VMNH Board of Trustees Education and Public Programs Committee

November 14, 2026, 9:00AM, VMNH

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Approval/review of October 30, 2025, May 16, 2026, and August 15, 2026 meeting minutes
- Education Updates-
    - Quarterly Numbers Served - (graphs attached)
        - At-the Museum highlights – Four Summer Adventure Camps were held during June and July with 58 children participating, Dino Festival activities highlighting microscopic fossils and popular tile art, over 100 Homeschool family members attended our Homeschool Open House to start the school year, and over 350 Danville City Schools 5th graders visited the museum and participated in educator-led programs in September
        - Outreach highlights – Wrap-up of educator-led programs with libraries across the state for their “Unearth a Story” Summer Reading Program with 64 programs serving 1,849 participants (map attached), Bird Focused information table at the Nature Expo at Smith Mountain Lake State Park, and summer afterschool programming with Boys and Girls Clubs and MHC After 3
- Department Updates:
    - Department staff renewed their CPR/First Aid Certifications
    - Artist Suzanne Stryke education programs with homeschool students
    - Rosemary Wagoner, Waynesboro based outreach educator, scheduled for Fall programs in the Charlottesville area
    - Received $5,000 from Monogram Foods Loves Children Foundation, $5,000 from Robert E. Browning Fund, and $1,000 from Captain Til Lester Fund towards program scholarships. Pending proposal with Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation (total $15,000) towards science festival support and program scholarships ($6,000)
- Exhibit Updates with Ms. Dougherty

Education & Public Programs Committee
VMNH Board of Trustees
Thursday, October 30, 2025, 3 PM
Fully remote meeting

Present: Mr. Nathan Sanford (Chair)
Ms. Cathy Hincker (BOT)
Ms. Emma Ito (BOT)
Ms. Christy Deatherage (Education Manager)
Ms. Annabelle Sechrist (Educator)
Ms. Jordan Brim (Educator)
Dr. Joe Keiper (Executive Director)
Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (Staff)

Not Present: Ms. Lauren Hall (BOT)
Ms. Gail Vogler (Foundation)

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Christy Deatherage welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 3:00 PM. Museum educators Annabelle Sechrist and Jordan Brim introduced themselves to the committee. It was determined that a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sanford made a motion to approve minutes from August 9, 2025, May 17, 2025, and November 16, 2024. Ms. Ito seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

EDUCATION UPDATES

- Ms. Deatherage noted that the contact numbers look robust, and the education department is now fully staffed with programming in full swing. Ms. Deatherage showed pictures of Dino Festival featuring an interactive activity developed in collaboration with Dr. Adam Pritchard. This was a very well received activity.

- The team has recently completed STEM programing for all Danville City 5th graders who visited the museum within the span of two weeks.

- The staff is currently conducting a Virginia Master Naturalist Program which is a statewide program. VMNH is a host for a local chapter consisting of about 40 people. Christy is the chapter advisor, Ms. Brim is chapter basic training chair, and Ms. Sechrist

is enrolled in the class. Classes are held each Monday evening. Topics are presented by subject area specialists from the museum and around the commonwealth. Graduation is in December.

- The outreach educator providing programming in the Waynesboro area is working to make regional connections. She provided programming in a couple of elementary schools in the previous quarter.

- The museum has three small greenhouses on the property, two of which are utilized by other groups, and one of which is being used by our home school group to grow lettuce. Students planted seeds and each week are measuring growth. They will take the lettuce home in December. Additional soil experiments will begin in January.

- The Jean S Adams Education Pavilion has been used numerous times for programming, outdoor student lunch, and teaching area. Teachers have been very appreciative of the new space.

- Staff continue to take advantage of professional development opportunities with Ms. Sechrist earning the *Certificate of Interpretive Guiding*.

- Ms. Deatherage reminded the committee that the educators will be attending and presenting at the Virginia Association of Science Teachers in November. Their topic will be: The Power of Real, Utilizing Museum Specimens to Deliver Powerful Programming.

- Ms. Deatherage noted the recent upgrades to the technology in uncovering VA: Carmel Church Quarry which included installation of a large TV monitor and a looping slide show have been well received by teachers and repeat visitors.

In summary, Mr. Sandford, mentioned his appreciation of the healthy programming trends and noted it was great to see the new staff and level of engagement.

GRANT UPDATE

Ms. Deatherage stated that we have not heard from our $10,000 Monogram Food Loves Kids grant renewal. This grant provides scholarships for classroom programming and aids with support for our science festivals.

