

Ahoy!

FALL/WINTER 2025

The Mariners' Museum and Park



**QUEEN
ELIZABETH'S
JOURNEY** pg 4

**DRAINING
THE
TURRET** pg 10

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



To our World of Champions,

Nearly a decade ago, our Mariners' Team fully committed to thinking about ourselves less as an attraction and more as a community resource for the local, national, and global communities we serve. A revised mission statement memorialized our shift in thinking:

The Mariners' Museum and Park connects people to the world's waters, because through the waters – through our shared maritime heritage – we are connected to one another.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a Collection – the art, artifacts, and archival material that comprise the Mariners' Museum Collection, and the forest, lake, and wildlife that comprise the Mariners' Park "Living" Collection – that first inspires an individual connection with this universal element of our shared identity, and ultimately our connection with one another.

It all sounds a little abstract at first, but one of the ways in which our Collection inspires connection is through the powerful emotion of "awe" – the feeling of wonder and reverence an experience can bring us. Consider Jennifer's story in our "Meet a Mariner" piece in this issue, and the preparatory role that experiencing the full-sky sunrise at Lions Bridge plays for Jennifer in connecting with fellow members of the Noland Trail walking community. The sheer size of the *Queen Elizabeth* model inspired awe in a young Ward Gypsom 85 years ago, launching a lifetime of connection to a broader community of "mariners." Even today, the tremendous size of *Monitor's* turret and the epic role that the "Little Ship that Saved the Nation" played in transforming the face of naval warfare evokes the sense of wonder that we feel when we wander into the proximity of the "real thing."

Our Mariners' Team is continuing to evolve and perfect how we use our Collection to awaken this sense of a shared connection to the water in each individual person with whom we engage, and how we ultimately support connecting with one another (the piece on the Fall Festival shares how we think about the event's role in convening our local community). Stay engaged with us in 2026, as we continuously redesign *our* work to better allow the Museum and Living Collections to do *their* work, humbling us to a sense of something bigger than ourselves.

Howard H. Hoege III
President and CEO



The Mariners' Museum and Park

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The Royal Worcester Oceanic Egg from 1986 is currently on display at The Mariners' Museum in an accessible storage gallery.

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Photo:

Brock Switzer



MEET A MARINER

Jennifer Sorrells

TOP Jennifer stands near Lions Bridge. Photo by Emily Ransone **BOTTOM** Ducks glide across Mariners' Lake under a beautiful pink sky. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Sorrells

The Mariners' Park is widely recognized as an urban oasis, an avenue for people to get away from the insanely fast pace of modern life. The Park and its five-mile walking path, The Noland Trail, has become a much-needed sanctuary for Newport News native Jennifer Sorrells. A local businesswoman and Army veteran, Jennifer found peace and comfort in the outdoors.

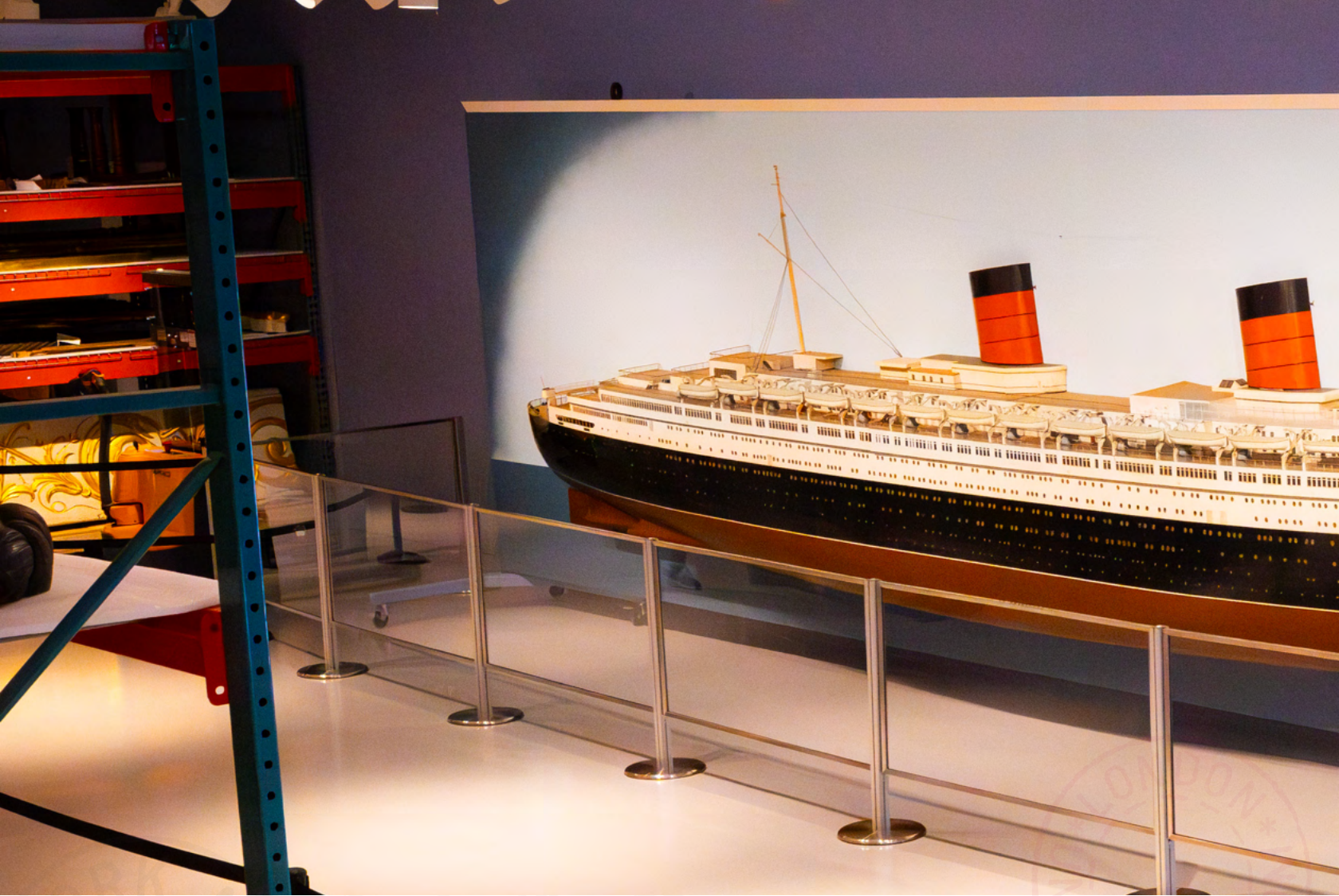
Jennifer started visiting Mariners' Park in early 2022 as a way to improve her health. "I started having health issues that I can't tell you about, because even the doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong," she shared. Suspecting burnout as the reason, Jennifer turned to health and wellness books and podcasts for inspiration on what she could do herself to get better. From there, she started going on early morning walks on The Noland Trail. Not only has regular walking helped her feel better, but being in nature and among other trail walkers has helped lift Jennifer's mood. She enjoys being on the trail so early in the morning because "the early morning crowd is happy and peaceful." She adds that it "feels like a community because everyone else is doing the same thing." If she misses a few days of walking, the other regulars will make sure she is doing okay, which really highlights the sense of community they all have created.

When she began her walking journey, Jennifer would start her walks at the Museum's main entrance, but then started going to Lions Bridge so she could watch the sunrise. "Sometimes [the sun] really puts on a show!" She commented that sometimes, the morning after a full moon, you can see the sun on one side of Lions Bridge near the treetops, and the moon on the other side over the James River. Jennifer loves taking photos and videos of her surroundings while in the Park, and has promised her friend and Mariners' staff member, Kelly Garner, that she will compile all those photos and share them with the Mariners' Team one day.

When not walking the Trail or working at her business, The Skin Bar, Jennifer enjoys camping and has recently picked up kayaking as a hobby. She fell in love with kayaking when participating in Lake rentals at The Mariners', and now wants to buy her own kayak so she can enjoy the open waters more often in other places.

■ Sarah Sumulong Jones

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT
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FROM ENGLAND TO NEW YORK TO NEWPORT NEWS

The Journey of a Ship Model

Measuring 33 feet long, the largest model at The Mariners' is proudly on view in one of our accessible storage galleries. Bassett-Lowke of England crafted the *Queen Elizabeth* model for Cunard to celebrate its new passenger liner of the same name in the British Pavilion at the World's Fair in Queens, New York, from 1939 to 1940. The model served as the centerpiece of a grand display celebrating "A Century of British Trans-Atlantic Shipping." Long-time supporter of The Mariners', Dr. Ward Gypsom, attended the Fair as a youth and remembers, "I'd never seen a model of a ship that big. And it was just purely amazing."

Before the ship that inspired this model could make her maiden voyage as an ocean liner, World War II broke out in

Europe, and *Queen Elizabeth* was swiftly refitted to serve as a troop carrier. She continued her wartime service until 1946, when she finally made her first journey as a luxury liner transporting passengers across the Atlantic to and from Southampton, England, to New York City.

The advent of WWII also changed the destiny of the *Queen Elizabeth* model. At the conclusion of the World's Fair, the prospect of shipping the model back across the Atlantic to a Britain engaged in actively staving off the Blitz was deemed too risky. Instead, Cunard sent the model to The Mariners' Museum for safekeeping for the duration of the War. It traveled by railway in a colossal crate that measured 36 feet wide and weighed two tons!

