



# Colonial Williamsburg News

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG'S PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS  
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## The Williamsburg Inn Named Five-Star Recommended Hotel by Forbes Travel Guide

Williamsburg Inn is now a Forbes Travel Five-Star Recommended hotel. The Williamsburg Inn will be showcased with all of the Star Rating recipients on [ForbesTravelGuide.com](http://ForbesTravelGuide.com).

“Forbes Travel Guide awarding the Williamsburg Inn with a Five-Star Recommendation is a testament to the hard work and first-class service our team strives to provide our valued guests every day,” said Florencio Ferrao, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation vice president of Hospitality. “We are all proud of the accomplishment and are honored to be a part of the elite Five-Star honorees.”

“Here at Colonial Williamsburg, we are very pleased to have earned the Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star

Recommendation,” said Mitchell B. Reiss, Colonial Williamsburg president and CEO. “We share this honor with each member of our Colonial Williamsburg team for helping to make it possible. And we look forward to welcoming our visitors and guests to experience the quality of service and range of offerings unmatched anywhere.”

Forbes Travel Guide is the only independent, global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas. Started as Mobil Travel Guide in 1958, the company created the first Five-Star rating system in the United States. Today, Forbes Travel Guide’s incognito inspectors travel the world, evaluating properties based on up to 900 rigorous, objective standards.

### TOP VA SITE TO VISIT—USA TODAY READERS’ CHOICE

Colonial Williamsburg won the USA TODAY 10Best Reader’s Choice Award for “Best Virginia Attraction” in a field that included Mount Vernon, Monticello and Arlington National Cemetery. The category’s finalists were nominated by a panel of experts and voted upon by social-media followers.

# Liberty Lounge Welcomes 100k Visitors

Colonial Williamsburg’s Liberty Lounge, a complimentary space for ticketed military guests to relax and recharge in the Historic Area, welcomed its 100,000th visitor Feb. 3. The milestone comes less than two years since the lounge first opened its doors May 26, 2016.

Part of a broad military outreach initiative led by Elisabeth Reiss, wife of Colonial Williamsburg President and CEO Mitchell Reiss, the Liberty Lounge is staffed full-time by 63 Foundation volunteers with more than 435 years of collective service in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

“It was a dream of mine to create a special space for our military guests and their families to recharge while visiting Colonial Williamsburg,” said Elisabeth Reiss. “We could never have anticipated the overwhelming support the lounge has received from guests and the community, and we are grateful to our volunteers, donors and corporate sponsors for making it all possible.”



*Elisabeth Reiss appears with Liberty Lounge volunteers and Colonial Williamsburg guest **David Cook**, a World War II veteran.*

*Military Interpreters **Justin Chapman** (left) and **Tom DeRose** (right) were among the early visitors to Liberty Lounge.*

Elisabeth Reiss added that the Liberty Lounge assists volunteers and staff with communicating the year-round military discounts and offerings available to Colonial Williamsburg guests, including complimentary and discount admission through the Honoring Service to America program, sponsored by the Home Depot Foundation, and discounts on Colonial Williamsburg hotels, food and beverage, military retreats, golf and spa services.

Volunteers relish the opportunity to thank veterans and make their visits special. Volunteer Bill Pearson commented, “My father and my father-in-law were WWII veterans. Both my grandfathers were WWI veterans. I spent 30 years in the Air Force and a tour in Vietnam. The time I spend in the Liberty Lounge is very special. When a Vietnam veteran’s granddaughter comes up to me just before they depart the lounge and tells me, ‘Grandpa has never talked about that before.’ That’s very special. When the wife of a deployed soldier comes into the lounge because she and her daughter are trying to have a little vacation while ‘dad’ is gone, and she quickly feels the comfort of the lounge — that’s very special. When a WWII veteran’s son sits his dad down on the couch and starts telling you all he went through, and then you get him to relive some of those experiences — that’s very, very special. That’s why there is a scrapbook — thank you for your service — may we never forget.”



## SKATE WITH A COP

“Skate with a Cop Night” was hosted by CW Public Safety on Feb. 2 at Liberty’s Ice Pavilion. CW Public Safety Officers David Frick, Sherry Jackson, Elke Schmidt and Samuel Wulfeck, along with the Williamsburg Police Department, skated and answered questions from the public.

# Thomas Everard House 300th Anniversary

## Library exhibit celebrates one of the Historic Area's oldest homes



*As one of the oldest restored original buildings in the Historic Area, touring the Everard House is especially exciting for those who love the decorative arts. The photo above, circa 1911, shows the house before its restoration that began in the early 1950s.*

“Celebrating Three Hundred Years at the Everard House,” an exhibit to accompany the observance of the 300th anniversary of the Thomas Everard House, opened recently at the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library. The exhibit includes manuscripts, corporate documents, photographs and drawings. Highlights include original letters written by Thomas Everard; letters, postcards and photos relating to later residents; brochures

and photos from the official opening in 1952, and notebooks, drawings and even paint and dendro samples documenting the house’s restoration.

