

**Board of Trustees
Education Committee
Saturday, May 16, 2026, 9 AM
Virginia Museum of Natural History
Distance Learning Classroom, In-Person only**



MINUTES

The Education Committee of the Virginia Museum of Natural History Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting in-person at 9:00 AM on Saturday, May 16, 2026.

BOT MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Nathan Sanford (Chair) Ms. Lauren Hall
Ms. Cathy H. Manion Dr. Mindy VanDevelder

BOT MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Emma Ito

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Christy Deatherage (Education Manager)
Ms. Lila Dougherty (Exhibits Manager)
Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (Minutes)

WELCOME

Ms. Christy Deatherage opened the meeting at 9:00 AM with a welcome and opportunity for introductions. A quorum was present for business to be conducted.

EDUCATION UPDATES

Ms. Deatherage reported very strong numbers of students served in the third quarter. Quarterly comparison data indicated an increase in both programs delivered and individuals served in 2026. Ms. Deatherage reviewed other activities supported by education staff during the quarter.

- Hands-on table and craft activity during Bug Day event
- Several scout sleep overs and programs
- Manned an immersive experience for guests at the Starlington Gala event

Ms. Deatherage highlighted the activity of off-site educators and noted the opportunity to serve all areas of the Commonwealth.

Ms. Deatherage informed the board that education staff will be collaborating with the Virginia Library System this summer presenting 45 programs at 17 sites across the Commonwealth. This is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the museum. Board members offered suggestions such as giving passes to summer program participants and creating a “passport” for children who attend several programs. It was noted that local Teachers for Tomorrow programs often look for volunteer opportunities during the summer which may fit nicely with the mission of both organizations. Additionally, some school divisions promote the opportunity to earn a community service sticker to be added to high school diplomas, which may appeal to some students.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Ms. Anabelle Sechrist was recently appointed to the Martinsville City Tree Board as the museum's liaison.

The Virginia Master Naturalist SW Piedmont Chapter along with museum staff worked to revitalize the garden in front of the museum with native species plants. Additional projects are on the horizon such as cleaning out the monarch waystation and replanting the garden strip between the parking lot and the front patio.

EXHIBIT UPDATES

Ms. Dougherty shared information about some of the exhibit work completed in the previous quarter.

- The VA 250 exhibits were completed including a new case in the lobby and additional cases in the Hall of Ancient Life and Virginia Waterways.
- Work on the Young Explorer's Center continued through the ideation process, gathering of technical specifications from firms, and developing a cohesive theme.
- Renovation of the Library space and hallway included painting and securing contracts for new flooring and new lighting.
- The Waynesboro library display was revitalized.
- The Waynesboro outreach trailer was outfitted with new exhibit materials.
- Reptile Festival T shirt design was extremely popular and sold out!

DISCUSSION

Ms. Manion and Dr. Vandevelder suggested a seed exchange or giveaway next spring. Possibly to coincide with Mother's Day.

Ms. Deatherage reminded the committee that in addition to the Library programs, staff would be busy with multiple week-long summer camps for various ages. There are still some scholarships available for these camps.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 9:44 AM.

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be held:

Saturday, August 15, 2026, at 9:00 AM.