

# Ahoy!

The Mariners' Museum and Park  
SPRING/SUMMER 2024



**INVEST. ENGAGE. IMPACT.**

*Meaningful Investments Resulting in Lasting Impressions.*

## Message from the President

To our World of Champions,

The incredibly diverse talent, skills, and experience within our team (including our amazing volunteers, represented by Brian and Melissa Nehrbass in this issue) will, no doubt, leap out at you while you read this issue of *Ahoy!*. All of that diversity yields the rich and wide variety of projects and initiatives captured in each of our issues of *Ahoy!*, including this one. All of that activity can feel, on the surface, quite complex and disconnected. What could one of our archaeological conservators working on *Monitor* possibly have in common with our Park technician removing invasive species from Mariners' Forest? How does the work of an early childhood educator relate to the work of a marketing and events photographer?

Read a little more deeply, and you'll see that all of our work is driven by **service** and **impact**: by the charge in our 1930 charter to "promote the public welfare." You'll also see that all of our work is tied together quite neatly by **strategy**.

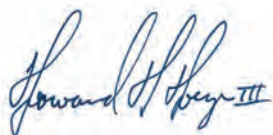
Our strategy for achieving the kind of impact that our charter demands of us is defined by two primary lines of effort:

- **Stewardship** of our Museum and Living Collection, and
- **Engagement** with members of the local, national, and global communities we serve.

So, the work of an archaeological conservator dry-ice blasting wrought iron recovered from *Monitor* is absolutely consistent with a Park technician removing invasive species from Mariners' Forest because both are engaged in Stewardship. We believe that we will have the greatest impact in our community when we are best-in-class at Stewardship.

Similarly, our early childhood educator and marketing and events photographer share a common focus on Engagement through storytelling. We believe that we will have the greatest impact in our community when we are best-in-class at Engagement.

I am beyond proud of the growth in our capacity for Stewardship and our reach through Engagement detailed in this issue of *Ahoy!* We are only able to invest and engage in our strategic lines of work — and achieve that growth — because you invested in and engaged with us first. I am and our entire team is truly grateful to you and for you!



**Howard H. Hoege III**  
President and CEO



## The Mariners' Museum and Park

Howard H. Hoege III  
President and CEO

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Senior Conservator Elsa Sangouard uses dry ice blasting to remove concretion and corrosion products from *Monitor's* wrought iron objects.

PHOTO: AMANDA SHIELDS



# Meet a Mariner

## Brian & Melissa Nehrass

Picture this: A young student steps off a bus on a Thursday morning, bubbling with excitement after arriving for their field trip to The Mariners' Museum. They follow their classmates in a single file line through the main entrance where a woman behind the front desk greets them with a bright smile and says, "Good morning!" Their teacher leads them to the man giving their tour, and the wonder in their eyes grows with each story he shares throughout the day. When the student tells their family about their fascinating day at the Museum that evening, they might not know or remember their names, but the impact Brian and Melissa Nehrass made on that student will last a lifetime.

If you've spent a weekday at The Mariners' Museum during the last six years, you've probably met at least one of the Nehrasses. After a 2015 trip to the Museum piqued his interest, Brian joined the docent team in February 2017 following his retirement from Newport News Shipbuilding. Melissa, who Brian says is "the volunteer" of their relationship, joined the Guest Relations team in September 2018 after Brian informed her of an open volunteer position. Both share a servant's heart and a love for all things maritime, which only add to their distinct abilities to create long-lasting connections for Museum guests.

Melissa is often the first face visitors see when they enter the Museum, and she knows all too well how important a good first impression is in creating great visitor experiences. While engaging in warm conversation with visitors during their check-in process, she highlights four "do not miss" areas of the Museum to each guest: The Battle Theater in the Monitor Center, the International Small Craft Center, and the Speed and Innovation and Crabtree galleries. In a testament to her quality of service to guests, Melissa was the recipient of a staff-voted volunteer service award just one year after joining the Mariners' team.

With the growth of the Mariners' Education team and expansion of low--and no-cost student programming, Brian has had the opportunity to provide an unforgettable Museum experience for thousands of students on tours. Alongside his work as a docent—for which he received two volunteer service awards in 2018 and 2019—Brian has also played a valuable role in Museum gallery renovation and *Monitor* conservation. Recently, he helped connect acoustic and civil engineers to assist with sound mitigation approaches during the Exploration Gallery renovation, as well as assessment of floor loadings underneath multiple galleries. His engineering experience was also heavily relied upon to coordinate a lift of *Monitor's* 115-ton turret, which he is currently helping with again.

When Brian and Melissa aren't volunteering at The Mariners', they enjoy volunteering at other local organizations, family boating days on the James River, and walking their dogs Buoy and Dinghy on the Noland Trail. What keeps them coming back to the Museum week after week? Both had the same answer: "The people."

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Top: Brian and Melissa in Mariners' Park.

Above: Brian takes his dogs, Buoy and Dinghy, for a walk on the Noland Trail.



## August F. Crabtree: *Journey to a Masterpiece*

Artist-carver August Crabtree was driven by an infatuation with detail and a personal motto that encapsulates his career — “Excellence Forever.” He toiled over his life’s work for decades, building a collection of miniature ships widely lauded as one of the most impressive assemblages of its kind. The Crabtree Gallery at The Mariners’ is home to August’s fleet, standing as a testament to the lifetime of labor August devoted to his craft.

