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THE ROBINS NATURE CENTER AT MAYMONT REOPENS APRIL 5 NEW JAMES RIVER EXPERIENCE WILL DELIGHT, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE ALL AGES

An immersive new James River experience will make a big splash with guests at The Robins Nature Center when it reopens to the public on Sunday, April 5 from 10am to 5pm. The attraction has been closed since November 1 to complete renovations and enhancements, the first major improvements since it originally opened in 1999.

Themed “Run of the River,” the \$2.3 million project will highlight the remarkable ecology of the James River located along Maymont’s southern border in Richmond, and it also will emphasize the natural history of the area and environmental stewardship opportunities for the community.

“The new James River experience at The Robins Nature Center is filled with innovative and imaginative activities for young guests and visitors of all ages,” said Parke Richeson, Maymont Executive Director. “It’s a celebration of Richmond’s iconic waterway and the place it holds in our hearts for recreation, appreciation and delight. I’m excited to welcome the community to explore the river’s diverse natural wonders through fascinating digital technologies and engaging fun.”

New features will include:

- **River Reach** – A 34-foot-tall centerpiece sculpture that encourages active play and learning within a series of netted rising platforms that depict microscopic river organisms. *Made possible through the generosity of Jeanette Lipman through The Lipman Foundation in memory of her grandson, Sage MacFarlane, who loved everything in nature.*
- **Freshwater Interactive Animation** – An extraordinary multimedia experience that replicates lifelike interactions with animals and water in a river environment. Fish were scanned using photogrammetry, and a vibrant, realistic underwater simulation was achieved with additional photographs, CG artistry and other inventive technology. A collaboration of the Digital Life Project, the Natural History Museum at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Richard Lewis Media Group. *The Digital Life Project will provide eight Maymont animal 3D models to scientists, educators and the general public free-of-charge for nonprofit use.*

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- **Digital Pool Touch Stations** – Two virtual shallow pools with touch responsiveness, teeming with wildlife and native plants waiting to be discovered.
- **Run of the River, Activity and Exploration** – Lively recreation, characterized by the textures and energy of the James River, with rocks to climb, a beaver lodge to visit, a kayak to hop in, and other playful pursuits.
- **Run of the River, Education and Inspiration** – Giant river murals, vividly illustrated species information, fascinating facts and figures, life size (and larger!) animal models, and simple citizen science options designed to engage guests in the river ecosystem.
- **My James River Learning Tools** – Fun facts, short videos, river trivia and opportunities for action in an entertaining app on multiple screens, providing a new way to engage and educate school groups, program participants and daily guests.
- **Dynamic Fish Identification** – Realistic digital animal illustrations to identify the aquatic and terrestrial life in the aquariums, learn about their remarkable abilities and instincts, and test your water wisdom.
- **Enhanced Guest Amenities** – More merchandise, souvenirs and a book nook in the guest entrance lobby, improved snack and beverage vending, and digital access to daily programs, upcoming events and other opportunities for involvement.
- **Aquarium Upgrades** – Improved habitats and heating systems for the resident fish, turtles, venomous snakes and other animals and new lighting that allows better visibility for guests.

“Guests can explore the amazing biodiversity of the James River like never before,” said Krista Weatherford, Maymont Director of Programming and Community Engagement. “Everything from the virtual interactions with turtles and otters to the tactile play spaces and fun facts will delight visitors and enhance appreciation of Richmond’s greatest natural resource. We’re especially eager to use all the new teaching tools to inspire curiosity in school groups, summer campers and lifelong learners.”

The Robins Nature Center, a 29,000-square-foot attraction, is the largest facility of its kind in central Virginia and holds close to 30,000 gallons of aquaria showcasing animals of the James River and Chesapeake Bay. Approximately 45,000 guests – including tens of thousands of local students – visit for hands-on environmental education each year.

The Robins Nature Center will reopen to the public on Sunday, April 5 from 10am to 5pm with special activities at Maymont on opening day and throughout Spring Break Week, April 6 to April 12.

This renovation is the capstone project of Maymont’s \$26 million dollar Spirit of Generosity capital and endowment campaign. Major funding for The Robins Nature Center upgrades and enhancements is provided by Moses D. Nunnally, Jr. Charitable Trust, The Lipman Foundation, Beirne Carter Foundation, Mary Anderson Harrison Foundation, Barbara A. Peers Trust, and Marietta McNeill Morgan & Samuel Tate Morgan, Jr. Trust.

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Daily admission to the new James River experience at The Robins Nature Center is \$8 for adults and youth ages 13 and older; \$6 for children ages 3-12 and seniors ages 65 and older; and free for children ages 2 and under. Maymont members receive free admission year round.

For more information on The Robins Nature Center renovation and reopening, visit www.maymont.org/nature-center or call 804-358-7166, ext. 310. Parking and entry to the attraction are located at 2201 Shields Lake Drive in Richmond.

The Spirit of Generosity campaign was a multi-year, multi-project capital campaign that supported efforts to preserve and protect Maymont. In addition to The Robins Nature Center renovation, other advancements included restoration and construction of a central administrative office and event space at 1000 Westover, renovation and expansion of the Maymont Farm, upgraded interpretive and way-finding signage, new windows at Maymont Mansion, and an endowment for the historic estate.

Since 1975, Maymont has been maintained and operated by the nonprofit Maymont Foundation. The Foundation is committed to creating experiences that delight, educate and inspire its guests. More than \$3.5 million must be raised each year through donations to keep the estate and park open to the public. Maymont Foundation administrative offices are located at 1000 Westover Road in Richmond, Virginia.

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