



★ AMERICA'S 250 MARITIME CELEBRATIONS ★

VIRGINIA

June 12-23, 2026

Adopt-a-Ship
Program



Contact: Sail250vinfo@festevents.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sail250® Virginia 2026 Dates Announced
Major Maritime Celebration Planned for Virginia in Summer of 2026

Release Date:
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Norfolk, VA- The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding in 1776 – The United States of America's Semiquincentennial.

For this milestone occasion, a fleet of the world's most magnificent international tall ships, historic character vessels, and modern military ships, will again sail into the ports of Virginia as part of the national Sail250® tour.

Sail250® Virginia, with affiliate events throughout Hampton Roads and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay region, is planned as part of America's 250th anniversary, and one of Virginia's signature events of the Semiquincentennial year.

According to Sail250® Virginia CEO and Norfolk Festevents Executive Chairman Karen Scherberger, "In the tradition of the past five iconic OpSail and Sail Virginia events held in the Norfolk/Hampton Roads/Chesapeake Bay region since 1976, the international fleet will once again bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities to every corner of our communities".

The Sail250® Virginia fleet will officially arrive in the Hampton Roads harbor with the traditional Parade of Sail on Friday, June 19, 2026, followed by ships docking in downtown Norfolk and several other Virginia locations. Free public ship visits will continue until the fleet departs on Tuesday, June 23, 2026.

Virginia affiliate events in regional locations, to be announced in upcoming months, will also host early arrival tall ships for free public visits the prior weekend, June 12-14, 2026.

Sail250® Virginia's June 19 - 23, 2026 schedule will coincide with the national Juneteenth celebration and the 50th annual Norfolk Harborfest.

Scherberger adds, "For two weeks in June 2026, 4,000 officers, cadets, and crews of more than a record 60 ships from at least 20 nations will engage with residents and visitors across Hampton Roads and the Virginia Chesapeake Bay region in events and programs symbolic of the bonds of international goodwill".

Sail250® Virginia sponsors include:
Virginia is for Lovers, City of Norfolk, Sentara, Optima Health, TowneBank, Crofton Industries, Dominion Enterprises, E. G. Middleton, Inc., W.F. Magann Corporation, Visit Norfolk, Hampton Roads Shipping Association, Colonna's Shipyard, Inc., Perry Family Foundation, Light Tech, Inc., BAE Systems, Coastal Precast Systems, Elizabeth River Concrete, S. B. Ballard Construction Company, Bay Power Solutions, MHI Ship Repair & Services, Bruce Bishop.

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Dennis Matheis, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sentara Health says "Sentara Health is proud to recognize America's Semiquincentennial anniversary and serve as a sponsor of the signature Sail250® Virginia event". Matheis adds, "Hampton Roads has played a key role in American history and maritime culture from the very beginning, and I am excited for the opportunity to share this while we represent the entire Commonwealth of Virginia and welcome visitors from across the world to our shores. As we celebrate this milestone, may the spirit of unity and the enduring legacy of our nation as a true melting pot carry on."

"The Sail250® Virginia commemoration events will allow the Commonwealth of Virginia, and specifically Hampton Roads, the opportunity to host more than 20 nations representing a global fleet," says Bob Aston, TowneBank Executive Chairman. Aston continues, "These events will fill our harbor with excitement, while driving significant economic impact for our region. TowneBank is proud to partner with Sail250® Virginia to foster international goodwill and create lasting memories".

Planned in partnership with the United States Coast Guard, United States Navy, and other military commands, Sail250® Virginia is collaborating with the Virginia250 Commission, local, regional, and national government departments and agencies, civic and volunteer organizations, and endorsed by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

Sail250® Virginia is one of five official US ports selected to host the 2026 Sail250® America tour, including New Orleans, Baltimore, New York, and Boston.

Sail250® Virginia is planned and directed by Sail Norfolk, the maritime division of Norfolk Festevents, Ltd., based in Norfolk, VA.

Regular updates and more information can be found at sail250virginia.com.

Inquiries and requests for more information, email Sail250vinfo@festevents.org.

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What is the Sail250® Virginia Adopt-a-Ship Program

This is an unparalleled opportunity for schools, organizations, and communities to engage in the Sail250® Virginia events as ambassadors to the crews of 60 ships from 20 countries around the world.



The Sail250® Virginia Adopt-a-Ship program is open to public, private, and home school groups, as well as youth and adult social and civic organizations across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Participants in the Adopt-a-Ship program will be partnered with one of 60 ships from 20 countries visiting Virginia in June 2026. They will have the opportunity to communicate with “their” ship’s crew in the months leading up to Sail250® Virginia and learn about the culture, traditions, and history of the ship and its crew.