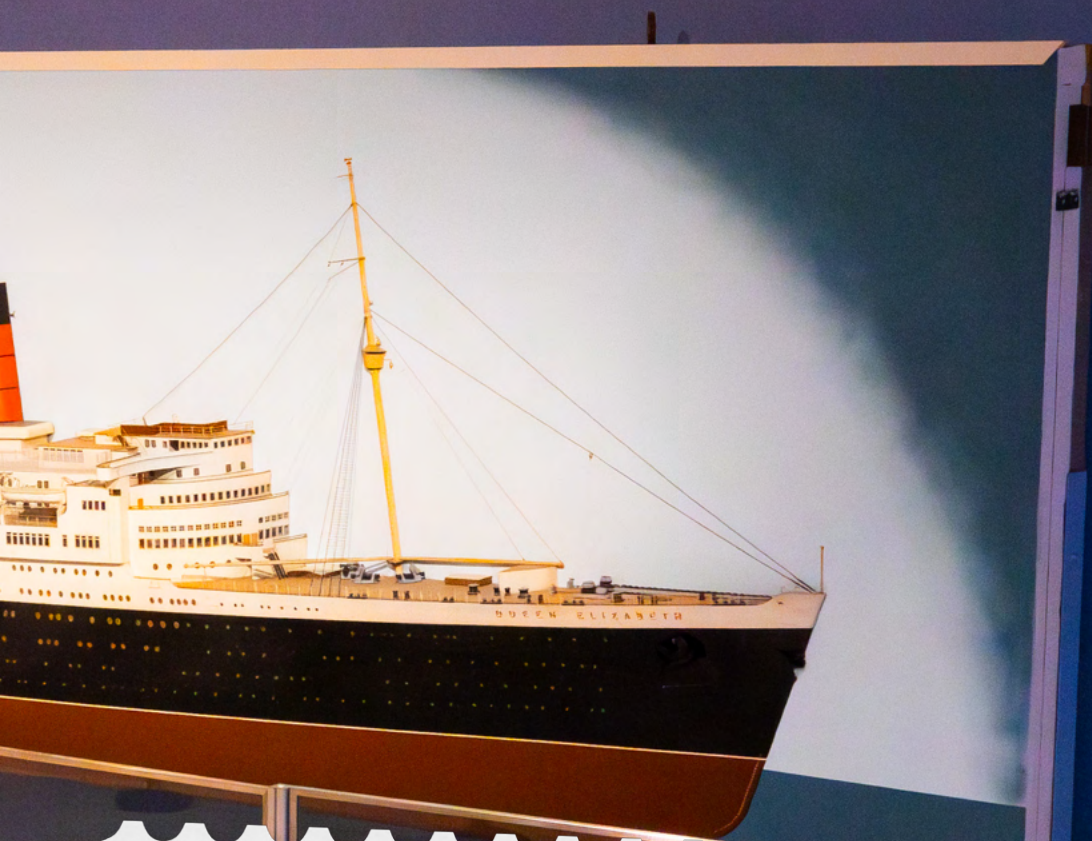


PHOTO Brian Townsend



TOP It's hard to miss the majestic *Queen Elizabeth* in this accessible storage space!
BOTTOM LEFT *Queen Elizabeth* was originally installed high on a wall in the former Great Hall of Steam gallery.
BOTTOM RIGHT Guests could get a much better view of *Queen Elizabeth* from its lower position.

We installed it high on the east wall of the Great Hall (now known as Speed and Innovation in The America's Cup) in 1941, where it remained until, in conjunction with a renovation of the Great Hall in 1990, the *Queen Elizabeth* model was relocated within the gallery to a lower display height to facilitate easier viewing. In 2017, the model was carefully encased in place to accommodate the installation of a new donation, the 72-foot hydrofoiling catamaran that Team USA raced to win the 2013 America's Cup. Last year, eager to once again share *Queen Elizabeth* with visitors, we moved the model to its current gallery, where it spectacularly commands almost half of that gallery's space!

Earlier this year, in recognition of The Mariners' more than eight decades of stewardship, Cunard transferred ownership to us, and this stately model officially became part of our Permanent Collection. We can't wait to begin planning the next 80 years of caring for and utilizing this extraordinary model to connect to our community of mariners!

■ Sarah Elizabeth Kelly

DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT
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A collection of nameboards lines the back wall of one of The Mariners' accessible storage galleries.

UNCOVERING SHARED HISTORIES THROUGH EXPANDED ACCESS

The journey towards accessible storage in the Museum began over three years ago, and we've made tremendous strides in integrating this strategy into our galleries. When we say "accessible" we don't just mean visibly. Objects will be more readily available for team members to provide care, while guests will learn more about the diversity of the collections, our role as stewards, and object stories. Most importantly, accessible storage is a platform for community engagement – to connect with and hear personal stories from guests. How does this happen? A couple of recent interactions come to mind.

Our ceramics gallery holds a unique object - a glass tube with layers of soil collected during the Panama Canal's

construction. When guests realize what the object contains, they quickly begin sharing their stories about traversing the Panama Canal. From Navy servicemembers to those who traveled recreationally on cruise ships - the Panama Canal experience is one with which many guests resonate. And those who haven't gone through it will talk about how they want to someday, or explain they have been through other canals in the world. Like canals connecting waterways to one another, a tube of soil samples is connecting us to each other.

The best encounters are when guests tell us more about the life of an object, and their specific relationship with it. While working in the gallery one day, two brothers noticed the Edward J. McKeever Jr. name board. They asked if it was from

the ship that worked the Tangier Island region. When we confirmed it was, they explained that they had worked on that vessel! They went on talking about their time working around Tangier Island and in the Chesapeake Bay. They explained how people would swing off the boat into the water for fun and to cool off. The two gentlemen concluded that the vessel provided memorable experiences not just for them, but for other people on Tangier Island as well. Seeing the name board recalled fond memories for the brothers, which they were more than happy to share. And we had the honor to be there when one of our objects sparked a personal connection. That's what accessible storage is all about.

Unlike an exhibit, accessible storage spaces will not contain as much interpretation. Our goal is not to just tell guests information, but to let them explore and engage in their own way. As the spaces grow, we plan to incorporate access to our catalog, so people can learn more about objects. Kiosks and other digital screens will help us display items that cannot go out due to their sensitivity, like photographs, prints, and other works on paper. But the best opportunity for community engagement and connection is for our team to continue being in the galleries, interacting directly with our guests. And that's exactly what we plan to continue doing. Community engagement builds trust and creates opportunities for people to feel safe sharing their experiences, with us and one another. Keep visiting the Museum to see how the spaces continue to change and grow, and make your own connections.

