Christy S. Coleman, in First Year as Executive Director, Leads Museums in Unprecedented Times

It’s been quite a year for Christy S. Coleman, new executive director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. Within two months of taking the helm in January, Coleman led the agency while its museums were forced to close amid the COVID-19 pandemic and worked with leadership to take steps to reopen safely for the summer. The unprecedented circumstances at the start of the tourism season led to budget adjustments, temporary staff furloughs and alterations to museum operations. Through it all, Coleman has worked to acquaint herself with the agency and offer innovation moving forward.

FOCUSED’ Special Exhibition Leads 2021 Special Programs

In collaboration with Virginia Indian tribal communities, Jamestown Settlement will present “FOCUSED: A Century of Virginia Indian Resilience,” a yearlong special exhibition opening January 29, 2021.

The special exhibition, originally scheduled to debut earlier this year, was among the special programs adjusted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. “FOCUSED” is principally a photographic exhibition drawing from collections held by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, as well as images from anthropologist Frank Speck in 1910s to 1930s, the work of award-winning Baltimore Sun photographer A. Aubrey Bodine in the 1940s and 1950s, and portraits by contemporary American Indian photographers.

Christy S. Coleman is the fourth executive director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and, in her first year, leading the agency through a historic pandemic.

This year, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation acquired a rare 1627 edition of Captain John Smith’s “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles” for future display at Jamestown Settlement.

“This Generall Historie,” first published in 1624 and reprinted five times by 1632 as a result of its popularity, contains Smith’s accounts of the founding of Jamestown in 1607, his capture and rescue through the intervention of Pocahontas, observations of the time he spent on his journey to Virginia and while there in 1606-1609, and explorations of the New England coast in 1610-1617.

This bound volume of “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles: with names of the Adventurers, Planters, and Governours from their first beginning Ano: 1584 to this present 1626” – its formal title – features four fold-out plates: a map of Virginia with five vignettes from Smith’s adventure, a map of Virginia illustrating the Jamestown settlement and principal Indian towns, a map of the Summer Isles (Bermuda), and a map of coastal New England. It also contains the bookplate of Benedict Leonard Calvert, second son of the 4th Lord Baltimore, who served as Governor of Maryland in 1727-1731.

This volume joins more than 1,500 objects and 200,000 archaeological artifacts in the Jamestown Settlement portion of the collection, including 16th- and 17th-century portraits, documents, furnishings, ceremonial and decorative material culture, tools and weapons.


New Executive Director (continued from page 1)

Coleman is the fourth executive director in the Foundation’s history. She is a nationally respected public historian who has built a career in museums and historic places.

Coleman has been recognized nationally and statewide for her leadership this year during challenging times and institutional change. She opened an honorary doctoral degree from William & Mary in February, and the Virginia Professional Communicators Newsmaker of the Year award in April, both for her work to make museum experiences meaningful to diverse communities. In August, Virginia Business named her among the state’s top leaders in “Virginia 500.”

“My goal is to work in partnership with JYF’s board, staff, donors, volunteers and diverse stakeholders to build on this strong foundation left by my predecessor,” Coleman said earlier this year. “I also want to tell powerfully relevant history that is inclusive and compelling.”

She wants to further tell full and inclusive stories of the past through engaging and meaningful visitor experiences, building on the success of diverse storylines shared during the 2019 Commemoration and in former special exhibitions. In January, Jamestown Settlement will open a yearlong exhibit exploring Virginia’s indigenous people through a contemporary lens in “FOCUSED: A Century of Virginia Indian Resilience.”

“From colonialism to independence, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation tells the stories of the 17th and 18th centuries very well,” Coleman said. “I want to look more at the convergence of the three cultures at Jamestown and the rich stories of this period through the Revolutionary War.”

“Christy Coleman’s professional accomplishments and perspective are invaluable in writing the next chapter of JYF’s long and storied history,” said Del. M. Kirkland (Kirk) Cox, former chairman of the Foundation Board of Trustees.