The exhibit is free and open to the public during library hours Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and will be on view until Aug. 31. Visitors must ring the doorbell at the library’s front door to gain admittance.

In addition to a series of special tours highlighting the house’s

restoration process and its archaeology, interior furnishings and three centuries of residents, visitors may also see archaeological artifacts unearthed at the Everard site by taking the tour “Rubbish, Treasures, and Colonial Life: The Archaeology Labs.” Tours are listed on the events calendar on [colonialwilliamsburg.com](http://colonialwilliamsburg.com) and require an advance reservation. Everard House is open for tours Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

# Behind the Scenes

## You may not see them, but their work is vital

Long before they walk down Duke of Gloucester Street, guests plan their visits to the Historic Area. While most access the Foundation's two main websites as they plan, for those guests who want to ask questions, clarify information and get recommendations from someone who knows, the Call Center stands ready to be the first voice of Colonial Williamsburg.

"We are complicated," explains Call Center Operations Manager Michael Foster. During a call, a representative is moving between nine different webpages and software programs, including two dining systems, the Marriott system, our own Foundation ticketing system, as well as sites for independent hotels and four different resort properties, and all this is in addition to the center's calling software that collects data on each interaction.

On an average day, the Call Center, located on the second floor of the Group Arrivals Building at the Visitor Center, will receive approximately 400 calls from potential visitors, and these calls may increase to upwards of 1,200 daily calls during our busiest seasons. This dedicated cadre of veteran employees answer 200,000 calls each year.

Before the internet, the center em-

ployed about 50 representatives. Today, even during peak season, there are about 22. Having a website helps, but the web doesn't provide all of the services callers need. About 70 percent of callers have already accessed the website before they pick up the phone.

Representatives are experts on options available, and are aware of their responsibility as the first voice of Colonial Williamsburg for most guests.

According to Holly Belena, one of the Center's supervisors, "People from all over the world contact our Call Center to make reservations. We are a 'one stop' service for the thousands of visitors who come here each year."

There is no doubt that the high quality of service the phone representatives offer to guests contributed to recent accolades our Hospitality division earned, from the Five-Diamond rating by AAA to Five Stars from Forbes Travel Guide.

Foster encourages other Foundation employees to visit the center, especially those planning special events and promotions. He says, "If our representatives know more about what we offer, they can encourage callers to attend special events or take advantage of special offers."



## ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATE

Security, Safety, and Transportation has been divided into Public Safety; Environmental, Health & Safety; and Transportation.

The Environmental, Health & Safety team promotes workplace health and safety, environmental protection, and regulatory compliance. It also provides training and information on health, safety, and compliance with state and federal regulations. This group also oversees workers' compensation.

The EHS Team includes: Karen Stone, director; Burke Humphrey, occupational health specialist; Katherine Pitts, safety inspector; and Flor Garcia, senior workers' compensation claims specialist.

Public Safety provides security throughout the buildings and properties, and responds to medical emergencies. You will notice a stronger presence of officers in the Historic Area focused on guest service and safety.

Transportation continues to manage and provide bus service for our guests.

Public Safety and EHS offices are in the Franklin Street Annex and Transportation offices are located at the Vehicle Maintenance Shop.

For more information, visit the E, H & S Intranet Site in the Safety Toolbox.



Call Center employees are proud of their contribution to the Inn's success in earning a Five-Star rating from Forbes. Standing, from left, Pat Mann-Taylor, Katerina Salamo-Smith, Call Center Director Michael Foster, Angela Saabye, Kim Dunnigan, and Brandi Moyer. Seated, from left: Stacey Heedram and Holly Belena.

# Your Story: Holly Belena

by Chuck Reusing

**POSITION:** Call Center Supervisor

**YEARS OF SERVICE:** I have been employed by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for approximately 3 1/2 years and have been in my present position for almost two years. Prior to this, I worked as a front desk clerk at the Williamsburg Lodge.

**WHAT I DO:** I am one of three Colonial Williamsburg Call Center supervisors. We have about 16 Call Center agents at our Call Center, and I will supervise about six of these agents, answer questions that they might have, address any issues that may occur and serve as a resource for each of them.