■ **Erika Ellis**
ASSISTANT CURATOR FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
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A tube filled with sand from the Panama Canal rests on a shelf in a cabinet that holds other glass and ceramic objects.

Mariners' Log:

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Share your connection to the water

From cherished memories to lifelong maritime passions, your story matters.

Tell us about your experiences on or near the water and help preserve our maritime heritage, inspiring others across the world to discover their own connection to the sea.



SCAN TO SHARE YOUR STORY





PRESERVING THE UNSEEN

How a Grant Sparked Transformation at The Mariners'

TOP Bank of America Intern Janie Qing labels the pages of the MS0199 - Frye photo negative binders with a unique digital ID to ensure images receive the correct file name once captured digitally.

In 2022, The Mariners' set out on a quest that would evolve far beyond original expectations. What began as a federal grant application to improve care of, and access to, photographic collections quickly became a transformative journey – redefining stewardship, access, and the value of our collective maritime heritage.

The project, ***Mariners' Access Initiative: Uncovering Hidden Maritime Cultural Heritage***, was made possible by a prestigious \$392,487 Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service, administered through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The goal: digitize and preserve more than 30,000 fragile photographic negatives that were inaccessible and actively deteriorating.

Many of these materials, stored on unstable cellulose nitrate and acetate film, were at serious risk. Nitrate, highly flammable when it degrades, and acetate, also prone to chemical breakdown in normal environmental conditions, presented urgent challenges. Physical indicators present included the strong smell of vinegar; while others were yellowed, warped, or shattered.

As part of the grant, the Museum committed matching funds to construct a custom Low Temperature Storage (LTS) unit – one of the few proven solutions to slow the degradation of photographic materials. But the project's impact didn't stop there.

This initiative touched nearly every aspect of our operations. From digitization to conservation to planning for future infrastructure, it was a true turning point.

The project aligned perfectly with The Mariners' commitment: conservation as its foundation, along with

access and value as core tenets. Identifying high-risk, nationally significant collections that had never been cataloged or digitized was just the beginning. These images reflect a wide range of American history – from maritime industries and labor movements to immigration, Native American culture, and the arts.

A 1990 assessment by the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress praised the Collection's richness and its relevance across countless disciplines. The materials, once tucked away and inaccessible, are now being preserved and brought into the public eye – where they belong.

Beyond preservation, the initiative delivered broader institutional benefits:

- Streamlined archival workflows
- Plans for long-neglected legacy collections
- Copyright and ownership verification
- Strategies for born-digital content
- Initial exploration of AI in collections management

As the project entered its third and final year in October 2025, it serves as a blueprint for managing future growth related to the galleries, the Center for the Collection, and expansion in environmental education.

Stewardship is more than storage and care – it's about providing value and telling our collective maritime stories. This project reminded the team that every challenge can lead to opportunity – and that even the most fragile pieces of the past can help build the foundation for a stronger mission and thriving future.

■ **Sabrina Jones**
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT
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Team Testimonials

Hear from some of the experts working on this transformational project and their personal takeaways.

Each project expert answered the following questions:

1. What is your recent favorite photograph?
2. What is the biggest challenge you have faced working through this massive project?
3. What are you most proud of?

Calli Force, MLIS - Archivist

1. The Levick ledgers show that a tricolor camera was sometimes used, capturing three filtered negatives at once and combining them into a single composite – an early form of color photography. This posed shot shows how intentionally they used color in their clothing, hair, and makeup. I've always been fascinated by the excitement surrounding the advent of color photography, and these photos are a portal to that time, making me feel as excited about this new technology as the people in the images.
2. Our biggest challenge is managing this project without a proper project management system. We've done our best with home-grown workarounds like Excel spreadsheets, but the lack of technology for managing a mass-scale digitization project like this makes things much more difficult and time-consuming, and increases the risk of error.
3. I'm proud that we've overcome significant challenges that would otherwise derail a project of this size and scope. Through many iterations of the team, new hires, lack of proper training or technology, and incomplete collections, we continue to produce digital objects (ahead of schedule) and formally address outdated institutional policies. Our work is shaping future Collection stewardship initiatives, setting us – and future Mariners' staff – up for success.

Emily Ransone - Digitization Technician

1. One of my favorite images is from the John Frye Collection. It features a woman weaving wire together to

make crab traps. She is identified as Miss Shirley Webb of the Northern Neck of Virginia. Frye's photographs document people and places along the peninsula, giving me a unique glimpse into the history of where I grew up and deepening my appreciation for the community of folks working on the water.

2. The biggest challenge was navigating change and uncertainty. The SAT grant, vapor-proof wrapping, and LTS occur in the same space and require the same team. A minor setback in one area could have major implications for another. Before construction could begin, our collection of 1,600 ceramics had to be relocated. It was all-hands-on-deck and a major accomplishment. Once construction began, some staff members had to vacate their workspace for months, pausing work for the grant. Early in the year, when the SAT Grant had been canceled amid federal cuts and restructuring of IMLS, we had to begin pivoting, and pivot once more once the grant was reinstated.
3. I am proud of the team for utilizing the pause and all of our experiences from the first year of the grant as an opportunity to make improvements to our workflow. We were able to develop a game plan for collections with more complex requirements.