Benson H. Dendy III, chairman of last year’s Executive Director Search Committee underscored her remarkable record of success and diverse experiences. “She has a national and international profile that will help bring even greater attention to Jamestown and Yorktown and make the Foundation an influential contributor to the timely conversation about how to make our history accurate, engaging and useful for our times,” he said.

A Williamsburg Native

Raised in Williamsburg, Va., Coleman graduated from Bruton High School. She initially enrolled at William & Mary and then transferred to Hampton University, where she earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. She began her career at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and served in a number of roles there, including director of African-American interpretations and presentations and later director of historic programs, overseeing all programming and tours in the Historic Area.

Coleman became president and CEO of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, Mich., in 1999. Nine years later, she was named the president and CEO of the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar in Richmond, Va. She helped coordinate the 2013 merger of the American Civil War Center and the Museum of the Confederacy to create the American Civil War Museum.

Coleman has served on multiple local commissions and national boards, including the American Association for State and Local History and the American Alliance of Museums, the Virginia African American History Education Commission and the Monument Avenue Commission in Richmond.

Coleman, who is an accomplished screenwriter and public speaker, including serving as a historic consultant on the Focus Features film “Harriet” and commentator on The History Channel miniseries “Grant,” has received numerous awards and honors.

In 2019, she received the Humanitarian Award from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, an Outstanding Women Award from the Richmond YMCA and the Ukrop Community Vision Award from Leadership Metro Richmond. In 2018, she was named to the Richmond Power List by Style Magazine and as one of the “31 People Who Are Changing the South” by TIME Magazine.

Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Welcomes New Board Leadership

The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees recently elected Del. Kenneth R. Plum as chairman and Del. Delores L. McQuinn as chairman at its virtual November meeting. Plum succeeds longtime chairman Del. M. Kirkland (Kirk) Cox, and McQuinn follows Frank B. Atkinson as treasurer.

The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors elected Sue H. Gerdelman as president, succeeding the late Lt. Gov. John Hager.

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam recently appointed Connie Kincheloe of Culpeper and Diane Leopold of Midlothian to the Board of Trustees in October, along with the reappointments of Anedra W. Bourne of Richmond and Daun S. Hester of Norfolk.

Nine members of the Virginia General Assembly also were appointed this year to Board of Trustees. Members of the House of Delegates include Betsy B. Carr of Richmond, Speaker Eileen Filler Corn of Fairfax (ex officio), Hyland F. Fowler, Jr. of Hanover County, C.E. Hayes, Jr. of Chesapeake, Michael P. Mullin of Newport News, and Luke E. Torian of Dumfries (ex officio).

Senators include Mamie E. Locke of Hampton, L. Louise Lucas of Portsmouth (ex officio), and Monty Mason of Williamsburg. Senators Emmett W. Hanger, Jr. of Mt. Solon, Janet D. Howell of Reston (ex officio), and Thomas K. Norment, Jr. of Williamsburg also will continue their service on the Board of Trustees.

They join new member Jeffrey B. Trammell of Washington, D.C., and reappointed members Suzanne O. Flippo of Glen Allen and Professor Ervin L. Jordan, Jr. of Charlottesville, who were all appointed by Governor Ralph S. Northam in December 2019.

The board is comprised of General Assembly members, state officials, and gubernatorial and board appointees.
JYF Museums Respond to COVID-19, Reopen Safely to Visitors

On the eve of a promising tourism season on March 14, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation was forced to temporarily close its museums to support public health mandates to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Following health and safety guidelines by the Virginia Governor’s Office, the Jamestown Settlement and the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown were able to adapt operations to reopen safely to the public on June 24.

During the temporary closure, many staff worked safely in teams of two to maintain the museums’ grounds and living-history areas, monitor the artifact collection, pay finances, renovate the Jamestown Settlement gift shop and lobby restrooms, and maintain the technology and network to support other staff working from home.