Born in Portland, Oregon, August displayed a knack for carving since elementary school. He took his craft very seriously and possessed a competitive streak, intentionally creating projects on a smaller, more challenging scale than his peers. Naturally industrious, he held various after-school jobs, including positions with a boatbuilder, cabinetmaker, and patternmaker, which enabled him to hone his skills.

August committed to pursuing a career in ship model carving when he was about 20 years old. He carved a miniature ship based on the *Mayflower* but considered it so erroneous that he gave it away. Determined to overcome this setback, he began hunting for resources to improve his models’ accuracy, sourcing information from London and Amsterdam. He then leveraged his connections to obtain materials: a Portland patternmaker provided him with seasoned fruitwoods and a dentist from his childhood newspaper route supplied dental instruments that August repurposed as carving tools.

August put these resources to work as he built the collection he would refer to as “the project” — an assortment of miniature ships representing the evolution of ships throughout history, starting with an Egyptian vessel and ending with a steamship. He married an accomplished artist named Winnifred, who took over painting the models and sewing most of the sails. Even



PHOTO: WILLIAM T. RADCLIFF

while he worked in shipyards and created models for motion pictures in Hollywood, August diligently continued laboring on his project. He invested 25 years of hard work into the collection, crafting 16 breathtaking vessels.

The Crabtrees toured the country with the collection for years and even opened a museum in Miami, Florida before settling on The Mariners’ Museum to permanently house the ships. When the Museum bought the models in the 1950s, the Crabtrees relocated to the Virginia Tidewater region, and August became an interpreter, woodcarver, demonstrator, lecturer, and guide at The Mariners’.

Mariners’ volunteer modelmaker Ron Lewis met August when Ron was 16 years old and on subsequent occasions during Ron’s frequent visits to the Museum. “He was an extremely talented person,” Ron recalled, noting how the ships capture a timeline of evolving skills — “a progression of talent and experience” evident when closely examining the models in the order August built them.

Because August’s models are based on plans and drawings from actual ships, the models are widely lauded for their authenticity, down to the minute working parts that function as they would on a full-scale ship. To demonstrate, Ron pointed out a set of oars on a galley that kept coming loose. Though August could have glued the oars down to increase stability, Ron explained the simple reason he didn’t: “He was very attentive to details. If they weren’t glued down on the ship, he wasn’t going to glue them down on his models.”



*Opposite, left:* The Venetian Galleass in the Crabtree Gallery displays August's extraordinary craftsmanship with dozens of ornate carvings traversing the ship's exterior and miniature people perched inside of the vessel.

*Opposite, right:* A magnifying glass amplifies the minute details of August's carvings.



August's commitment to detail even compelled him to include elements that most observers will never know about, such as two barely visible ship wheels August tucked away in an inconspicuous part of a vessel because the wheels would have been in that location on the actual ship. "If I'm building this ship and nobody can see them, I don't know whether I'd put the wheels there or not," Ron said. "But he put them there."

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"The Life and Incredible Miniatures of August Crabtree." Pilot Online. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.pilotonline.com/1990/08/26/the-life-and-incredible-miniatures-of-august-crabtree/>

"August Crabtree, Carver of Ships, Dies at Age 89." Pilot Online. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.dailypress.com/1994/10/15/august-crabtree-carver-of-ships-dies-at-age-89/>





# ... Cinematic ..... ..... ..... Connections

Since March 19, 2021, over 4.2 million people from all across the world and just around the corner have connected with The Mariners' through video. But four years ago, this seemed out of the realm of possibility.

Enter Multimedia Production. Historically, for cultural arts institutions, any stories they wanted to tell through video had to be produced by external production companies. While the videos were high quality, these short videos could cost thousands, making digital storytelling a far-off dream, reserved only for special occasions. However, in 2020, as we sought ways to connect with each other and with the stories contained in the Museum's Collection, video became the solution.

The problem, though? We didn't have the equipment or the know-how — all we had were stories.

Our small but dedicated team started with hand-me-down equipment from around the Museum and learning, day by day, how to tell stories in this way. But the act of creating and sharing the stories of our Collection through video generated interest from our community. Sure, making videos is nothing

revolutionary — but a museum making videos in-house? Now that's something you don't see every day. Our community recognized that and invested in us from the get-go, setting the stage to increase our team's capacity to share the stories of our Collection.

Canon was the first organization to step in, and their generous team donated refurbished lenses and shared their knowledge and expertise — an investment that immediately increased the new Multimedia team's capabilities. Soon after, the investment of grant funding from York County and Newport News Arts Commissions gave our team the ability to purchase much-needed equipment to create and tell the stories of the Museum's Collection — the stories of mariners past and present.

The investment from our community has made it possible for us to serve *millions* — locally, nationally, and globally — who may never have the opportunity to visit The Mariners' themselves, explore the paintings and artifacts, or witness the groundbreaking conservation work that happens here.

*Above:* Canon's team members visit Creative Director Kyra Duffley and the Multimedia team.



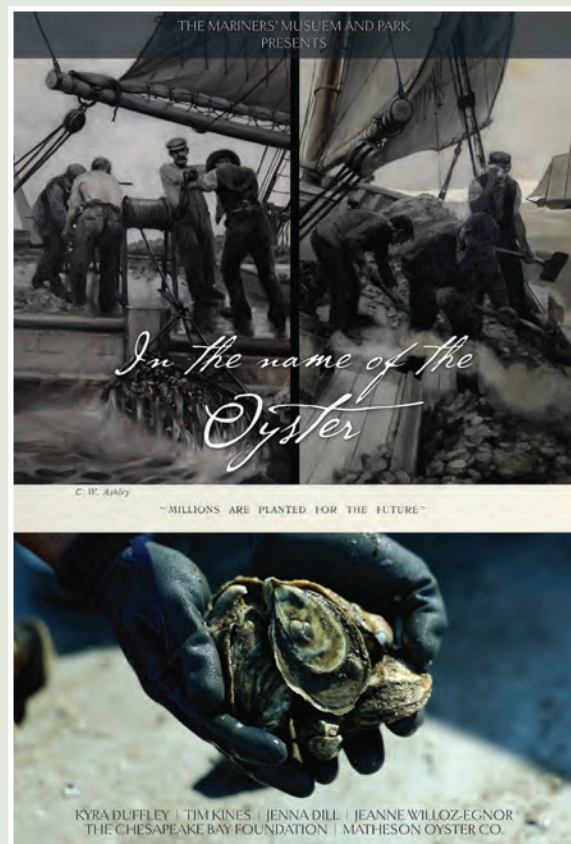
Marketing and Events Photographer Amanda Shields takes photos of Multimedia Specialist Tim Kines setting up audio equipment.



But in this ever-connected world, we know that true connection isn't necessarily created through watching a video on Facebook, YouTube, or Instagram. Beyond the number of views on the videos we create, the Multimedia Production team is continually working to find new and better ways to engage with our communities — and seeking to use video as not only a resource for our community but also as an entry point for new audiences to come and connect. Our digital storytelling has allowed the Multimedia team to capture and tell the stories of mariners working in the world around us — ship pilots, oyster farmers, navy divers, and restoration experts. These opportunities not only help us to better understand and tell the stories contained within our Collection but also deepen our connection to an incredible world of mariners around the globe.

We're going to continue growing, telling new stories, and reaching new audiences, and we're thrilled to announce that *In the Name of the Oyster*, a Mariners' Production, has been selected for screening at the first annual Fredericksburg Film Festival. We couldn't be more grateful for the investment from our community — without you, none of this would have been possible!

Kyra Duffley  
Creative Director  
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## *In the Name of the Oyster*

The Mariners' film, *In the Name of the Oyster*, is an official selection of the Fredericksburg Film Festival in the Documentary Short category. The film is based on paintings by Clifford Warren Ashley and features the female-owned Matheson Oyster Company and the all-female oyster team at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Uniting the paintings' subjects with real-world oyster harvesting and restoration practices, the film shines a light on environmental sustainability in a historic industry with considerable regional impact.



Scan the QR code  
to see this film and other in-house videos.



A large-scale photograph showing the silhouettes of several children in the foreground, reaching out to touch a large, stylized map of China mounted on a yellow wall. The map features blue rivers and a red star, with its borders defined by a complex, interlocking gear-like pattern.

# Building a Legacy

**Chris Voll gives us an inside look at the craftsmanship and creativity behind the Custom Production team.**

As a third-grader drags his finger across a wall to trace an illustration of the map of China, he's probably not thinking about the type of paint that was required to create the map. And as Navy Junior ROTC students meander through the *Monitor* Center, they're probably thinking more about touching the turret's unique exterior than how it was made. That's where The Mariners' Custom Production team comes in.

Instead of outsourcing design and construction, we invest in an in-house team that coordinates with other departments to balance conservation needs with engagement goals. Custom Production assembles the pieces of this complex puzzle, finding solutions that enable the public to interact safely with our Collection. We sat down for a Q&A with Manager of Custom Production Chris Voll to get an idea of what it's like to work on this integral team.

## **What does the Custom Production team do?**

"We build anything that needs to be built, including all the cases, a lot of the case furniture, and the mounts for the artifacts. Every department and many of the projects seem to funnel down to us eventually. That's why we're called Custom Production — we build anything that comes along."



## **What educational and professional backgrounds do you and your team have that led to this career?**

"It's a combination of things like cabinet-making and art backgrounds. I have a master's in art, and the other members of the team also studied art in college. We also have prior professional experience in nuts and bolts type of work. We're not just working with oil on canvas; we do a lot of welding, woodworking, and drawing, so we also have backgrounds in sculpting."

*Top: The first students of Newport News Public Schools to have a lesson in the new Exploration: China Gallery.*

*Above: The as-built of *Monitor's* gun turret captivates Museum visitors and is one of Chris' proudest projects.*





### **What is the process the team uses when setting out to design a space?**

"We receive a lot of input from other teams and use computer drafting to create a pretty decent rendering so they can see the final product before we build it. And then it's a matter of practicality: How is this going to get constructed? What are the materials we're going to need? During the process, we can make changes on a computer and move things around digitally without physically moving them."