Ambassador programs can integrate history, geography, foreign language, art, and cultural lessons into their curriculum and programming, supported by resources provided by Sail250® Virginia.



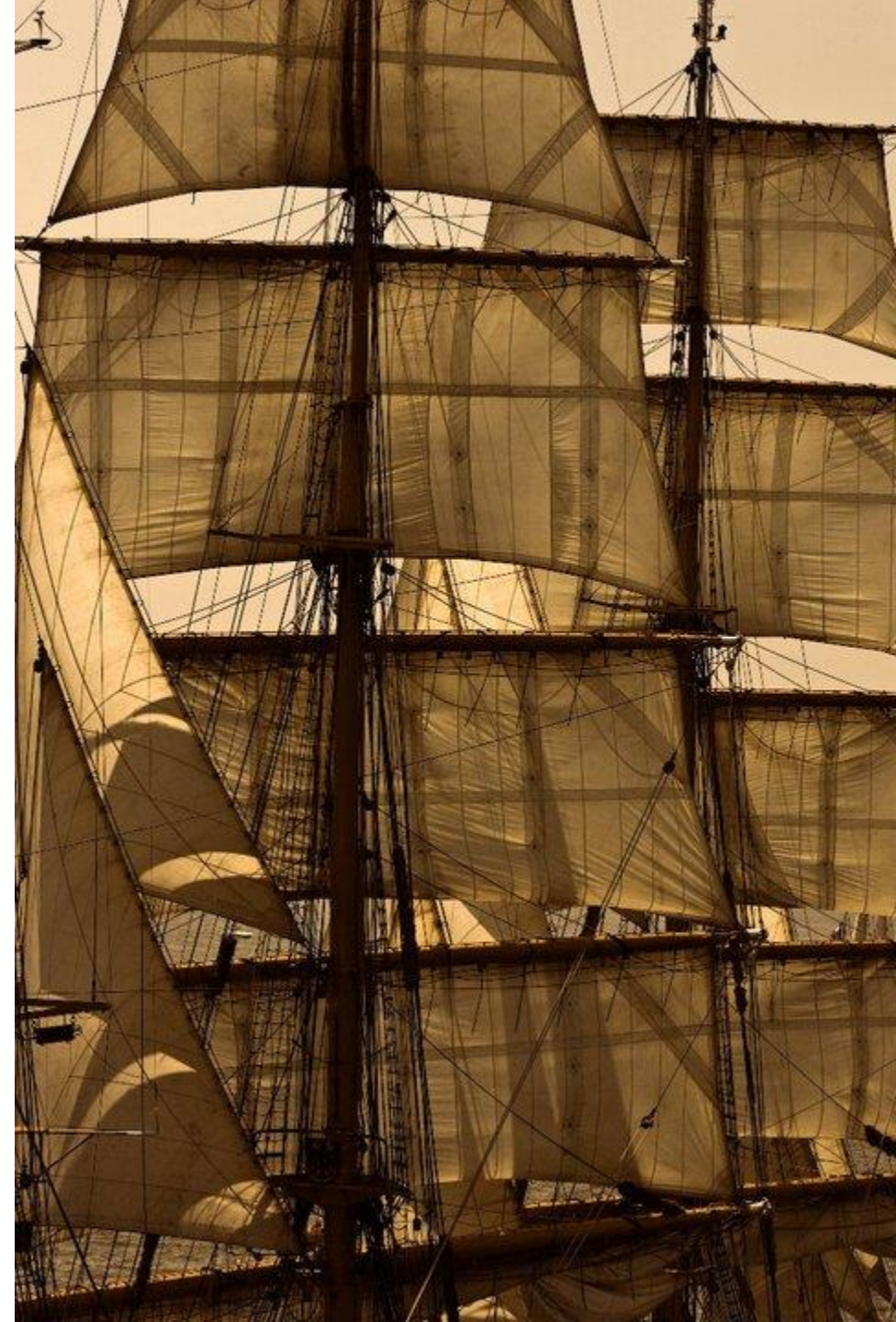
During the Sail250® Virginia events (June 12-23, 2026), Adopt-a-Ship participants will be able to welcome their ships to local ports, tour the visiting ships, and meet the crew of “their” ship. Participating programs will have the opportunity to apply for Sail250® Virginia transportation grants to help offset the financial costs of these trips.

The Sail250® Virginia Adopt-a-Ship program is an integral part of this incredible world class event and will create lasting bonds of friendship between visiting ship, their crews, and Virginia citizens of all ages!

Who Can Participate in the Sail250[®] Virginia Adopt-a-Ship Program?

The Sail250[®] Virginia Adopt-a-Ship Program is open to schools/organizations across Virginia, including:

- Public, Private, and Home Schools (Elementary, Middle, and High schools)
- Colleges and Universities
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Civic leagues
- Private Companies/corporations
- Local yacht clubs
- Military commands
- Athletic clubs
- Service organizations
- Social groups



How can Adopt-a-Ship participants get involved in the Sail250® Virginia events?