Along with enhanced signage and a health and safety video, the agency implemented new safety protocols, including requiring protective masks indoors, limiting capacities in the indoor gallery exhibits and outdoor living-history areas, converting tickets to online sales, installing plexiglass around customer service counters, and enhancing cleaning measures.

Paid visitation for the year continued to fluctuate through the summer and fall, with summer visitation accounting for about half of a typical summer to a spike over the Labor Day weekend showing 90-percent of normal visitation. Fall visitation, typically bustling with school groups on field trips, dropped to about half. Special events and programs designed to support homeschool, families and virtual learning experiences helped bolster in-person visits to the museums, as well as the extensions of two special exhibitions, the 18th National Exhibition of the American Society of Marine Artists at Jamestown Settlement and “Forgotten Soldier.”

“We hope our special events and overall museum experiences – spacious galleries, outdoor living-history areas and gift shops – will give visitors a reason to visit our museums and locals to return with family and friends,” said Frank N. Stovall, Deputy Executive Director for Administration.

In order to address the financial impacts of COVID-19, in 2020, the Board of Trustees Executive Committee implemented cost-saving measures in April to mitigate expected losses in earned revenues in the 2020 fiscal year budget, as well as to address unknowns in the 2021 budget.

Among the measures to fill a $2 million funding gap in the 2020 fiscal year that ended June 30, was the temporary furlough of 221 part-time staff and a temporary workforce reduction for 152 full-time staff; a mix of furloughs and unpaid time off, through June 20, 2021. Additional spending reductions, including freezing new positions and staff compensation, were identified to balance the previous year’s budget.

More than half of the agency’s annual operating budget, adjusted to $17.7 million from July 1 through June 30, is appropriated by the General Assembly while the other half is generated through admissions revenue and concessions from the gift shops and cafes.

The agency also receives annual support from its non-profit private affiliates, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Inc. and the Jamestown-Yorktown Educational Trust, which were impacted by the pandemic. The agency received $39,000 in state funds from the federal CARES Act, which supported safety equipment, such as masks, gloves and face shields, cleaning supplies, signage and social distancing markers and a health and safety video.

Donors Support Museums through COVID-19 Impact Fund

Gifts to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Inc. not only serve as an important source of revenue for the museums’ most pressing needs, they are helping bridge funding gaps due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the museums’ temporary closure earlier this year.

Through a new COVID-19 Impact Fund, donors have expressed generous support during the museums’ temporary closure this past spring and well after their reopening, giving support at many levels and making multiple gifts to raise the bar toward a year-end fundraising goal. Since March, donors have contributed more than $220,000, including new gifts and grants, as well as re-designations of prior year grants.

“These generous gifts, coupled with funding through the federal CARES Act and the Annual Fund, enabled the Foundation to continue its educational mission while ensuring the safety of visitors to engage people with living-history interpretation, retain its core staff, and deliver an extensive menu of virtual education and online public programs about early American history,” said Julie Westhafer Basic, senior director of Development. “We are grateful for our loyal donors and the positive impact they make on our museums and educational mission.”

Donations play a vital role in the telling of our nation’s history at both museums, and provides resources for the Foundation’s most essential needs: engaging museum galleries, dynamic outdoor living-history areas and educational resources that expand beyond the footprint of the classroom – now, online and at home. Among the needs, funds have helped underwrite “History At Home” virtual programming, the creation of a temporary distance learning studio, equipment and technology, and support wages for living-history interpreters and educators to deliver core programs.

Despite the challenges of 2020, museum staff – historical interpreters, curators, educators and others – have been able to cultivate history to new audiences at home in dynamic, immersive and exciting ways. Thanks to the support of donors, the Foundation is poised to weather this challenging environment and flourish throughout 2021. Support the museums at historyisfun.org/donate.
Virtual Museum Experiences, Online Education Resources & Living-History Webcasts Reach At-Home Audiences

While visitors were unable to visit the museums in person this spring, Jamestown Settlement and the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown offered a multitude of online resources to visit the museums virtually through apps, blogs, interactives, videos, historical demonstrations, live webcasts and a series of curriculum-based lesson plans for educators and parents with students learning at home.