### **What benefit do you see in having an in-house Custom Production team?**

"Lower costs, being able to make ongoing changes and repairs, and consistency within the work because we've been doing the work at the Museum for years. An in-house team just streamlines the whole process a lot better and it's much more cost-effective."

### **What was the process like for creating the Exploration Gallery?**

"For the Mediterranean section, we emptied out the gallery and talked with the Education team about getting linoleum or some kind of printed floor cover for the space. Instead, we decided to just paint the floor. We had to consider materials because certain types of finishes emit off-gasses, so we found a paint that passed muster with the Conservation team. I drafted the map on a computer, resized it to the actual size, and gridded it out. We hand-drew the map and spent a couple of weeks painting it, then we applied a clear coating. We also built additional cases, provided bins, blocks, and mounts, and painted a boat to resemble a Mediterranean aesthetic."

For the China section, we were able to put the map on the wall. We projected the image with an opaque projector on a ladder so we could trace it, which was a lot quicker because we didn't have to grid it out.

Students from the Newport News Public Schools English as a Second Language program learn about Mediterranean geography.

### **After working at The Mariners' for 25 years, which project are you the proudest of that is currently at the Museum?**

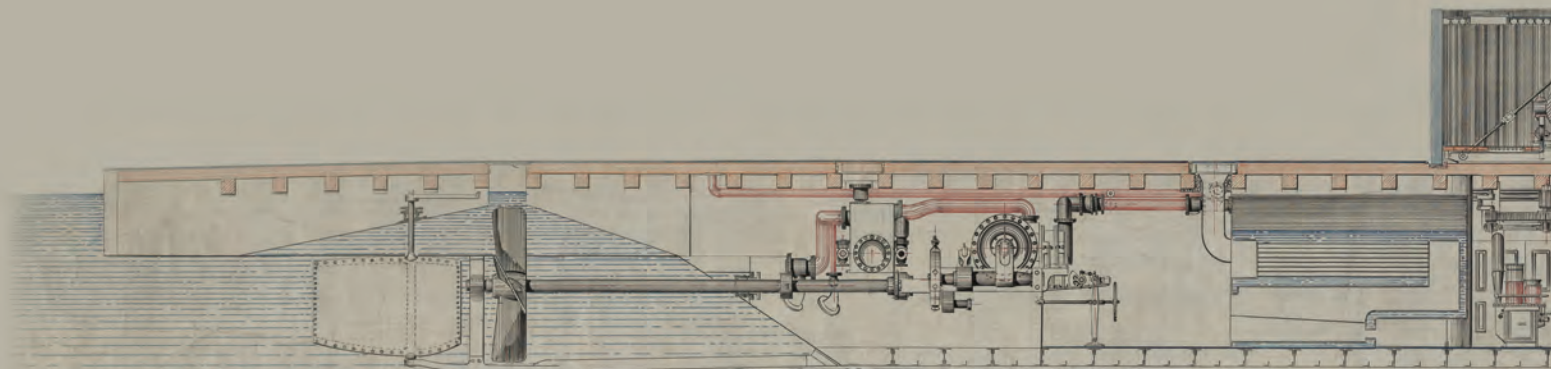
"I would say the as-built turret in the *Monitor* Center. I took measurements from inside the actual turret because the real thing was built so quickly and a lot of modifications were made that were never represented in the drawings, so some things weren't discovered until they pulled it out of the water. So I had to figure out how to build it. I used plywood and masonite and then painted it to look like metal and to show the way it was constructed with different plates of steel and bolts through it, and I cast all the bolts out of resin and plywood. That came out pretty nicely."

### **What do you think makes a design successful?**

"We want to provide a nice, consistent look across the Museum. We try to find a balance between getting the work done really quickly and efficiently and doing super-quality work. It's not fine woodworking, but it's not carpentry either. I think we've always managed to find a good medium."

Custom Production's dedication to excellence contributes to a Museum that is both functional and beautiful, enhancing the experience of our guests while simultaneously safeguarding our Collection. Though they largely complete their work outside of the public gaze, the team's impact is highly visible throughout every corner of the Museum.

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## Harnessing Innovative Methods to Treat USS Monitor An Ironclad Begins to Take Shape

SOURCE: UNKNOWN



*On the morning of July 28, 2000, the skeg assembly from USS Monitor was brought to the surface off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US Navy. The crew also recovered the mounting section of lower hull plating and several other artifacts. These objects were transferred to The Mariners' Museum and Park, beginning a multi-year conservation journey grounded in a conservation technique that was new to The Mariners': dry ice blasting.*

### What is a Skeg?

A skeg is an extension of a ship's keel that mounts the propeller and rudder on its centerline. *Monitor's* skeg is uniquely long, consisting of a massive two-ton, 28-foot wrought iron beam.

Due to its size and awkward shape, the composite object was disassembled into its component parts shortly after arriving at The Mariners' so that it could be placed in submerged water storage. Having been in an ocean environment for over 137 years, if allowed to dry at that time, chlorides from salt water trapped within the wrought iron materials would have led to debilitating corrosion that had the potential to cause serious damage in the future.

