, Expanded Digital Programming and Completion of Art Museums Expansion During 2020

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (March 9, 2021) — The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation received \$62 million in gifts during 2020, including a record \$19 million designated to the Colonial Williamsburg Fund. During the year recently completed, fundraising activity flourished despite challenges encountered by the COVID-19 pandemic which required many on-site visits and programs to be limited, canceled or postponed.

“Words cannot express how grateful we are for Colonial Williamsburg’s extraordinary donors who continue to demonstrate their appreciation for this national treasure,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of Colonial Williamsburg. “Their financial support, encouragement and participation has been truly inspiring and enabled us not only to sustain our educational mission and core capabilities during an unprecedented time, but in fact to greatly expand our work in important and exciting ways. They deeply understand the foundation’s national significance and our potential to reach people with thought-provoking and meaningful experiences.”

The strong base of donor support during 2020 is viewed as a positive indicator by Colonial Williamsburg leadership including Fleet and Chief Development Officer Earl Granger.

“Philanthropy lends life to our best ideas,” said Granger. “In 2021 and beyond, we will continue to partner with visionary members of the Colonial Williamsburg community to pursue innovative ways to realize our extraordinary potential. During 2020, we made great strides in digital education and engagement, greatly enhanced the Historic Area and completed the major expansion of the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg.”

Despite limitations to on-site activities and operations, a significantly expanded digital footprint reached a broad-based international audience. New virtual programming fulfilled the teaching and engagement mission of Colonial Williamsburg, with more than 13.5 million video views and almost 110 million digital impressions.

The Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute of Colonial Williamsburg, which traditionally holds onsite sessions, also found many new ways to engage teachers during the pandemic.

“Similar to what teachers do in the classroom when experiencing a challenge, we faced it and found ways to overcome it,” said Beth Kelly, vice president of education, research and historical interpretation. “We were able to support more than 1,600 teachers, and through them almost 140,000 students, from over 40 states with online professional development that met historical content and instructional needs both for the classroom and online. This year more than any year

with current social and political unrest, teachers needed ways to teach a complete history of the American Revolution and the founding of America.”

Kelly said that although teachers and students were unable to visit onsite, online professional development was supported by Colonial Williamsburg content experts, staff and classroom master teachers.

“It is part of the Teacher Institute’s strategic plan to reach teachers onsite, online and offsite,” said Kelly. “With COVID-19, we were able to move forward in piloting new online programs.”

Several projects that are enhancing Colonial Williamsburg’s efforts to disseminate complete stories have also reached broad audiences by garnering national headlines recently.

In spring 2020, Colonial Williamsburg began exploring the South Nassau Street site of First Baptist Church, one of the oldest churches in America founded by Black worshippers. The project, a partnership with the church’s congregation and descendant community as well as the Let Freedom Ring Foundation, is entirely donor funded and has received \$3 million in support.

Last month Colonial Williamsburg and William & Mary announced establishment of the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative, a joint project that will ensure that current and future generations learn about the complex history of what is likely the oldest extant building in the United States dedicated to the education of enslaved and free Black children. The partnership calls for the relocation of the Bray-Digges House from William & Mary’s campus to the Historic Area, where it will become the 89th original structure restored by the foundation. The project has received a \$400,000 grant from the Gladys and Franklin Clark Foundation.

During spring 2020, Colonial Williamsburg completed a 65,000-square-foot addition to the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum was completed last spring, expanding museum gallery space by 25 percent.

“The project has revolutionized the art museums guest experience,” said Ron Hurst, vice president for museums, preservation and historic resources. “A prominent new entrance brings visitors directly into the main building where they find new galleries, more collections, a light-filled café and museum store, and an updated auditorium. Behind the scenes, new mechanical systems keep the collections safe and our guests comfortable.”

Enhancements for the Historic Area and the expansion of the Art Museums were priority areas for the \$600 million Campaign for Colonial Williamsburg that concluded in December 2019. A virtual celebration of the campaign’s conclusion is planned for later this year.

Going forward, Fleet said that fundraising efforts will focus on supporting preservation, education and civic engagement.

“Just as donors made so much possible in 2020, they have sustained Colonial Williamsburg for nearly 100 years,” said Fleet. “We will celebrate them as we reach this milestone for the foundation. We also plan to engage new visitors and donors who will join us in our efforts.”

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia's 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center, pools, retail stores and gardens. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization; philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and operations sustain its educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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