History at Home – launched a week after the museums temporarily closed to the public – continues to offer access to some of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation’s most enriching content sharing insight to stories of 17th- and 18th-century Virginia to connect online viewers with the museums’ educational mission.

The fully integrated marketing initiative, bolstered by paid digital advertising to reach audiences in the mid-Atlantic region and print advertising for local audiences, has received national media attention in syndicated news articles and blogs covering at-home educational resources, and resulted in 3 million website visits through December, a 15-percent increase over the previous year.

Existing online resources, including apps, interactives and videos, were compiled in one location on the website for general audiences and educators, and staff collaborated across the Foundation to develop new webcasts, blogs and tutorials.

Nearly 90 live educational webcasts were presented through December, offering live learning lessons on a variety of museum and historical topics, offering a chance to ask questions and interact with curators, historical interpreters and educators.

Robust efforts on organic social media generated more than 1,300 posts from March to September. Historical interpreters grew a Powhatan-style garden at home to transplant at the museum, built a wattle-and-daub structure, carved a dugout canoe, played period games, tied sailors’ knots and shared their love of history, all from home. At the museums, educators and historical interpreters taught young audiences how to make bread in a cloam oven, take care of historical animal breeds and heirloom plants, roll musket cartridges and how math and science are used to fire an artillery piece.

Curators wrote more than two dozen blogs about learning at home, pandemics of the past and offered a unique look at the museums and its collection. A History Happy Hour Libation Education Series webcast for adult viewers blended historical connections and highlighted a newly acquired 18th-century whiskey still.

Educators developed lesson plans and connected with teachers to help them engage their students in learning from home at the end of the academic year, and shifted into summer and fall to assist teachers in developing engaging content for the new school year.

Online resources, including new blogs, colonial recipes, coloring pages, crossword and word search puzzles, are available at historyisfun.org/at-home.

‘FOCUSED’ Special Exhibition Leads Lineup of Special Programs (continued from Page 1)

The yearlong exhibition will focus on the resiliency of the Virginia’s Indian population, from the passage and repeal of the Racial Integrity Act in 1924 to the contemporary efforts of 11 Virginia tribes to receive state and federal recognition. The exhibition will highlight themes central to Virginia Indian daily life, including the establishment and maintenance of Virginia Indian reservations and tribal lands, education, fishing and hunting, traditional crafts and cultural heritage.

Ten special events are slated for 2021, and event organizers are making adjustments to ensure health and safety protocols and social distancing. Several events were cancelled or modified this year, including a virtual lecture series at Jamestown Settlement.

Jamestown Settlement will offer “After Angelo” on February 27 with a day of music, song and storytelling honoring the legacy of Angelo, the first African woman named in Jamestown’s historical record. On March 20-21, Military Through the Ages will return after the military timeline event was cancelled earlier this year for the first time in its 36-year history.

Jamestown Day, which was offered virtually this year through artillery firings from the Susan Constant and live shots of the James River from a Powhatan-style dugout canoe, will resume at the museum on May 9.

The American Indian Intertribal Powwow is planned for October 9-10 at Jamestown Settlement, along with Family Frights on the evenings on October 22 and 23. At the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, special events will include Liberty Celebration on July 4 and Yorktown Victory Celebration on October 16.

For the holidays, Foods & Feasts of Colonial Virginia on November 26-27 and Christmastide in Virginia on December 19-31, round out the year’s planned events.
Museum Heroes Show Selfless Dedication to Support One Another & Community

While museum doors were temporarily closed to the public this past spring, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation staff showed selfless dedication to support one another and the community. From uplifting expressions of support to caring for animals and tending gardens and grounds, staff used their talents in new ways to help others in need.

Sewing for a Cause

Historical tailors put aside mending regimental coats and doublets at the museums to create fabric masks while working at home to donate to those in the community working the frontlines of the pandemic.