With nothing further to report and no further business, Mr. Sanford adjourned the meeting at 3:32 PM.

The next meeting of the Education and Public Programming Committee will be on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 9:00 AM.

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

Virginia Museum of NATURAL HISTORY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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.

DRAFT

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.

DRAFT

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be held:

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

Board of Trustees
Education and Public Programs Committee
Saturday, August 15, 2026
Virginia Museum of Natural History
In-person Only

MINUTES

The Education and Public Programs Committee of the Virginia Museum of Natural History held their quarterly meeting at 9:00 AM on Saturday, August 15, 2026, at the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

BOT MEMBERS PRESENT:	Ms. Lauren Woodson Hall	
	Dr. John Almarode	
BOT MEMBERS ABSENT:	Mr. Nathan Sanford	Ms. Cathy Manion
STAFF PRESENT:	Ms. Christy Deatherage (ex officio)	
	Mr. Ryan Barber	Ms. Jennifer Whitlow

WELCOME

Ms. Deatherage welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting at 9:05 AM. A quorum was not present, so no votes could be taken. Dr. John Almarode was welcomed to the committee with brief introductions.

EDUCATION UPDATES

Ms. Deatherage reviewed the number of programs and students served in both the final quarter of 2026 and overall year-to-year comparisons. It was noted that June was a very busy month with Library programs accounting for the significant increase in numbers served. Ms. Deatherage reminded the committee that programs are heavily supplemented with grants from individuals, localities, and corporate sponsorships.

The Waynesboro outreach educator successfully provided public and homeschool programing during the school year and provided many library programs this summer. Opportunities to expand programming in the Waynesboro area are being explored. The final numbers regarding all library programs will be available at the November meeting.

Ms. Deatherage briefly talked about the department's practice of using surveys to evaluate programs. In short, each teacher receives a survey with a variety of questions following a program. The survey response rate is generally good at the beginning of the year but falls off especially early in the spring semester.
General discussion ensued about best practices and/or incentives to increase survey response rates and ways to combat survey fatigue.

Ms. Deatherage reminded the committee that she and her staff are certified Project WILD/Project Learning Tree trainers and can serve as excellent resources for teachers who are uncomfortable teaching natural resource SOLs to their students.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Education staff members Anabelle Sechrist and Jordan Brim served as judges for the Patrick County High School Science Fair.

The homeschool Open House and Registration event was well attended and beneficial. The program continues to serve new students and repeat families year to year.

Local funding from Henry County and Martinsville City supplements the salaries of our two educators.

EXHIBIT UPDATES

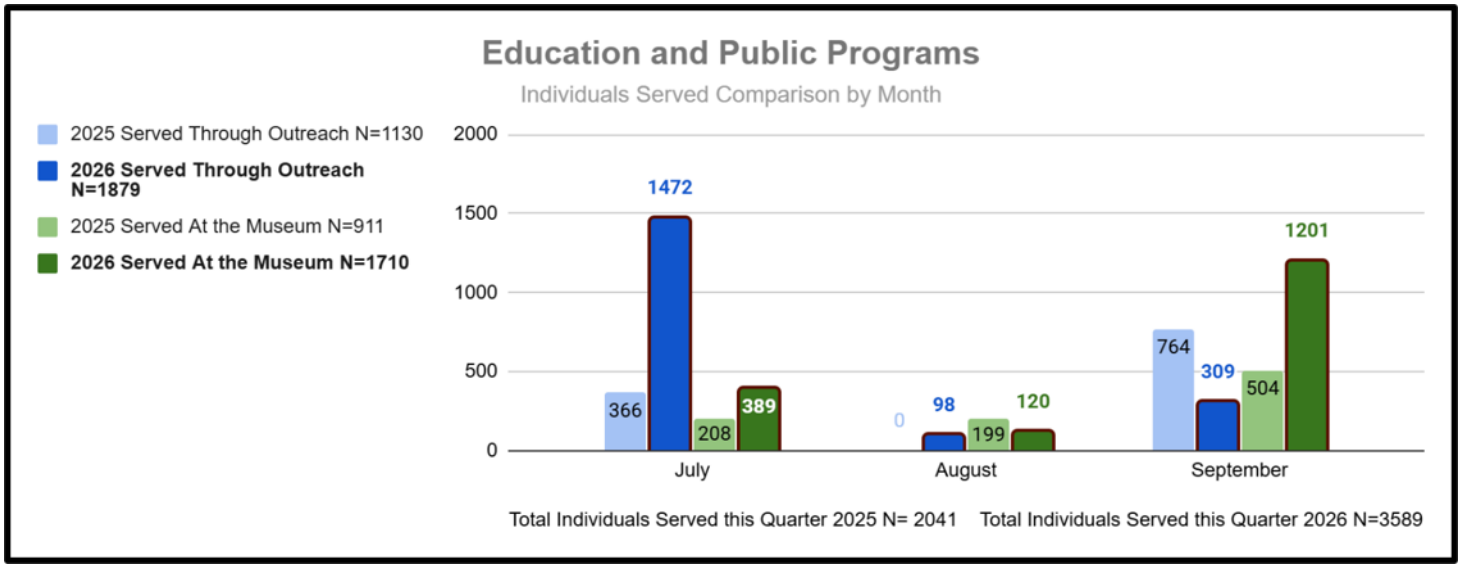
Mr. Barber spoke on behalf of the exhibits department and reported that seven exhibits are in various stages of development or removal. The most immediate of which is the installation of the traveling Smithsonian exhibit, Water/Ways. Some of our own collections will be used to supplement this exhibit. Mr. Barber further reported that elements of the current Dinosaur Discovery exhibit will be removed incrementally to make way for the Young Explorers Center to open late July 2027. Followed by the Petra exhibit taking over the current children's play space in October 2027.

