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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
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## **Donors Drive Major Progress on Colonial Williamsburg Initiatives, Advancing Mission with a Record \$103 Million in 2023**

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Feb. 1, 2024) – Donors gave a record \$103 million to Colonial Williamsburg in 2023, advancing the educational mission and funding key preservation, education and civic engagement initiatives that are expanding and enhancing The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s impact.

“Our donors, who believe deeply in Colonial Williamsburg and understand the impact they have on our mission and our daily work, are making wonderful philanthropic investments that are essential to our goals,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Fleet said donors have been steadfast in their support of the Foundation’s initiatives for the past several years with 2023, 2022 and 2021 emerging as the top-three fundraising years in Colonial Williamsburg’s 97-year history. With this strong philanthropic support, the Foundation launched *The Power of Place – The Centennial Campaign for Colonial Williamsburg* in October 2023. The multiyear fundraising initiative is advancing projects and operations leading to 2026, which is the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Foundation’s own centennial anniversary.

“We named our campaign ‘the Power of Place’ because so many of the ideas and events leading to the American Revolution happened in and around Williamsburg,” said Fleet.

“Today, as a direct result of our remarkable donors, the Foundation is making a significant impact on the nation as we enhance our ability to present authentic historical accounts and engage in lessons and conversations around history and civic engagement, subjects that are critically needed in American education. We will continue to work closely with our donors so Colonial Williamsburg can lead the way up to and beyond the 250th anniversary of the United States.”

Spurred by this generosity, activity in Colonial Williamsburg’s Historic Area and in online programming flourished in 2023.

“Our donors’ enthusiasm for our work and their belief in our mission is driving us to reach new heights,” said Sani Silvennoinen, chief development officer for the Foundation. “Their engagement and remarkable commitment are critical to our ability to share the prolific research and discoveries happening during this exciting time in Williamsburg. We will

continue to draw inspiration from our donors as we accelerate our progress leading to 2026 and beyond.”

## **Programming Highlights**

In January 2023, the Foundation announced the Innovation Studios Initiative aimed at scaling digital programming and experiences to advance the Foundation’s goal of becoming the world’s largest digital U.S. history museum. The Innovation Studios is home to the Ben Franklin’s World podcast, which has been downloaded more than 11 million times by listeners around the world.

In February, the Foundation moved the Williamsburg Bray School to the Historic Area, where it is undergoing restoration and will open as a site for interpretation later in 2024. The Bray School, which operated in Williamsburg from 1760-1774, is believed to be the oldest extant building dedicated to the education of enslaved and free Black children.

In March, Colonial Williamsburg hosted *A Common Cause for All*, bringing together hundreds of representatives from 34 states for the nation’s first event to begin planning for the United States’ 250th anniversary in 2026. Annual convenings will take place leading up to 2026, with the next one happening again in Williamsburg this spring.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Colin G. and Nancy N. Campbell Archaeology Center on April 21. When it opens in 2026, the Campbell Archaeology Center will become the home for the Foundation’s more than 60 million archaeologically-recovered artifacts. The world-class facility will provide unprecedented access to guests and researchers, ensuring firsthand access to the discoveries that have provided critical information about the history of Williamsburg.

Philanthropic support enabled the Foundation to offer two free admission days on Juneteenth and the Fourth of July, welcoming more than 22,500 guests free of charge.

During the summer, the Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute of Colonial Williamsburg provided 467 teachers from across the country with programming in the Historic Area. Most of the teachers who attend are able to do so thanks to scholarships provided by donor support. In addition, approximately 1,500 teachers participated in online programming throughout 2023. Collectively, these teachers impact 200,000 students in classrooms throughout the United States. The Foundation also embarked on a project to renovate the former location of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Museum, converting the original 1957 section of the building into the new Bob and Marion Wilson Teacher Institute Center.

The creation of the center will bolster the Teacher Institute's capabilities, providing a countermeasure to national declines in history and civics education. Creating this dedicated space will further the Foundation's commitment to teachers in all 50 states by ensuring they are equipped with vital and authentic lessons about the nation's history.

In addition to the Power of Place Campaign launch in October, the Foundation joined the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture and William & Mary to

sponsor “Restoring the Indigenous Voice in Museums of Early America” as a part of the “For 2026: Contested Freedoms” series.

From November 14 to 18, the Historic Area’s Brickyard held its annual wood kiln firing, baking close to 20,000 bricks that are being used in a variety of projects across the Foundation, including the Magazine restoration and the First Baptist Church reconstruction. The kiln was monitored 24/7 through a collaborative effort between the historic tradespeople, and visitors to the site were encouraged to ask questions and participate in the multi-day process of keeping the kiln fueled.

“So many of these and other engaging initiatives are possible because of our generous donors,” said Fleet. “They are an incredible source of inspiration for everything we do, and it is our responsibility to them to strive even further to reach our full potential.”

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***About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation***

*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 and 18th-century inspired culinary options from historic taverns situated along historic Duke of Gloucester Street. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that is not federally or state supported and advances its educational mission, That the future may learn from the past, with support from more than 70,000 individual donors, foundations and corporations every year. Colonial Williamsburg Resorts complement the experience, offering guests five unique hotel properties including the iconic Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star, AAA Five Diamond Williamsburg Inn, newly renovated Williamsburg Lodge-Autograph Collection, Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites, the Griffin Hotel, and authentic 18th-century Colonial Houses. The resort offers a range of events and amenities including four historic taverns, 15 food and beverage outlets providing exquisite culinary experiences from casual to elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 36 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a world-class full-service spa and fitness center, pools, meeting and flexible event spaces, and scenic gardens providing the perfect venue for weddings and special events. Merchants Square, built alongside the Historic Area in 1935 as one of the first planned shopping districts in the United States, features more than 40 specialty boutiques with products ranging from apparel to fine jewelry, art, specialty foods and gifts. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg’s educational programs and preservation initiatives.*

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