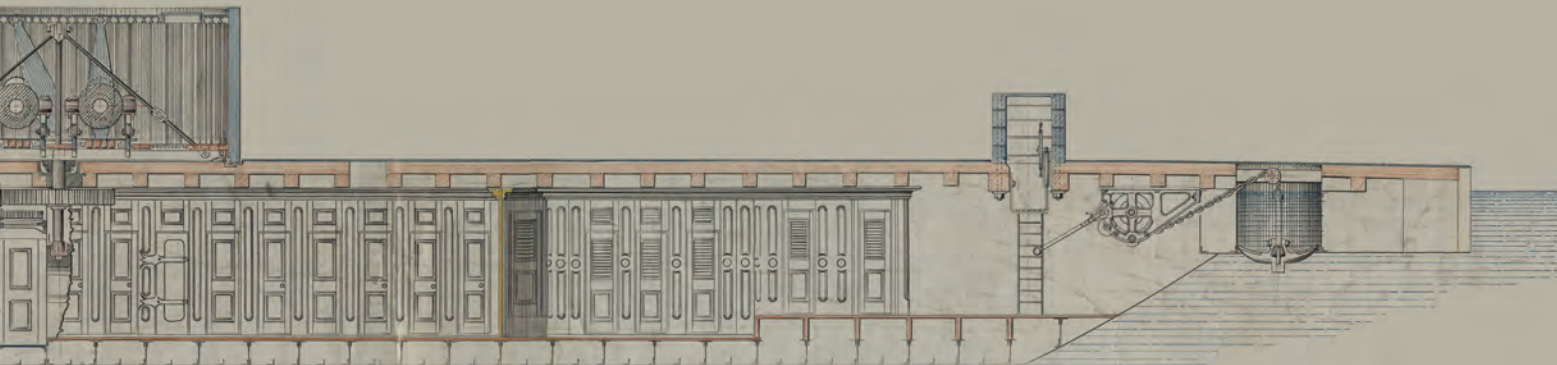
### Chemical Conservation Methods

To complete the treatment of the artifacts, the Conservation team would need to desalinate them to remove as much of the chlorides as possible. To do this, we used both chemical and electrochemical techniques to break down corrosion and draw chlorides out of the objects; however, before the process began, the artifacts had to be prepped. Over the course of two months, we:

- mechanically removed marine growth
- fabricated custom supports
- employed a 60-ton crane to lift and place the objects on the new mounts, and
- installed an electrolytic reduction system to start artifact treatment — this method uses electric currents to reduce rust and corrosion







## Manual Conservation Methods

By the mid-2010s, it had become apparent that corrosion was located deep within the surviving laminar structure of many wrought iron artifacts from the ironclad that could not be removed by chemistry alone. At that time, the only option for removal was by hand with hammers, chisels, and dental and pneumatic tools. This was clearly impractical for USS *Monitor*'s many massive artifacts.

## Dry-Ice Blasting

After researching various industrial applications, it seemed to conservators that dry-ice blasting had the greatest potential. Dry-ice blasting utilizes frozen carbon dioxide in place of sand or walnut shell to clean delicate surfaces and is dry, non-toxic, and leaves no waste behind other than what is removed during cleaning. Therefore, it is perfect for cleaning, especially in confined spaces (i.e., treatment tanks), and has been utilized successfully dating back to the 1980s.

The Conservation team spent three years testing the process and honed in on a cleaning methodology to successfully clean wrought iron. With a working procedure in hand, The Mariners' applied for and received a Maritime Heritage grant administered by the National Park Service in 2016 to purchase all required equipment. This has been a game changer for the *Monitor* project as it has increased the efficiency of conservation treatment, and, as a result, shortened treatment timelines.

The skeg objects received three rounds of dry-ice cleaning, and by 2023, as much of the corrosion and chlorides had been removed as possible. Final conservation treatment began, including drying components, additional surface cleaning, and the application of protective surface coatings. On January 3, 2024, the lower hull plate was reattached to the skeg beam in an upright position for the first time since the sinking of USS *Monitor* nearly 162 years ago. At that moment, the Conservation team took a step back to reflect on the achievement. Not only was this the largest artifact assembly to be conserved to date, but after years of work, the ironclad was starting to take shape! Even with only these two structural elements rejoined, one's mind could already start to reconstruct the ship.

*Opposite, top left:* USS *Monitor*'s skeg was lifted out of the water over a century after the ironclad was lost at sea.

*Opposite, middle left:* The Conservation team spent years refining the dry ice blasting procedure they used to treat *Monitor*'s artifacts.

*Opposite, bottom left:* Conservators prepare to reattach the aft-lower hull plate from USS *Monitor* to the skeg beam. It was the first time both would be together in an upright position since the vessel sank in 1862.



John Broadwater sees the skeg beam and the lower hull plate reattached at the Battle of Hampton Roads Day. John was the lead archeologist on the *Monitor* recovery project.

## Sharing Our Dry Ice Blasting Story

With the annual Battle of Hampton Roads Day on the horizon, it was the perfect opportunity to share the journey with the public. So, through much planning and elbow grease, the skeg beam was rolled to the Museum's lobby. That day, more than 500 experienced what conservators had many years ago while gaining insight into the technology required to build, operate, and conserve *Monitor* through grant support. This overall effort represented another substantial step in The Mariners' commitment to conserving this historic symbol of ingenuity and honoring the individuals who contributed to its life.

*Will Hoffman*

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### Reference:

Broadwater, John D. 2012. *USS Monitor: A Historic Ship Completes Its Final Voyage*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.