Alex Vitale - Project Cataloger

1. I have a number of favorite photographs that I've come across!
2. So far, the biggest challenge is determining the photographers for collections that include more than one. For example, the Levick collection contains photographs from a variety of different photographers, and they aren't always credited, so it is difficult to determine who to include in the official records.
3. I am generally proud of the records I've created – 20,864 to be exact – and I feel like I am doing something useful for the community! The collections I've worked on so far highlight both the working-class watermen as well as maritime leisure culture. It gives unique perspectives on how the water can benefit us all. I'm proud to help disseminate this information to the wider public!

LEFT (Calli) This image would have gone through a colored filter and been combined with two other negatives to create a single composite image. From the Edwin Levick Collection.
MIDDLE (Emily) Miss Shirley Webb gives us a glimpse into the hard work woven into Virginians throughout the decades. From the John Frye Collection.
RIGHT (Alex) A pup enjoys the breeze on the back of a boat. From the Edwin Levick Collection.





Geoffrey and Christopher Fosdick travel around the circumference of the turret.



Tour participants take in the impressive scale of the turret.



Archaeological Conservator Leslie Haines leads a tour inside *Monitor's* turret tank.



The iconic turret sits in its drained tank.

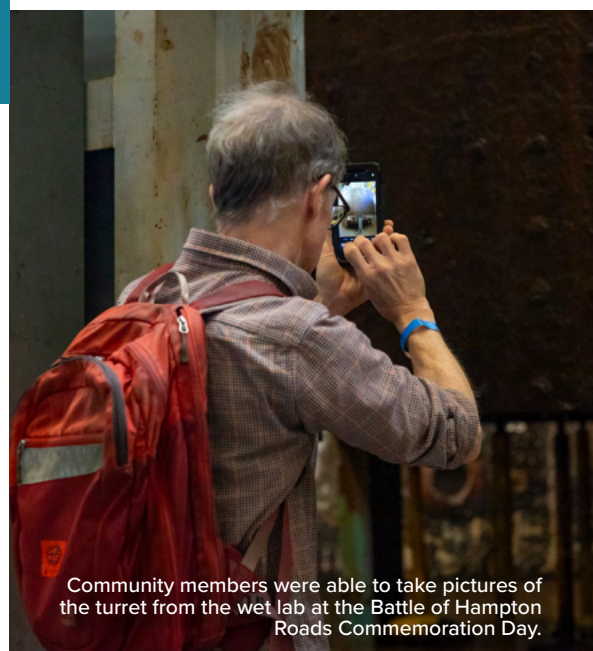


A member of the Conservation Team carefully works on *Monitor's* turret.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH USS MONITOR'S TURRET



Donors and members listen to Archaeological Conservator Laurie King as she gives information about the turret.



Community members were able to take pictures of the turret from the wet lab at the Battle of Hampton Roads Commemoration Day.

PHOTOS Kyra Duffley and Tim Kines

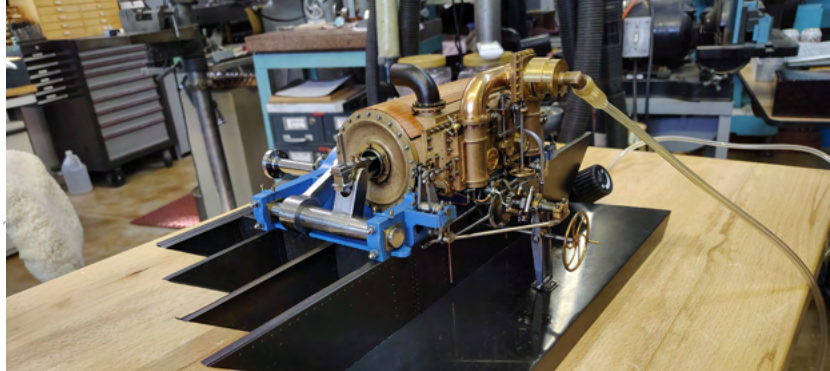
The crowd gazed through the observation window into the wet lab with phones in hand, ready to capture pictures of the rare sight. Viewers cascaded down the staircase to the door below, where a stream of visitors waited to enter the lab. Brimming with reverence and anticipation, they walked through the doors and into a room with high ceilings, where a massive tank stood. One by one, guests crept up to the tank's open door and peeked inside, stunned by the sheer scale of the 115-ton turret from USS *Monitor*, a solid mountain of steel and history towering over a shallow pool of liquid.

This scene played out multiple times throughout the Battle of Hampton Roads Commemoration Day in March 2025, when the turret tank, typically filled with a caustic solution inhibiting a clear view of the iconic artifact, was drained for conservation needs. The last time the tank was drained was in 2019, and this was the first time the draining coincided with the Commemoration Day. The annual event centers on the pivotal battle between USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia*, and this year, the community was able to see the revolving gun turret that determined that battle's fate and changed the course of naval warfare.

Though the general public could view the turret from outside the tank, members and donors received an exclusive offer to climb inside the tank for a close-up view and tour. Donned in waders and gloves, small groups of supporters swished around the turret's perimeter, craning their necks to see how high up the object extends. The Mariners' Conservation Team led these experiences, providing stories and insights into the object's brief but impactful life.

The tank was drained for several weeks, allowing dozens of guests to engage with the object. The reach of *Monitor*'s stories expanded with each new set of eyes that landed on the turret, and the community was able to forge a deeper connection with the ironclad. This year's Battle of Hampton Roads was the most well-attended to date, speaking volumes about the interest the community has in this monumental piece of maritime history.