**WHAT I DO TO IMPROVE THE GUEST EXPERIENCE:** For many visitors to Colonial Williamsburg, the Call Center staff is the initial contact resource for these people and we want these contacts to be helpful and informative to our guests, whatever their needs and requests might be. We expect that each of our calls will be answered within at least two minutes and most calls will average between 15-20 minutes in duration. Some calls may well exceed this, depending on the reservations to be made. I love helping and assisting our Call Center agents in performing their jobs. Based on some of our recent surveys, guest satisfaction is now about 95 percent for these guests when they make their reservations through our Call Center. Some of our guests visit the Call Center and request to meet and thank our staff for their assistance. As supervisors, we make every effort to ensure that our agents are current in the information that they provide, including room availability in our hotels and what Colonial taverns are open for dining during each day.



*Holly Belena supervises call center representatives, making sure they have the most up-to-date information to answer callers' questions.*

**MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES:** One of my more memorable experiences involved a woman who had been visiting Colonial Williamsburg over many years. During our conversation, she also said that she had recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness and that this would be her final visit here. She became somewhat distraught when she learned that the Williamsburg Lodge, where she had requested room reservations, was already sold out on the dates of her planned visit. I subsequently reached out to all of our hospitality staff, including Colonial houses, and explained my situation to them. Fortunately, we did have a last minute cancellation at the Lodge, and I was able to confirm her reservation on the dates she requested, and I was even able to get her room upgraded for three full days. This obviously meant a great deal to this woman, and she

was most appreciative of my efforts and concern in helping her. She even wanted to meet me personally during her visit. This will always remain a very special memory for me.

**BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Colonial Williamsburg was totally new to me when we moved to this area. Learning more about Colonial Williamsburg and its many diverse programs and resources, and beginning as a desk clerk at the Williamsburg Lodge and then transferring to the Call Center as a supervisor — all within a rather short period of time — was a great accomplishment for me and my career. I am proud of the career I have made here already.

**INTERESTS/HOBBIES:** In my spare time, I enjoy reading true crime-novels and making different arts and crafts with my hands.

# Interpreter Certification Nearly Complete

Interpretation of history, the method we use to engage guests in the Historic Area, has a time-honored history of its own with scholarly roots. Now, those who practice it here will have the chance to earn recognition in the form of certification for their skills.

Interpreters must quickly create a connection with guests. Rather than a memorized speech, interpreters craft an interpretation in response to individual interests, offering guests a one-of-a-kind experience. Interpretation, therefore, requires presentation skills and a depth of specific knowledge to quickly pull guests into a meaningful experience.

To support interpreters' efforts to maintain the highest standards in their field, the Foundation initiated last September the Certified Interpretive Guide Certification through the National Association for Interpretation. This professional certification offers front-line staff a shared vocabulary and set of principles to shape their interpretations. This approach advocates for thematic interpretation rather than simply telling a chronological story.

"The CIG Certification training focused staff on linking tangibles with intangibles, or finding the deeper meanings within a resource that can create a connection with a guest, said Colleen Ziemba, who manages the CIG program here. "By identifying the common ideas, experiences and emotions of the human experience—these universal concepts to which all humans can relate—we emphasize the relevance of the 18th-century period to the modern guest.

"Like the guest, the people who dwelled here knew tragedy, love, betrayal, hope, joy, freedom, change and growth," she said "When guests see themselves in these spaces and faces, then they will want to return, invest and support the interpreters and the institution at large."

Beyond shaping interpretive style, the certification aims to integrate the Colonial

Williamsburg staff into a larger corps of interpretive professionals, giving critical recognition to their field.

The process involves a 40-hour intensive course with an NAI trainer that covers the core requirements for certification, which include writing a program outline, delivering a 10-minute interpretive program and completing a 50-question multiple-choice literature review of interpretive research. During training, interpreters incorporate the principles of interpretation—POETRY: Purposeful, Organized, Enjoyable, Thematic, Relevant, and You—into their 10-minute interpretive program. They lend support to each other through peer reviews and as audience members during presentations. An NAI trainer evaluates their work using a rubric based on the POETRY elements. On the final day of training, interpreters take the literature review exam, and if successful, are granted a certificate valid for four years.

To renew the certificate, interpreters must complete 40 hours of additional professional development that the Foundation plans to support through a continuing



*Paul Bennett, director of Coach & Livestock, makes his final presentation as part of his certification process.*

education program.

The Certified Interpretive Guide Certification training was completed March 1, involving 311 full-time front-line interpreters and a handful of auxiliary staff. All 101 frontline interpreters trained in 2017 received certifications. The remaining staff who sought certification will receive notification soon.



## NEW NATION BUILDER

As part of its recognition of Black History Month, each Tuesday in February, the Hennage Auditorium presented a glimpse into the life of Aggy of Turkey Island, as portrayed by Mary Hardy Carter. In the one-woman performance, Aggy shared her perspective as a slave who had a long-term relationship with Ryland Randolph and was not accepted by society or others in the Randolph family, despite Ryland's plan to take care of her and the two children that were likely his.