Early Childhood Educator, Amanda Abrill, transitions students across Exploration Gallery by asking them to swim like fish.

# Charting a New Course

## The Mariners' Extends Educational Reach to Early Childhood

*Early childhood education is critical in developing a child's social and cognitive skills and lays the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of learning. Over the past two years, the Education team tested several pilot educational enrichment programs for early learners and collected feedback from key community partners.*

*This fall, The Mariners' made the biggest investment to date in serving this critical segment of the community by hiring an Early Childhood Educator. Please meet Amanda Abrill.*

Harriet Smith, Director of Education



I was thrilled to become a part of the Mariners' community in October of 2023 after eight years of teaching in the public school system. My background is in Special Education and Early Childhood Education (ECE), so I was very excited to learn that The Mariners' is expanding their education reach into Early Childhood. After joining the team, I jumped right into researching the needs of ECE centers in the Hampton Roads area. Through this research, I learned that many centers are in need of enrichment programs designed specifically for their PreK classes. I also discovered that, according to the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), 42 percent of Virginia's PreK students do not have the reading and writing skills needed to be successful in kindergarten.<sup>1</sup>

The Mariners' has embarked on a journey to develop enriching educational programs specifically for young learners. We will provide one program per season that focuses on kindergarten readiness skills and targets PreK learning standards. This framework will allow ECE centers to come to the Museum up to four times per year. By working with community partners such as Peake Early Childhood Center to develop these lessons, we are able to seamlessly integrate maritime themes into Early Childhood education standards.

I had the privilege of hosting our winter program, called Boat Bonanza!, which brought 58 PreK students into the Museum. Students enjoyed singing songs, listening to a silly story about animals sinking a boat, playing a counting game, and choosing



their favorite boat in the International Small Craft Center. Every little mariner felt welcome, with wide smiles on their faces as they experienced all our Museum has to offer.

In looking ahead to our upcoming programs, we hope to expand the number of students served and continue to refine our content to meet all needs. By nurturing the next generation of mariners, we can guarantee that people of all ages feel connected to the world's waters for years to come.

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1. "Why We Need VKRP," Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program, 2024, <https://vkrponline.org/virginia-kindergarten-readiness-program-2/why-we-need-vkrp/>.

## Proposed Plan



*Above:* An illustration of the proposed plan for the Discovery Project.

*Top, right:* A student from Peake Childhood Center proudly displays her leaf tracing artwork while on a field trip to the Museum.



## Discovery Project

### Outdoor Learning Space for Children

As part of The Mariners' continued commitment to the smallest members of our community, our goal is to create an environment where engagement, excitement, and learning collide! The Discovery Project will create a welcoming space for children ages two through five in Mariners' Park. The project includes improvements to Lil' Mariners Play Zone, the Bumblebee Learning Garden, and the installation of a new garden with modular seating to host interactive programs in a nature-based setting. Together, they provide an immersive experience for exploring native flowers, pollinators, and Park animals.



*Discover more*

Learn more about how you can help us bring this space to life!





# Caring for Mariners' Forest

## Defining Goals and Measuring Impact to Maximize Park Health

Mariners' Park would not be the iconic sanctuary it is without the majestic trees in Mariners' Forest. Approximately 300 acres of the 550-acre Park is forest! The history of Mariners' Forest began in 1931 with George C. Mason, the Park's first forester. His and other staff's work to plant a diverse landscape set the foundation for the Park team's work today, and a majority of the trees Mason cared for are still in Mariners' Park!

As the Park approaches its 100th birthday, what could the next century bring? How can we measure success within a living ecosystem? In mid-2020, a Community Forest Management Plan in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Forestry helped answer that question by establishing indicators of the Park's health that we use to guide our strategy.

### The Goals

The primary goals of our forest management plan are:

- Sustainable forest health
- Increased forest diversity
- Wildlife habitat creation
- Maintenance of a scenic habitat
- Non-wildlife-related outdoor recreation

### The Measurements

The growth metric for forest health is focused on reducing invasive species. Based on Department of Forestry data, the Park contains approximately 11.34 acres of invasive species. Through habitat restorations along the northwestern side of the Park, 6.38 acres are invasive-free, meaning 44 percent of the total acres are free of invasive species.

Increasing forest diversity is a measurement of native trees and plants versus non-natives. To track this, staff and community scientists in iNaturalist provide species identification data based on visual observation. Currently, 78 percent of trees and 69 percent of plants are native in Mariners' Park, and the team hopes to continue growing this percentage.

Wildlife habitats need a more targeted approach to provide growth metrics that are measurables. Although plant choices in landscapes and restoration sites are intentional in their multi-beneficial nature, and the team takes the health of the entire ecosystem seriously, we are working toward developing more focused objectives.

In addition to tracking growth and success, the Park team must also weigh these metrics with the goal of maintaining a scenic habitat. Mariners' Park contains 300 forested acres and a lot of





opportunities for teachable areas where staff decide if it is best to leave downed trees or remove them. Generally, 10 percent of all downed trees remain as habitat for wildlife.

For non-wildlife-related outdoor recreation, the priority is hazard tree removal, which are trees that pose a threat to the community enjoying Mariners' Park. A majority of these hazards are trees over 100 years old — 57 percent of the trees in Mariners' Forest are centenarians. Staff must be extra vigilant in monitoring the health of all the trees that grace the Park.

