

Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

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Record Donations Drive Discoveries, Partnerships and Progress for Colonial Williamsburg

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Feb. 10, 2022) – Donors gave \$102 million to Colonial Williamsburg in 2021, an increase of 42% over the previous record of \$72 million set in 2019. The total for 2021 includes \$21.2 million raised through the Colonial Williamsburg Fund, surpassing 2020’s \$19.7 million, the previous record.

“Our remarkable donors are increasing their investments in Colonial Williamsburg because they believe in the importance of our educational mission and they understand the impact of our work for current and future generations,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. “Their loyal and extraordinary generosity is greatly advancing our efforts to engage audiences in our Historic Area, Art Museums and through online programming as we prepare to commemorate the country’s 250th anniversary in 2026.”

Despite ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation safely reopened many sites and hosted events including an expanded Juneteenth celebration, July 4 celebration and, for the first time, three Grand Illuminations in 2021. The foundation also pursued numerous projects throughout the year in support of education, preservation and civic engagement goals that are leading to new discoveries and expanding knowledge of the country’s shared history.

“Our plans for 2026 require us to strive for excellence in our fundraising and our programming,” said Earl T. Granger, III, chief development officer and vice president of Development for Colonial Williamsburg. “Our donors who are making this journey possible are among our most powerful partners in bringing new discoveries and groundbreaking opportunities to fruition for the nation and the world.”

Last year, [archaeologists identified the original foundation of First Baptist Church](#), the nation’s first church founded by and for Black people in 1776. The discovery, which is advancing Colonial Williamsburg’s commitment to sharing a more complete and inclusive story of life in early America, led to tweets with more than 80 million impressions and was featured by prominent media outlets across the nation including The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Associated Press. This ongoing

project is a partnership with the church's congregation, the Let Freedom Ring Foundation and William & Mary. Plans call for reconstructing the original structure and opening the site for interpretation in 2026, the 250th anniversary of the church's founding.

The discovery of the [Williamsburg Bray School](#), which was announced jointly by Colonial Williamsburg and William & Mary in 2021, also garnered national and international headlines. The Bray School operated from 1760-1774 and is believed to be the only remaining colonial era building in the country that was used to educate enslaved and free Black children. Colonial Williamsburg and William & Mary are working together to preserve, relocate and renovate the Bray School and are developing and implementing public programming to educate visitors about the school's complex history. The Bray School structure will be relocated from William & Mary's campus to Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area, where it will become the foundation's 89th original building.

"We are pursuing many visionary projects on aggressive timelines," said Granger. "Increased donor support is making this rapid progress possible. Collaborative partnerships also are playing key roles in our success."

Colonial Williamsburg renewed a vital partnership and its commitment to independent scholarly research in 2021 by joining William & Mary to financially support the [Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture](#). The Omohundro Institute was established by the two institutions in 1943 and has become the nation's leading academic center of historical research on all aspects of early America. The strengthened partnership is positioning the three Williamsburg-based institutions as the nation's center of historical scholarship in preparation for 2026.

Colonial Williamsburg further expanded its educational impact through the [Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute](#). Held fully online for the second consecutive summer due to the pandemic, the Teacher Institute reached many more teachers and, consequently, more students, than in any previous summer season. During 2021, 1,400 teachers participated, benefiting nearly 100,000 students across the country. The Institute also increased the number of teachers working at schools where more than 70% of students receive free or reduced cost lunches.

"In 2020 when so many of our onsite programs as well as our Teacher Institute had to be postponed or canceled due to the pandemic, we responded quickly to the needs of teachers and their students by expanding our digital footprint," said Beth Kelly, The Royce R. and Kathryn M. Baker vice president for Education, Research and Historical Interpretation. "We discovered there is a significant demand for our educational content and we are able to engage many more teachers, students and citizens when we connect with them through digital channels. In 2021, we built additional programming that engaged our audience and attracted new participants."

In January 2021, backed by donor support, the foundation launched [US: Past, Present, Future](#), which increased Colonial Williamsburg's reach through national dialogues about

enduring promises of America, and factors and events that challenge those promises. Reaching as many as 20,000 viewers monthly, the series included topics like religious freedom, the power of education, Juneteenth and the meaning of American citizenship. Among those who tuned in, 21% were completely new to Colonial Williamsburg programming.

The foundation's educational programming garnered further attention in 2021 when The Washington Post included Colonial Williamsburg's Museum Theatre program in its "[Best of Theater 2021](#)" list. Colonial Williamsburg's program was the only museum to make the list. Earlier in 2021, [The Washington Post also recognized Colonial Williamsburg](#) for having "some of the most progressive and insightful theatre in America."

"During 2021, our donor community responded to many opportunities to expand our impact," said Granger. "They fully understand the transforming effect their generosity has on turning ideas into engaging and thought-provoking experiences."

Granger and Fleet said the foundation's work will continue to accelerate in 2022, a year they see as pivotal to building on 2021's successes.

"Much of the work we made meaningful progress on in 2021 continues this year," said Fleet. "And 2022 brings new opportunities as we raise funds to break ground on the new Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center, pursue transformational support for a digital Colonial Williamsburg and enhance our strategic partnerships. Donor involvement and support will be critical to each of these opportunities and many others."

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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. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.