Chris Daley, manager of Historical Clothing Services, and his team of tailors produced an estimated 500 masks, which were distributed to least eight Virginia hospitals or medical facilities, as well as to doctors at the University of Wisconsin and St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital in Bryan, Tx. Custom patterns also were created for Signature Canvas Company in Hampton, supplying the U.S. Navy. He also created a video tutorial and a mask pattern shared on the Foundation website and social media channels to encourage others to make them at home. When the museums reopen in late June, masks were shared with every employee.

Sharing Spring Bounty

While spring was in bloom, a number of historical interpreters and supervisors worked behind-the-scenes to cultivate historical gardens and preserve vegetables grown in the museums’ outdoor living-history areas, as well as preserve fresh eggs laid by hens at both museums. Eggs and produce were donated to a Williamsburg area food bank, Village Initiative for Equality in Education.

For those that go down to the sea in ships, this motto is a covenant that bonds people together as shipmates even after the voyage is complete - over thousands of miles and decades of time.

The ship must be cared for since we all are on the same vessel. You care for your shipmates because the work is too great for any one of us to manage alone. And, you must care for yourself so that you may continue to support your shipmates and aid in the ship’s passage.

Voyages, especially voyages of exploration, often lead to unexpected destinations and involve trials and tribulations along the way. Navigating those voyages successfully requires the development of new tools and is always easier with a good crew.

We teach history. It is a messy topic with far more nuance than can be contained in a textbook or movie. Chapters of our nation’s history may be summarized in single paragraphs or pages, but they are based on the narratives of many individual people that made personal decisions to act. While history is currently being written around us at an unprecedented pace, let us remember the sailor’s motto and act upon it wherever we can. Ship, Shipmate, Self.

—Hank Mosley, Ships Marine Technician
March 15, 2020, Social Media Post

Jamestown Settlement Gift Shop Shines with Renovation, New Products Connect With Museum Themes

The main gift shop at Jamestown Settlement underwent a major renovation while the museum was temporarily closed this year, revealing an inspiring new environment for shoppers to connect with the museum experience.

The 4,000-square-foot space was transformed with an open floor plan, improving sight lines and traffic flow with wider aisles, which became especially important to encourage social distancing. With new safety guidelines, plexiglass shields now cover areas around the registers, and protective masks are required while in the store by staff and visitors.

The gift shop connects themes found in the museum galleries, with merchandise reflective of the Virginia Indian, English and west central African cultures. Items also range from Virginia-made and regionally-sourced products, including gourmet foods and wines, to museum reproductions, apparel, educational toys, books and souvenirs.

At the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown this fall, the gift shop began offering textiles hand-dyed by historical interpreters at the museum’s Revolution-era farm. Cotton and silk scarves and wool skeins were hand-dyed using natural dyes of the period in a range of colors, including indigo, logwood, madder, cochineal and Osage orange. Similar hand-crafted products are planned for sale at Jamestown Settlement.
School Resumed with Summer Teacher Institute, Virtual Professional Development Sessions

Despite COVID-19, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Summer Teacher Institute resumed in person this year at the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown.

On July 13-16, 18 teachers from 15 school districts throughout Virginia took part in immersive learning sessions to bring back to their classrooms this fall, following new safety and social distancing protocols.

While teachers didn’t yet know whether fall sessions would take place in the classroom or online, the Summer Teacher Institute offered essential tools and learning methodology for teachers to address academic topics related to the Revolutionary War era and prepared them for opportunities to share these lessons virtually. A partnership with WHRO eMedia Virginia offered an online curriculum of the program.

Teachers in Grades 4-8 took part in sessions about the events leading to the American Revolution, debated loyalist and patriot causes, and explored activities to talk about the role of enslaved and free African Americans on both sides of the war.

The Teacher Institute was made possible by a gift from the Charles S. and Millicent P. Brown Family Foundation, named for parents of managing trustee, Keith Dubois, who is also a member of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors.

Virtual professional development sessions engaged more than 100 teachers in the summer and fall, with teaching strategies to explore Virginia cultures and connect the past to the present using pop culture resources, such as the Tony award-winning musical “Hamilton.”