### The Team

The Park Department has two dedicated individuals who care for Mariners' Forest. In early 2024, the Park team welcomed a new arborist, Danny Bandula. Danny has an impressive 20+ year career in forestry and arboriculture and brings enthusiasm and a love for the Living Collection. Javier Camacho, Park technician, joined the team in fall 2022. With a fondness for the outdoors and a deep interest in learning, Javier has significantly contributed to the successful growth of the Park's trees.

Mariners' Forest offers the community a unique perspective amid an urban environment. The care and feeding of the Living Collection will ensure its survival for generations to come.

*Erica Deale*

Director of Park Department  
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Arborist Danny Bandula and Park Technician Javier Camacho work to trim branches on a hazard tree in Mariners' Park as part of the forest management program.



# Cultivating Mindfulness

## by Connecting With Nature

An increasing body of research shows that time spent in nature has positive health benefits ranging from improved mood and increased energy levels to lower blood pressure. A recent study determined that people who spent two hours per week in nature were more likely to report good health and psychological well-being.<sup>1</sup> For many, it can be challenging to dedicate that much time. When we show up to a place like Mariners' Park and Lake with limited time, we may hear an inner voice saying, "Hurry up and relax!" or we may spend our time thinking about what we should be doing instead of relaxing, which takes us away from experiencing nature. We invite you to slow down, take a meaningful and intentional pause from rushing around, and set aside multi-tasking, using your senses to discover the beauty that emerges in the present moment.

Stress is a normal part of life and a valuable signal that we need to take action. When we are busy caring for others or checking items off our to-do lists, it can be easy to overlook our own processes for managing stress. Cumulative stress causes tension in the body and activates our sympathetic nervous system, putting us on alert with a fight, flight, or freeze stress response. Engaging in physical movement, breathing exercises, sensory experiences, and mindful self-compassion activates the parasympathetic nervous system to relax the alert signals and move the body and mind toward balance. Building

these self-care practices can help us get closer to engaging with the world as our hearts would desire rather than through the lens of our stress.

On the following page, you'll find a sensory awareness activity from one of our guided programs that can shift the mind from "busy" to "present." By tuning into each of our senses, allowing distractions to fade, and letting the past and future "just be," we can make the most of our limited time in nature. Try observing any thoughts or feelings that arise with curiosity or amusement rather than judgment: like watching leaves fall onto the water in front of you and drift away.

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1. White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. *et al.* "Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing." *Scientific Reports* 9, Article 7730 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-44097-3>



# Beyond First Impressions

## Sensory Awareness Activity

Consider a friend or a person you like being with. At some point, they were likely just another “person” you’d have passed by in a crowd without noticing. As you spent time and shared experiences with them, you felt more connected with them and saw them as more than just a “person.” When we look around in nature, we might say we see “trees, water, or birds” but those are just labels like “person” for us to move beyond. What might we discover beyond our first impressions as we explore through our senses?



A park visitor enjoys a moment of tranquility on the Noland Trail.

Find a place in the Park where you feel comfortable and safe. Take some time with each of your senses and notice beyond your first impression by spending a few minutes in mindful sensory awareness with each sense. Some optional cues are provided to help you get started.



Listen for leaves rustling, bird songs, human activity, or the water on the hull of your kayak or shoreline.



Look for ripple patterns and reflections on the water and light shimmering on the water or shining through the leaves. Explore the variety of shades of green, blue, and brown.



Feel the water or soil with your hand or the textures of tree bark or moss. How does your body move through this space, respond to the wind, or sway as you sit? We invite you to check in on the bodily sensations you feel as you experience this place. Are you holding any tightness/tension? Send some deep breaths to each of the places in your body that you notice and allow them to soften. Feel the weight of your clothing and how the wind and sun feel on your skin.



Smell the wind, water, leaves, soil, or your snack.



Taste your own water or snack, and notice how it feels in your hand or as you chew. We invite you to find an expression of gratitude for a few sips or bites.

\*Note: please don't taste the Lake, Park, or wildlife.





# Mariners' on the Move

The Mariners' team has been out and about, spreading our mission around the city and beyond! Here are some of our favorite snapshots of the team partnering with other organizations and participating in events to expand our impact in the community.



Horticulturist Savannah Allen at Lewis Ginter Conservatory for the Winter Horticulture Symposium.



The Mariners' team at the Peninsula Museums Forum holiday party. From left: Archivist Bill Barker, Membership Coordinator Rebecca Guest, Philanthropy Officer Sherri Fosdik, and Archivist Dalton Bradrick.



Creative Director Kyra Duffley (front row, right) attends an Earth Day 2 Earth Day event led by the Emerging Leaders Society (ELS). Members of the ELS and other event volunteers helped to clean up Mount Vernon Elementary School's native plant garden.



Science Educator Brandan Adams sits in a small submersible from MI Technical Solutions at the VDMC Digital Ship Challenge in Suffolk, where Hampton Roads middle and high school students competed in a ship design challenge.



# Mark Your Calendar!

Programs are offered in a variety of formats (in person, livestreaming, virtual), and subject to change. Times listed are Eastern.