■ **Ashley Lambert**
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
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TOP Rich's intricate miniature of USS *Monitor*'s propulsion system.

BOTTOM The Multimedia Team films Rich and Will discussing the engine's operation: note the scale of the model in relation to the people!

TINY, BUT MIGHTY: Replica of Monitor's propulsion system advances conservation efforts

Through generous donor support, three Mariners' Team members headed out to Green Bay, Wisconsin, this summer to capture the story and work of Rich Carlstedt. Carlstedt, a retired production engineer and model maker, has spent more than 20 years completing the world's most accurate working miniature of USS *Monitor*'s propulsion system. The 1/16th scale miniature captures every detail of Captain John Ericsson's two-pistoned engineering marvel. Utilizing surviving historical records, mechanical engineering and steam technology research, and consultation with personnel at The Mariners', Carlstedt has brought the complex mechanism back to life! His work has been critical to understanding not only how two independent steam engines worked together to turn the vessel's propeller, but also how they were made and assembled. This information has been invaluable for the conservation team as they have worked to conserve the archaeologically recovered 25-ton engine system, which was raised by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the US Navy in 2001. The goal of the trip was to capture three story lines with the first focused on how the engines were turned on, controlled during operation, shutdown, and maintained, the second on how Rich recreated a complete set of design plans and physically built the miniature, and the third on his personal journey that led him to make it.

■ **Will Hoffman**
DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION AND CHIEF CONSERVATOR
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BUILDING BRIDGES

Community Engagement

One of The Mariners' most critical goals is to empower community members to identify as mariners. One way to advance this mission is through opportunities for the community to connect to the objects, stories, and people that define what it is to be a mariner, and to ensure these opportunities are easily accessible. We're always seeking ways to remove barriers and construct bridges between the Museum and the community. \$1 admission is a bridge. No-cost student programming is a bridge. Another bridge brings in swaths of mariners each year: group experiences.

During group visits, The Mariners' customizes experiences to the backgrounds and interests of the participants, resulting in personalized visits that enable guests to see themselves reflected in our Heritage and Living Collections. With Mariners' staff coordinating these visits, bonds naturally arise between community members and the team, highlighting the connections that flow from the Collection's stories.

■ **Ashley Lambert**

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
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PHOTOS Brian Townsend and Kyra Duffley

Newport News Shipbuilding employees observe *The Angle Shed*, a painting by Thomas C. Skinner



Reflections From the Team

A host of memorable groups visited the Museum and Park in 2025. Our team recalls a few of the experiences that had a significant impact on them.

COMMONWEALTH CATHOLIC CHARITIES

I approached the group of young visitors with both enthusiasm and trepidation. I worried about finding common ground with children from a distant country, many of whom spoke primarily the language of their homeland. My worries fell away within a few moments of hitting The Noland Trail. What I experienced was not differences, but similarities. Their excitement over colorful lichen, their wonder at the sun reflected off the Lake, their curiosity about the woodland called to mind my own wonder and curiosity as a child—things so often lost or forgotten in the midst of busy adulthood. These children, unlike me in many ways, reminded me that our outward differences belie our inward commonalities, and that we share a common bond when we walk the same path—even for a moment.

Sherri Fosdick

Senior Individual Philanthropy Officer



A group of children and adults from Commonwealth Catholic Charities looks over a bridge during their walk on the Noland Trail.

THE ARC OF GREATER WILLIAMSBURG

For the last three and a half years, The Arc of Greater Williamsburg's evening program has had frequent presentations at their location in Williamsburg covering a range of topics, such as maritime mythology, USS *Monitor*, and R.M.S. *Titanic*. Of course, they have always asked questions and have been fascinated by the interesting artifacts people can see throughout the Museum! Thoughts of visiting the Museum one day had always lingered in the air!

In July, those thoughts became an exciting reality. Members of the Curatorial Department welcomed and led 52 participants, staff, and volunteers on their first-ever after-hours tour through the Museum spaces. The sounds of elation, camera flashes, questions, commentary, and all the smiles made this particular visit a most memorable experience for everyone involved.

Wisteria Perry

Associate Curator, Community Engagement



Guests from the Arc of Greater Williamsburg pose in a boat located in the Mediterranean Gallery.
Photo courtesy of the Arc of Greater Williamsburg

NEWPORT NEWS SHIPYARD

The longstanding history between the museum and Newport News Shipyard continues to grow. Most recently, the shipyard hosted their Summer Kickoff Event at the Museum. Vice presidents, executives, managers, and other employees working with interns participated. The goal was to give interns an opportunity to network with one another and the executives of Huntington Ingalls. They explored the galleries in teams to complete a shipyard-themed scavenger hunt. They also got a behind-the-scenes look into library and archival material reflecting Newport News Shipbuilding's history. This is one of several events the museum has partnered with the shipyard over the past years. Our connection with the Newport News Shipyard remains strong, and we are fostering this relationship as we look to our centennial.

Erika Ellis

Assistant Curator, Community Engagement



Newport News Shipbuilding employees observe *The Angle Shed*, a painting by Thomas C. Skinner



PARTNERSHIPS IN PLAY

The Community Effort That Launched The Discovery Project

In previous *Ahoy!* editions, we've brought you along on our vision and progress of the Discovery Project. Excitingly, the updated Lil' Mariners' Playzone and early childhood outdoor classroom opened to the community this summer!