Mr. Barber stated there is ongoing work to secure grant funding for education programming along with exhibit sponsors with the goal of working two years in advance.

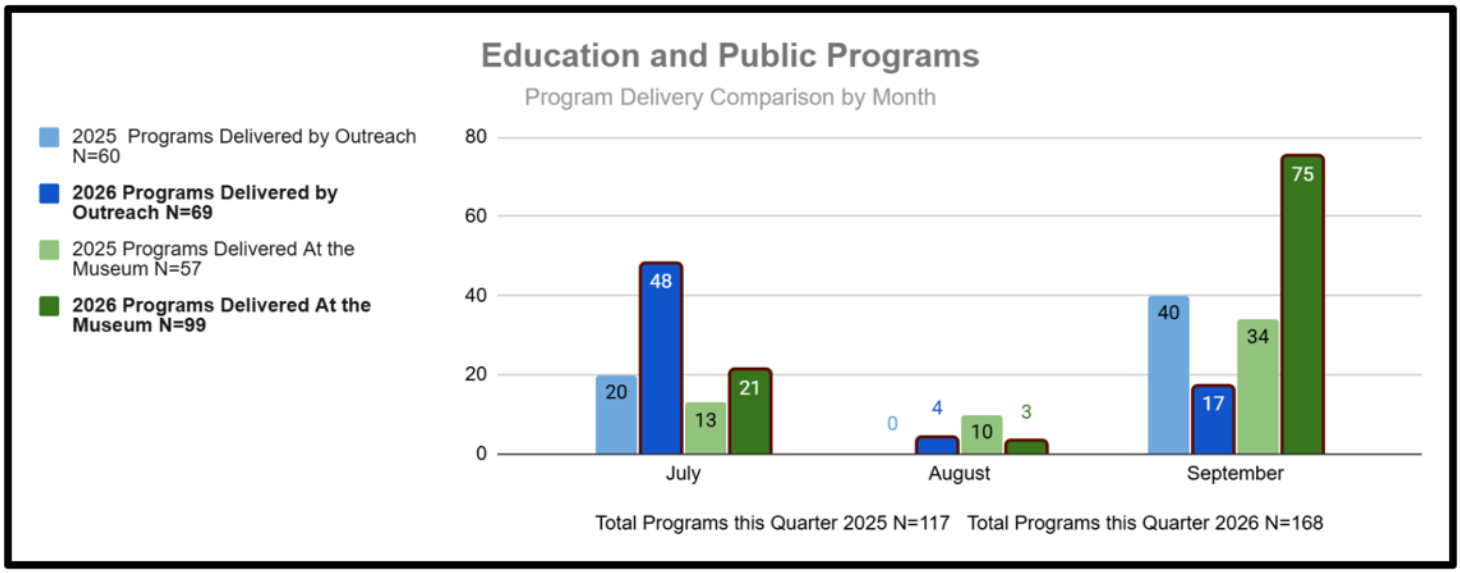
ADJOURNMENT

With no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 AM.

Comparison of Individuals Served July – September 2025 and July – September 2026



Comparison of Programs Delivered July – September 2025 and July – September 2026



2026 Summer Library Outreach Programs:

64 programs

1,849 Served