## CW Employees Visit Smithsonian's African American Museum

by Nicole Trifone

More than 50 Colonial Williamsburg Foundation employees recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to tour the only national museum devoted exclusively to the story of African American life, history and culture.

Stephen Seals, who portrays Nation Builder James Armistead Lafayette and serves as the Foundation's liaison for community outreach, arranged the Jan. 24 trip to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture for interpreters and Foundation staff.

Before the museum opened to the public, the Colonial Williamsburg group was invited to take part in a question-and-answer session in the Oprah Winfrey Theater with Rex Ellis, an associate director of curatorial affairs with NMAAHC and a former vice president of the Historic Area with Colonial Williamsburg.

"We want to be a place that helps Americans see American history through an African American lens," said Ellis, who also worked as the director of African American Interpretation during his tenure with Colonial Williamsburg. "My hope is that this day will provide you with ideas that help you also do that day-to-day."

After the session with Ellis, employees toured the nearly 400,000-square-foot museum, where visitors can explore the history of African Americans from the slave trade to the modern day, seeing how their stories contributed to American culture along the way.

It's not the first time Colonial Williamsburg employees loaded a bus and headed to NMAAHC. Ahead of the September 2016 opening of the new museum on the National Mall, Foundation employees and First Baptist Church congregants delivered the church's Freedom Bell, which was rung by President Barack Obama, first lady Michelle Obama and four generations of a family descended from slaves.

"This was a great opportunity for our interpreters, and one we've wanted to make happen since the museum opened," Seals said. "Our two institutions are committed to sharing the American story, and the centrality of the African American experience in that story. I know I'm not alone in saying I left the NMAAHC inspired."

A donation from Alcee William Polk helped to partially fund the January trip.



### April is National Volunteer Month

#### April 15-21 is National Volunteer Week

Make sure to give a heartfelt "Thank You" to our volunteers!

#### Colonial Williamsburg's Volunteers are the best!

- Colonial Williamsburg has approximately 900+ volunteers that contributed over 100,000 hours in 2017
- Ages 12-95, our volunteers leave their mark in history!



## Challenge Grant

A private foundation has awarded Colonial Williamsburg a \$250,000 challenge grant, which requires a 1-to-1 match from individual donors, to fund upgrades and restoration to structural systems and improvements to the grounds and gardens of the Governor's Palace complex. We welcome contributions of any size toward our goal of raising an additional \$250,000. If employees encounter individuals considering a gift to Colonial Williamsburg, they are encouraged to share this opportunity with those potential donors.



*Shown (left to right): Kelvin Dillard, cook at King's Arms Tavern and Sandra Wiggins-Elliott, lead console operator for Operations' Work Control, both celebrated 25 years of service. Leroy Graves, Senior Conservator of Upholstery, celebrated 50 years.*

## Twenty-Year Club

One hundred employees celebrated Foundation employment anniversaries in 2017 during a dinner event at the Williamsburg Lodge that combined Twenty-Year Club and Milestone recognitions for the first time. Twenty-one employees celebrated a milestone of 20 years with the Foundation; 28 had served for 25 years; 22 for 30 years; 21 for 35 years; four for 40 years; one for 45 years; and three for 50 years.

## Family and Friends Admission Vouchers Available

Current full-time employees, as of January 31, 2018, with a valid CW ID, are entitled to ten free admission tickets to Colonial Williamsburg.

Casual employees are entitled to five vouchers.

Vouchers will be available in the Franklin Street Offices Lobby on Friday, April 13 from 4 – 6 p.m. and at the Old Craft House/Taste Studio on Tuesday, April 10 from 3 to 6 p.m.

## Marketplace

- Kingsmill golf bag. Green color. \$50. Like new. Contact Scott Russell at x7443.

Send your news, including items to sell and information about marriages and family additions, to Kerri Albertson at kalbertson@cwf.org by April 16 for inclusion in the May issue of *CW News*.



*Two of the newest masters, Richard Sullivan and Mark Hutter (second from left and third from left) appear with Senior Master Ken Schwarz (far left) and some of the other masters in Historic Trades. They are (from Hutter's left) John Boag, Garland Wood, Frank Clark, George Cloyed, Ted Boscana and Jason Whitehead.*

## Employee Advancements in Trades

Workers in the Trades celebrated the achievement of four employees who recently earned journeyman and master-level credentials. They were joined by Mitchell Reiss, Ghislain d'Humières, Peter Seibert and Ken Schwarz.



*Journeymen Kimberly Costa, from Historic Foodways.*

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