The ideas and dreams behind the Discovery Project started in 2022 when a well-loved play ship had to be removed. At that time, Dominion Energy partnered with us to provide a playground made from trees in Mariners' Forest! After two years and hundreds of children enjoying the playground, it was time for a refresh. Simultaneously, the team took the opportunity to create a new outdoor classroom and remove invasives in an adjacent space. The Rotary District 7600 and the Annie Belle Reavis Toccuri Foundation saw the vision for a new combined space to provide a welcoming and fun place for children of all ages. Collectively, this space gave rise to the Discovery Project.

Within the latest Lil' Mariners' Playzone, two bench swings, two bucket swings, and one fully accessible swing with a new sidewalk leading to it were installed. Additionally, the team added interactive gameboards and balance beams. A local Eagle Scout rebuilt the picnic tables to complete the space. Within the outdoor classroom, it was important to create a space geared specifically towards early childhood education. The Mariners' Custom Productions Team hand-carved and painted whimsical benches themed to programmatic elements throughout the Mariners' early childhood curriculum. Additionally, the Mariners' Landscape Team designed and installed a new area containing all native plants to surround the classroom in natural color and pollinators.

The thoughtfully-designed updates to the Bumblebee Learning Garden are part of a larger effort to welcome our youngest mariners into the Museum and Park. The garden is the setting for programs that cater specifically to the learning goals of PreK students. Our most notable of these programs is Wonder Wednesdays, a story time for kids ages two through four that combines songs, books, and games into an engaging half-hour of fun. We've just completed our



Young learners work together to plant seeds.

second iteration of Wonder Wednesdays, which ran throughout the summer of 2025, and it was a smashing success. Children disguised paper bugs in the garden to demonstrate camouflage, grew a bean sprout as part of a lesson on the life cycle of a plant, and collected leaves for leaf rubbing. Even more exciting was the addition of Spanish/English dates, offered every other week, where children practiced Spanish nursery rhymes and listened to a story in both English and Spanish. Community feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and The Mariners' is thrilled to be able to serve this segment of the community in a purposeful way.

The Bumblebee Learning Garden is also home to a program that is offered to our community's early learning centers. Wild About Pollinators is designed for students ages three through five and focuses on pollinators and how we can take care of those that live in our environment.

In crafting this space for early learners, The Mariners' continues to invest in providing a sense of belonging for all children, no matter their age. We look forward to expanding programming in our Bumblebee Learning Garden!

■ Amanda Abrill

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

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LEFT Colorful new benches brighten up the early childhood education outdoor classroom. | **MIDDLE** A child plays during Wonder Wednesdays. **RIGHT** The Mariners' Custom Production Team have a laugh while installing benches in the Bumblebee Learning Garden.

PHOTOS Kyra Duffley and Tim Kines



Early childhood learners gathered to use the newly installed custom benches for the Wild about Pollinators program.

LIL' MARINERS' WINTER WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays • 9:30 a.m.

January 21-February 25

Available in Spanish on select dates.

For six weeks only!

Did you and your little mariner enjoy our summer program, Wonder Wednesdays? Then get ready to keep the fun going with Lil' Mariners' Winter Wednesdays! Join us each week as we embark on a new learning adventure, filled with stories, educational games, and fun songs.



FREE program for kids ages 2-4.

Scan the QR code, registration is encouraged.

MarinersMuseum.org/series/Winter-Wednesdays



A SEASON OF CONNECTION

2025 Mariners' Park Fall Festival Highlights

Under crisp blue skies and the changing colors of autumn leaves, the 2025 Mariners' Park Fall Festival welcomed more than 3,000 on November 1 for a day of connection, local flavor, and family fun. This beloved community tradition once again transformed Harvey Field into a lively hub filled with music, hands-on learning, creativity, and laughter – a celebration of everything that makes the Mariners' Park so special.

The Festival generated an estimated \$71,720 in total revenue, supported by sponsorships, donations, beer sales, vendor fees, and proceeds from race organizers, Flat-Out Events. Guests enjoyed sampling beverages from 14 regional breweries and cideries, and offerings from eight local food vendors. Proceeds from this event benefit the stewardship of Mariners' Park, which attracts 225,000 annually.

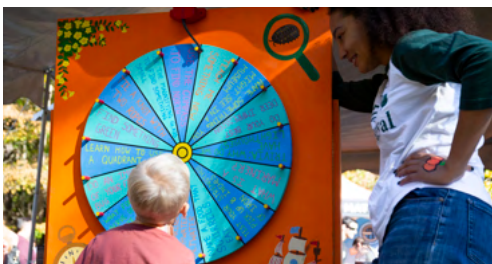
Throughout the day, 15 community and educational organizations presented interactive exhibits and demonstrations. The Peninsula Master Naturalists, Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association, and HRSD provided engaging activities focused on conservation and water quality. Graduate students from the Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science presented their research and facilitated hands-on activities.

The Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Conservation Police, and Christopher Newport University's Wildlife Research Team offered educational experiences related to forest health and wildlife. Other highlights included presentations by Project Healing Waters, the USS *John F. Kennedy* Medical Team, TRANSCAER, and the Teeny Tiny Farm petting area.