On-Site Education Programs Reach Homeschoolers, Families

Summer & Winter History Camps Go Virtual

At Jamestown Settlement and the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, families of homeschoolers and traditional learners took part in fall programs that offered an interactive escape to learn about early American history outside of the classroom or at home.

“Homeschool Program Days” on September 5-20 and “Fall Into History” family programs on November 9-20 offered unlimited admission and opportunities to engage with in-person educational programs, virtual learning activities and access to a guided tour with a museum educator. The annual homeschool program attracted more than 4,700 participants, up 9 percent from the previous year. A total of 866 people took part in “Fall into History” programs, and a similar program will be offered March 13-28, 2021.

When traditional camps were impacted by COVID-19, history camps went virtual this past summer with new Digital Explorers program, offering exclusive online content, at-home crafts and activities for more than 30 children or family groups in Grades 1-3. A virtual winter camp with 12 problem-solving activities and crafts is being offered through February 14, 2021.

NOTEWORTHY

MROD Senior Director Retires After 25 Years of Marketing Museums

After 25 years, Susan K. Bak retired September 1 as senior director of Marketing & Retail Operations.

During her tenure, Bak oversaw development of creative marketing, public relations and advertising campaigns and digital platforms to promote the museums to national and international audiences, including transformations of both museums with new facilities, interpretive features, exhibits and programs, and during America’s 400th Anniversary in 2007 and the 2019 Commemoration. She also directed retail operations of the museums’ gift shops and cafés. She was instrumental in marketing the museums and travel to America’s Historic Triangle, the Greater Williamsburg destination and Virginia, which contributed to nearly 16 million visitors to both museums and generated $115 million in paid admissions.

Senior Museum Director Takes Helm of Mystic Seaport Museum

In December, Peter J. Armstrong, senior director of Museum Operations & Education, took the helm of Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Conn., as president and CEO.

Armstrong, who served as senior director since 2014, oversaw the Foundation’s education, collections, exhibitions and interpretation at its two living-history museums, as well as public lectures, events and programs. He played a role in the opening of the new American Revolution Museum at Yorktown and the Jamestown Settlement gallery refresh as part of the 2019 Commemoration. He previously worked at the United Kingdom’s National Museum of Arms and Armour, also known as the Royal Armouries.

Martha W. McCartney Honored with American Heroes Award

Historian Martha W. McCartney, who has studied the people and places of Virginia for 47 years, received an American Heroes Award in May from The National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars for her collective research of colonial history.

In collaboration with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, McCartney’s groundbreaking research on the 1619 arrival of the first documented Africans in Virginia was incorporated last year in new Jamestown Settlement gallery exhibits.
In Recognition

Connock Honored in Memory for Nearly Four Decades of Foundation Leadership

The Honorable Stuart W. Connock, chairman emeritus and member of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees for nearly 40 years, passed away on December 6, 2020, at the age of 95. Connock, a World War II veteran, formerly served as the journal clerk in the Virginia House of Delegates and tax commissioner, was later appointed as Secretary of Administration and Finance, retiring in 1990.

Connock served in many leadership roles, including chairman of the Board of Trustees and the Educational Trust Board of Directors. He played a key role in the planning America’s 400th Anniversary observances, serving as chairman of the Jamestown 2007 Steering Committee, and as a member of the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution Steering Committee and Programs and Logistics Committee.

Hager Remembered for Dedicated Leadership of Foundation Museums

Former Lt. Gov. of Virginia John H. Hager, who spent the past 28 years shaping the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and the education of Virginia schoolchildren, passed away on August 23, 2020, at the age of 83.

Hager, who had an active career in the public and private sector, served in prominent roles as the Lt. Gov. of Virginia, Director of Homeland Security for Virginia Governor Mark Warner, and as a member of President George W. Bush’s administration under the Department of Education as Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. He was an active leader on the Foundation’s state and private boards, serving on the Educational Trust Board in 1992-1999, and was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1994 and reappointed in 2013. He was elected to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors in 2009 and, until his passing in 2020, served as the Board president.

‘TENACITY’ Special Exhibition Wins Prestigious 2020 AASLH History Award of Excellence

Take a bow, “TENACITY.” The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) honored the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation with an Award of Excellence for last year’s “TENACITY: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia” special exhibition at Jamestown Settlement.

The AASLH Leadership in History Awards, now in its 75th year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

“It was truly a collaborative effort across the entire Foundation, where the exhibition became interwoven into the fabric of our institution,” said Katherine Egner Gruber, special exhibition curator. “The real reward has been bringing these women’s lives into the narrative of early Virginia – and there’s no going back. These difficult and often overlooked histories shape the complexity of the earliest years of our nation. We’re committed to continue integrating the legacy of Virginia Indian, west central African and English women in our galleries and programming.”

A 2019 Commemoration legacy project, “TENACITY” featured artifacts and primary sources from 20 domestic and international lenders, some on view in the United States for the first time, blended with interactive, videos and compelling visuals, to tell the real stories of women who lived at the time of Jamestown’s founding. Special programming covered a nine-part lecture series, four special events, two original theatrical performances and two academic symposiums.

“TENACITY” was a premiere example of ‘good history’ in museum interpretation,” noted Linda Monk, J.D., a constitutional scholar, journalist and author, in her review. “It took a multicultural approach to the founding of the Virginia colony, examining how women experienced this era from various perspectives of race and class. It embraced the full sweep of the human condition – hope and terror, success and failure, love and cruelty.”

Sandra Gioia Treadway, Ph.D., Librarian of Virginia, praised the exhibit. “Never before have so many artifacts relating to early Virginia women been displayed together… The exhibition did not shy away from discussing difficult topics and the darker side of life in early Virginia, but it did an excellent job of tying every woman’s story back to the exhibition’s central theme. What every woman in this period had in common was the will and strength to survive – tenacity.”

The exhibition was a public-private partnership funded by the Commonwealth of Virginia, James City County and 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution, with additional support from the Robins Foundation.

2019 ‘Our American Evolution’ Web Documentary Traces 400-Year History

“Our American Evolution,” an interactive web documentary launched in June by the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution traces significant events in 1619 and their legacy today.

The commemoration illuminated the nation’s most important historical events to millions of people around the world, and the documentary allows viewers to discover and re-discover 1619’s history while taking a part in the continuing story and the evolution of America. Viewers are encouraged to facilitate conversations about America’s 400-year history to continue the story. The documentary and discussion guide are available at americanevolution2019.com/interactive-documentary.
Dispatch

2020 Year in Review

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Calendar

February 27

After Angelo
Jamestown Settlement
Black History Month culminates with a celebration of African-American culture and heritage with music, song and storytelling honoring the legacy of Angelo, the first African woman named in Jamestown’s historical record. View African and African-American objects and storylines in permanent gallery exhibits.

March 13-28

“Spring Into History” Family Programs
Jamestown Settlement &
American Revolution Museum at Yorktown
A new way for families to explore the museums with special admission and a blend of in-person educational programs, virtual learning activities and access to a guided tour with a museum educator.

March 20-21

Military Through the Ages
Jamestown Settlement
Military re-enactors and modern-day units return to Jamestown Settlement to show how uniforms, weapons and military tactics evolved through the centuries.

Opening January 29, 2021

“FOCUSED: A Century of Virginia Indian Resilience” Special Exhibition
Jamestown Settlement
Focus on 100 years of Virginia Indian resiliency in a yearlong special exhibition featuring personal and professional photography collections charting this century of change, from the passage and repeal of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 to state and federal recognition today. Made possible with the support of James City County.

Shown in this 1919 photo, Pamunkey Indian couple Nannie and Paul Miles, along with an unidentified child and Union Ottaway Collins holding a dog, posed on the front porch of a house on the Pamunkey Reservation in Virginia. Frank Speck photograph collection, N12730; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

February 27