- Communicate with the captain and crew of a visiting ship ahead of the June 2026 events.
- Opportunities for select participants to sail aboard one of the visiting ships during the Sail250® Virginia events in June 2026.
- Meet visiting ships on the pier as they arrive in Virginia.
- Provide translators during Sail250® Virginia to practice your foreign language skills.
- Integrate information about a visiting ship and its home country into your educational curriculum.
- Host a concert featuring music from a visiting ship's country.
- Host a dinner or cookout for the captain and crew of a visiting ship.
- Create an art contest inspired by the visiting fleet or their countries.
- Host the crew of a visiting ship for a baseball or soccer game.
- Host the crew of a visiting ship for a field trip to a local museum, theme park, or shopping center.
- Have students cook meals inspired by the cuisine one of the visiting ship's country.
- Organize a run/walk with the crew of a visiting ship



Community Outreach Programs

ADOPT A SHIP PROGRAM

From June 2011 to June 2012, students and community organizations across Virginia engaged in an one-a-life-time opportunity to interact with the international fleet. More than 4,000 students from 66 different schools and youth organizations spent a year learning about the War of 1812 as well as studying their adopted ship and country. Also involved were community organizations such as Norfolk Sister City Association and the Pride Boating Club of Hampton Roads. Our focus on inclusion, diversity, and education provided the opportunity for everyone in the community to welcome the world to our doorstep.

Adopting groups communicated with their ship's crew and were encouraged to learn about the ship's culture, traditions and history. Throughout the year, the program integrated history, language studies, geography, art as well as Virginia hospitality, in a creative and exciting way.

The Adopt a Ship Program provided unique teaching opportunities. Katherine Humphrey, Gifted Resource Teacher at Coleman Place Elementary and Tidewater Park Elementary and her 4th and 5th grade class created wanted posters for 'fugitives' of the War of 1812. Another teacher, Molly Sandling of Jamestown High School, worked with the Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Society to create a historical guide to Colonial Williamsburg, which was shared with crew members of their adopted Norwegian ship, the H.M.S THOR HEYERDAHL. By integrating War of 1812 history into fun educational projects, students discovered creative ways to apply what they were taught in the classroom.

The Adopt a Ship program also hosted the OpSail 2012 Virginia Art Contest with the theme "Our Flag Was Still There." Students across Virginia submitted artwork illustrating the 1812 theme. Winning works were displayed in Norfolk International Airport in April 2012.

"OpSail 2012 Virginia™ has provided wonderful learning opportunities! Our adopted ship, the ARC GLORIA from Colombia, has served as a springboard for the study of geography, culture, and writing. Additionally, the whole experience has enriched our maritime studies program."
- Lauren Campese, Ocean View Elementary principal in Norfolk, VA



Above: USNSC 635 Navy Sea Cadet Corps/AMERICA Division from Richmond, VA visiting their adopted ship NOAA CERIBAND HASLER.



Right: Sea Scouts Ship 16 from Suffolk, VA adopted the DEWARUCI from Indonesia.



Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, VA adopted the H.M.S ESEBEN SNAKE from Denmark.



Above: Selections from the OpSail 2012 Virginia™ Art Contest using the theme "Our Flag Was Still There."



Tidewater Community College and Oceanview Elementary students greeting the GLORIA.

Below: Visitors went back in time on a full-size model ship.

"First of all I'd like to tell you how proud we are to share some time with people who have so much to teach us. I hope that you and your friends have a good time here in CISNE BRANCO."
- LT Gabriel Paredes, sailor on board the Brazilian ship CISNE BRANCO to Robbio Smith at Harbor's Edge Retirement Community in Norfolk, VA

International diplomacy is a hallmark aspect of the program. The connections made by the Adopt a Ship partners crossed not only oceans, but language and cultural barriers as well. As the ships docked, crews were greeted by the waving flags of their country and even elementary school students wearing t-shirts with a picture of their adopted ship. The enthusiasm of the students, their warmth to the crews, and their ability to bring a smile to the visiting crew members began the ship's time here in Norfolk on a great note.

Once in harbor, more than a dozen community organizations greeted, entertained, and befriended the visiting ships. The H.M.C.S GOOSEBAY, a Canadian Coastal Defense Vessel, was greeted every morning by a friendly Town Point Yacht Club member bearing several daily newspapers and magazines along with fresh-baked goodies. The Indonesian training ship, the DEWARUCI, who circum-navigated the globe on their way to Norfolk, was given passes for a trip on the Portsmouth Ferry and thrown an American waterfront party featuring traditional food specialties from Oysters Rockefeller to Chesapeake Bay Crab Cakes. In gratitude, the DEWARUCI band gave a special concert performance for their hosts, Great Bridge Cruise Club and Virginia Beach Power and Sail Squadron, on the docks as the groups awaited their tour. All adopted ships invited their adopting organizations and schools for a private tour of the ship and opportunity to meet the Captain.