The Mariners' Team organized themed children's activities, such as pumpkin painting, carnival games, and nature-based challenges, connecting recreation to the Park's ecosystems and maritime heritage. Members of the Mariners' Lake® Team also provided instruction on kayak safety and shared information about accessibility initiatives and volunteer opportunities.

The success of this year's Festival would not be possible without the dedication of 81 Mariners' Team members and 36 community volunteers, including representatives from the Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School, Warwick High School Key Club, and the Rotary Club. Their efforts ensured a memorable and well-coordinated event that celebrated both community partnership and the natural beauty of Mariners' Park.

TOP LEFT Guests decorate pumpkins from the Festival's pumpkin patch. **TOP MIDDLE** Collections Management Technician Montana Coward chats with a contestant at the Wheel of Wow carnival game. **TOP RIGHT** Young mariners practice their paddling techniques. **BOTTOM LEFT** Noland Trail 50K & Relay runners enjoy a celebratory drink and kettle corn after the race. **BOTTOM RIGHT** A proud artist shows off her pumpkin painting skills.



The Museum extends sincere appreciation to the organizations that made this event possible:

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HRSD, and PBMares.



A poster of the evening's presenters greets BDS Annual Dinner guests.

A LEGACY OF STEWARDSHIP

Founded in 1997 by a dedicated group of community members, the Bronze Door Society was created to preserve our shared maritime heritage. Today, it proudly stands as the oldest member-managed affinity group at The Mariners' Museum and Park. Its name honors the Museum's iconic Bronze Doors, which have welcomed visitors since the original building opened in 1933.

Throughout the year, the Society hosts events that bring members together and connect the community to the Museum's Collection – such as the popular Mariners' Sips & Trips each June. The year culminates with the Annual Dinner, where members vote to fund projects that advance conservation and care of the Collection.

To date, the Bronze Door Society has contributed more than \$1.5 million toward the Museum's stewardship efforts. This year's Annual Dinner, held on October 24, welcomed a record 114 members and raised \$218,025 in support of six conservation projects and the newly established Bronze Door endowment – a remarkable testament to the Society's enduring commitment.

2025 Project Highlights

Project 1: Advancing Access & Preventive Conservation: A Model for the Future

Over the past two years, the Mariners' Team has worked to make more of our Collection visible through accessible storage. More than 2,000 objects have been moved into gallery spaces for the community to enjoy. Protective cases and vitrines safeguard artifacts from dust and environmental changes while keeping them on full display. With the reorganization of Gallery 2 (located just off the lobby) now complete, funds for this project enable the Museum to enclose the gallery's shelving with acrylic and maple casework. This upgrade will enhance conservation, improve staff access, and allow visitors to experience even more of the Collection up close.

Project 2: The Bronze Door Society's Fund for Heritage Conservation

In partnership with The Bronze Door Society, the Museum has achieved remarkable progress in conserving our Heritage Collection. Our Conservation Team has doubled, hundreds of artifacts are now accessible to our community, and our research has advanced new treatments in conservation science. To continue this standard of excellence, the Society has established **The Bronze Door Society Endowment for the Heritage Collection**. The purpose is to support conservation activities, and is structured to underwrite personnel costs, internships, or fellowships, and direct costs for the active conservation and preventive care of The Mariners' Collections.

As you consider your year-end giving, please think about a contribution to the BDS Endowment.



SCAN TO SUPPORT

Library & Archival Materials Conservator Emma Guerard examines a photo under a microscope.



The Mariners' Museum and Park

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.



◀ Mariners' Team members get a behind-the-scenes tour of Peake Childhood Center's new facility. From left: Bronze Door Society Member Suzanne Beckstoffer, Grants Administrator Tina Gutshall, Director of Education Harriet Smith, Early Childhood Program Manager Amanda Abrill, Development Officer Amy Swan, Senior Philanthropy Officer Sherri Fosdick, Community Outreach Coalition's Director of Workforce Training Taunya Harris, and Peake Childhood Center's Executive Director Jennifer Parish, Ed.D. Photo courtesy of Peake Early Childhood Center



▶ From left: Senior Science Educators Shantelle Landry and Claudia Moncada and Educator Ellie Stockner help out Chesapeake Bay Foundation with their living shoreline work.

▶ Members of the Education Team volunteered with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to move roughly 13 crates of oyster castles in Hampton. Courtesy of Sue Mangan Photography



COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

▲ Royal Worcester of England produced this stunning egg as part of a 1986 series inspired by Carl Fabergé to mark the 100th anniversary of the artist's first egg. The gilt porcelain base features three mermen with tridents on opalescent waves and a pale green band of horses. The cup's gold center features a wave design topped with a single pearl. Scenes of ships and marine life and a gold knob of Neptune adorn the lid's exterior, while its interior reveals Neptune's portrait. This work of art, on display in our ceramics gallery, is another example of how accessible storage expands opportunities for the community to engage with our Collection.



Battle of Hampton Roads Commemoration
March 7



Mark Your Calendar!

Join us for these special events in 2026

Winter Wednesdays

Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.
January 21 - February 25

USS Monitor Legacy Program

Monthly: select Fridays

MilKids Festival

April 19

Battle of Hampton Roads Commemoration

March 7

Public Lake Rental Season Begins

May 23

Sips & Trips

June 27

Fall Festival

November 7

Scan the QR code to stay updated on all programs and events



MUSEUM ADMISSION IS \$1 PER PERSON.

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) 952-0418

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Education
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