## JUNE

- June **Lake Reopening**  
Date TBD
- Jun 9 **Friendly Hours**  
9 AM Quieter, less crowded Museum experience
- Jun 14 **USS Monitor Legacy Program**  
12 PM *Flag Officer Josian Tattnell*  
Presenter: John V. Quarstein
- Jun 22 **The Mariners' Sips & Trips**  
6:30 PM Presented by The Bronze Door Society  
USS *Monitor* themed food and wine event
- Jun 26 **Lil' Mariners' Wonder Wednesdays**  
9:30 AM Educational storytime for ages 2-4
- Jun 28 **What's Brewing?**  
10 AM Coffee, treats, and engaging conversation about what's happening at The Mariners'

## JULY

- Jul 9:30 AM **Lil' Mariners' Wonder Wednesdays**  
Educational storytime for ages 2-4  
Wednesdays, July 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31
- Jul 12 **USS Monitor Legacy Program**  
12 PM *Siege of Port Hudson*  
Presenter: John V. Quarstein
- Jul 14 **Friendly Hours**  
9 AM Quieter, less crowded Museum experience

## AUGUST

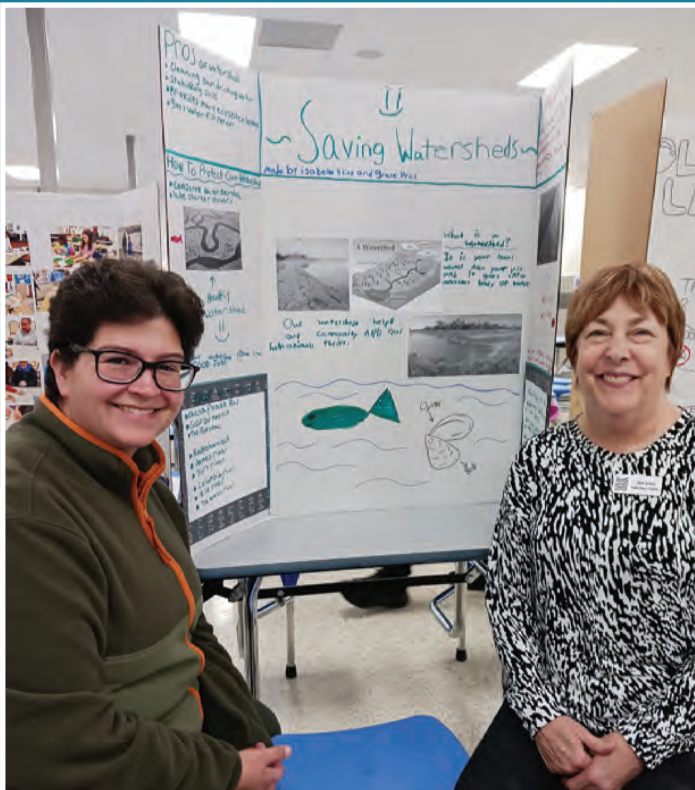
- Aug 9:30 AM **Lil' Mariners' Wonder Wednesdays**  
Educational storytime for ages 2-4  
Wednesdays, August 7, 14, 21 & 28
- Aug 2 **USS Monitor Legacy Program**  
12 PM *The Battle of Mobile Bay*  
Presenter: John V. Quarstein
- Aug 11 **Friendly Hours**  
9 AM Quieter, less crowded Museum experience

For additional programs & events, visit [MarinersMuseum.org](http://MarinersMuseum.org).

## LIL' MARINERS' WONDER WEDNESDAYS

Set sail on a magical adventure every Wednesday this summer!

Join us for a captivating storytime filled with imagination, laughter, and fun. From enchanting tales to catchy songs and exciting games, there's something every little mariner can enjoy!



Science Educator Brandan Adams (left) and Student Program Coordinator Jane Jones attend an Extended Enrichment Learning Celebration at Kilgore Gifted Center, where middle school students presented on local watersheds. Sixth-and seventh-grade students created posters and Lego models to show how local watersheds affect our environment and community.



Grant Writer Josi Washington visits Tradition Brewing to learn about the process for brewing the beer featured during Tide Brews & Good News, for which the Mariners' was the selected nonprofit.

# THE MARINERS' *Sips* & TRIPS

**Saturday, June 22, 2024**

Departure time: 6:30 PM

**All Aboard:  
A whirlwind voyage  
from New York to  
Newport News**



Set sail down the East Coast while enjoying international wines and delectable food pairings. Discover unique artifacts and hear fascinating stories of mariners who traveled aboard *USS Monitor*.

**MarinersMuseum.org/Sips**

\$60 Member | \$70 Guest | \$35 Nondrinker

**Presented by The Bronze Door Society**  
Proceeds from this event support conservation efforts for The Mariners' Museum and Park.

  
**The  
Mariners'  
Museum  
and Park**

100 Museum Drive  
Newport News, VA 23606

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Norfolk, VA  
Permit No. 287

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**MUSEUM ADMISSION IS \$1 PER PERSON.**

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## **MarinersMuseum.org**

Explore new ways to engage with the Museum, in person and virtually. Learn more about the Museum's Collection and how we can help you discover your own maritime connections!

### **Contact us for more information:**

Guest Relations  
(757) 596-2222

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(757) 591-7740

Advancement  
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