Participation in the Adopt a Ship program was free and open to a variety of organizations. The cost of running the program was \$4,461.20. 90% of this funding went to reimbursing public schools for their transportation to Norfolk and the rest for mailings of education materials and worksheets.

"What a powerful learning experience... this allows us to take what's going on in the classroom, and connect it to the real world."
- Bruce Parnell, Norfolk County

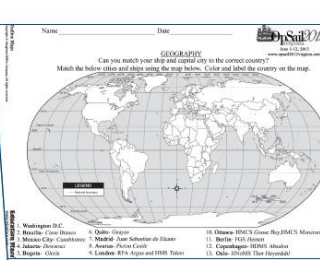
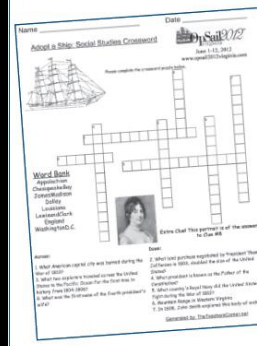


Coleman Place Elementary students visiting the GODSFED.

CHARITY

Proceeds raised at OpSail 2012 Virginia/Norfolk Harborfest benefited a number of charities: Down Syndrome Association of Hampton Roads, Barrett Haven, ACCESS AIDS Care, Virginia Sun Wheelers, Kiwanis Club of Norfolk, REACH, Inc., Chinese Community Association of Hampton Roads, Cosmoopolitan Club of Norfolk, Chesapeake Southside Lions Club, Kiwanis Club of Crafton, The Pulling Place and Western Branch High School Track Club. Over \$100,000 was raised for the various charitable organizations.

Supporting Materials: Community Outreach



Above: Upon registering for the Adopt a Ship program, each school received an education program full of supplemental materials for the classroom. The program featured worksheets with fun and educational crosswords, a collection of suggested activities ranging from cooking projects to a 1812-themed essay contest, 20 recommended teacher-friendly interactive websites, and a list of 11 books focused on the War of 1812 history. All of these resources were also featured on our website (education section on www.opasail2012virginia.com) and available at anytime for use by the public as well as by teachers.



Right: A full collection of educational resources - from interesting facts of the War of 1812 to booklets and suggested activities were featured online under the Education Section on www.opasail2012virginia.com.




Past Successes: OpSail2012® Virginia's Adopt-a-Ship Program

- Accomack County Schools, Accomack VA
- Azalea Gardens Middle School, Norfolk VA
- Blair Middle School, Norfolk VA
- Booker T. Washington High School, Norfolk VA
- Boy Scout Troop 306, Cape Charles VA
- Broadwater Academy, Cape Charles VA
- Camp Allen Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Cape Charles Christian School, Cape Charles VA
- Cape Henry Collegiate School, Virginia Beach, VA
- Christ & St. Lukes, Norfolk, VA
- Coleman Place Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Family Medical Practitioners Inc., Virginia Beach VA
- Fort Story Youth Center, Virginia Beach VA
- Granby High School NJROTC, Norfolk VA

- Great Bridge Cruise Club, Virginia Beach VA
- Henrico County Adult ESL, Henrico VA
- James Monroe Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Jamestown High School, Williamsburg VA
- King George Middle School, King George VA
- Maury High School NJROTC, Norfolk VA
- Norfolk Botanical Garden, Norfolk VA
- Norfolk Collegiate School, Norfolk, VA
- Northampton High School, Capeville VA
- Norview Middle School, Norfolk VA
- Occohannock Elementary School, Exmore, VA
- Ocean View Middle School, Norfolk, VA
- Oceanaire Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Old Point Comfort Yacht Club

- Park Place School, Norfolk VA
- Salvation Army Tidewater
- Sea Scouts, Ship 16, Suffolk, VA
- Suburban Park Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Tidewater Community College, Norfolk VA
- Tidewater Park Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond VA
- Yorktown Middle School, Yorktown VA
- U.S. Naval Sea Cadets - Top Hatters
- Virginia Beach Sail & Power Squadron
- Washington & Lee High School, Hague VA
- W.H. Taylor Elementary School, Norfolk VA
- Xerox Community Involvement Program



**To learn more or sign-
up for the Sail250®
Virginia Adopt-a-Ship
Program:**

**Please complete and submit the
Sail250® Virginia Adopt-a-Ship Interest
Form or contact Paula Cook at
CookP@festevents.org**