



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor

September 24, 2015

Virginia Living Museum
Board of Trustees
J. Clyde Morris Blvd.
Newport News, Virginia 23601

President Rolf Bartschi,

Since Governor Mills E. Godwin, Jr. presided over the dedication of the Junior Nature Museum and Planetarium on Nov. 13, 1966, Virginia's governors have long recognized the importance of the Museum in science and environmental education.

Governor Gerald L. Baliles opened the new Virginia Living Museum on May 17, 1987, marking the first living museum east of the Mississippi and its leadership role in the use of living exhibits to present its message – connecting people to nature through educational experiences that promote conservation.

When Governor George Allen and his family visited in 1997, Susan Allen said the Virginia Living Museum was their children's favorite museum in all of Virginia.

Governor Mark Warner presided over both the groundbreaking in 2002 and the opening of the museum's \$22.6 million expansion on March 28, 2004, an expansion that tripled the museum's exhibits and programming.

This past March, I was pleased to present the Museum with a Governor's Environmental Excellence Gold Award recognizing its mission of promoting stewardship and conservation practices through engaging exhibits to promote sustainable practices by Virginia residents and 50 years of environmental education for millions of Virginia students.

Virginia's natural resources are unique, from the mountains to the sea. As a "living museum" with 250 species including 12 endangered or protected, this institution promotes our native environment and serves as a sanctuary for non-releasable native wildlife. The Museum's citizen-science, research, environmental education and conservation programs contribute to sustaining and stewarding the Commonwealth's natural resources for future generations.



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Environmental literacy is a key component of my administration's conservation efforts. We need to make sure that our students are graduating with the skills and knowledge they need to protect Virginia's natural resources. Learning about our environment is a great way for children to understand important scientific concepts that will prepare them for the new Virginia economy.

The Virginia Living Museum has been doing that for 50 years, providing quality, hands-on STEM education that is recognized for excellence by the Virginia Department of Education. The Museum also partners with the state in providing "meaningful watershed experiences" as part of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Let us not forget the role the Virginia Living Museum plays in the economy. Tourism is an instant revenue generator in Virginia. In 2014, visitors spent \$22.4 billion, which supported 216,000 jobs and contributed \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes. A major contributor to that revenue are Virginia's authentic, local travel experiences, such as the Virginia Living Museum.

A goal of my administration is to ensure that Virginia is business friendly. To make that happen, Virginia has to have a great quality of life. At the Virginia Living Museum, families protect what's precious – what's precious in the environment and what's precious as a family spending time together.

Tonight, I salute the Virginia Living Museum on its 50th Anniversary of providing visitors the opportunity to experience nature like never before. May this upcoming year be one of celebration and anticipation for the next 50 years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terence R. McAuliffe".

Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia