December 2025

Dear Virginia Educators and Community Members:

In June 2026, Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay region will welcome an international fleet of tall ships, military vessels, and character ships to commemorate America's 250th anniversary. This milestone event, **Sail250® Virginia**, will welcome more than 60 ships from 20 countries, bringing 10,000 visiting sailors, officers, and dignitaries to Virginia's shores.

Sail250® Virginia aims to foster international goodwill, inspire patriotism, and spark interest in America's rich maritime history. In the tradition of the past five iconic OpSail® maritime festivals held in Virginia since 1976, the international Sail250® Virginia fleet will once again bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities to every corner of our communities, including our Virginia schools, youth organizations and community programs.

As we approach America's 250th anniversary**,** we invite all Virginia educators and community organizations to take advantage of our ***Sail250® Virginia education program***, which features three key components:

- Adopt-A-Ship Program
- Online Maritime-Themed Resources and Projects
- Educational Speaker Series

The Sail250® Virginia Adopt-A-Ship program offers student and community groups the chance to become cultural ambassadors by "adopting" one of the visiting ships. Each group will be paired with one of the visiting ships to explore its history, culture of its home country, and eventually, to correspond with its crew as they sail to Virginia in 2026! For more details, please download the PDF available on our HISTORY/EDUCATION webpage

We welcome the participation of entire schools and community groups. While there is no maximum limit for the number of people involved, we do ask that one person serve as the primary point of contact for each organization.

STEPS to Become an ADOPT-A-SHIP Partner:

1) Visit the **Sail250® Virginia** website for updates about Ships, Educational Resources, Suggested Maritime Projects, Speaker Series, Affiliate Harbor Events and Adopt-A-Ship program ideas. Feel free to share these resources with your teachers and colleagues.
2) Begin planning. Meet with your group to brainstorm lesson plans, activities, or events tied to your adopted ship.
3) Review **Confirmed Ships** on our website for descriptions and photos.
4) Complete the Adopt-A-Ship Partner Registration Form which includes:
    - **a.** Contact information
    - **b.** Your top three preferences from the Confirmed Ship List (Norfolk only)
    - **c.** Outline of your areas of interest and tentative plans as an Adopt-A-Ship Partner
    - **d.** Estimated number and age range of participants
    - **e.** Interest in Transportation Grant information (Virginia schools only)
    - **f.** Comments/Questions
5) Submit your Registration Form to **cookp@festevents.org**

We're confident that you share our commitment to making the ships and their crews feel as welcome and at home as possible upon their arrival in Norfolk. While we will do our best to match you with one of your preferred ships, please understand that assignments are subject to change—or even cancellation--based on the schedules and

preferences of the ships and their respective nations. Rest assured; we will make every effort to notify our partners of any changes as soon as possible.

We encourage you to submit your ADOPT-A-SHIP REGISTRATION FORM at your earliest convenience, as matches will be made on a rolling basis.

Do not hesitate to call or email me with any questions. Thank you for your interest and we look forward to partnering with you through the Sail250® Virginia Adopt-A-Ship program!

With warm regards,

Paula Barclay Cook
Education Manager
Sail250® Virginia
cookp@festevents.org
Norfolk, VA 23510
C: 757-793-0551

Frequently Asked Questions

Which ships are eligible for the Adopt-A-Ship program?
Any confirmed ship on our website that states it will be in Norfolk, June 19-23, 2026.

Are schools and organizations outside of the Hampton Roads region allowed to adopt a ship?
We welcome schools and organizations from anywhere in the Commonwealth of Virginia to participate. While it is exciting to be able to visit the ships in Norfolk, great learning experiences and relationships can be developed online and through social media, even if visiting the ship is not possible.

Many schools are no longer in session in June. Can we still participate?
See above answer. We understand the timing is challenging for school organized field trips. If school trips cannot be arranged in the summer, we can arrange individual students and families to greet and tour the ships.

When is the best time to submit our partner registration form?
You may submit your registration form as soon as you have some preliminary ideas and approximate numbers of participants. We understand your plans may change or evolve as the year progresses. We hope that all registrations will be received by January 2026 to allow significant time for your partnerships to develop.

How soon will we know which ship we have been assigned?
We will start making matches as soon as we receive contact information from the ships. Ideally, all interested partners will be matched by January 2026.

Is there a charge to participate in the Adopt-A-Ship program?
Sail250® Virginia does not charge anything to participate. Your school/organization will be responsible for any expenses incurred from your plans and activities. For example, hosting a social event, supplies for learning projects, t-shirts for your participants, etc.

What is the Transportation Grant?
Funds will be available to offset transportation costs for Virginia schools who are able to bring students to visit ships in Norfolk in June 2026. More information will be provided in early 2026.

ADMIN USE ONLY
Date Recd:
Response Sent:

Sail250® Virginia Education Program

ADOPT-A-SHIP PARTNER REGISTRATION FORM

Date _____

Name of School/Organization _____

Street Address _____ **City** _____ **Zip** _____

Primary Point of Contact:

Sal/Rank _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

Preferred Phone Number: Cell _____ and/or Work _____ Ext _____

Secondary Point of Contact:

Sal/Rank _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

Preferred Phone Number: Cell _____ and/or Work _____ Ext _____

Name of Principal/Organizational Leader (if applicable):

Sal/Rank _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

Preferred Phone Number: Cell _____ and/or Work _____ Ext _____

Please list your top three preferences of ships from the Confirmed Ships coming to Norfolk:

Ship Comments (reason for choices)

1. _____ _____
2. _____ _____
3. _____ _____

Please indicate the approximate number of people participating in each age group:

GRADE LEVEL **PK-5:** _____ **GR6-8:** _____ **Gr 9-12:** _____ **Post Secondary:** _____

Adults/Teachers: _____

Please check/describe the "tentative" program plans/ideas for your school/organization:
Here are some suggestions to help get your creativity jump started. Indicating your interests will help us better support your program.

Prior to June 2026:
____ Communicate with the captain and crew of a visiting ship ahead of the June 2026 events.
____ Integrate information about a visiting ship and its home country into your educational curriculum.
____ Integrate information about maritime & military history & heritage into your educational curriculum.
____ Host a concert featuring music from a visiting ship's country.
____ Create an art contest inspired by the visiting fleet or their countries.
____ Have students cook meals inspired by the cuisine of the visiting ship's country.
____ Utilize Educational Resources & Suggested Maritime Projects on Sail250® Virginia website.
____ Other ideas:

_____
_____
_____

During the June 2026 ship visits to Norfolk:
____ Provide translators during Sail250® Virginia to practice your foreign language skills.
____ Meet visiting ships on the pier as they arrive in Norfolk.
____ Opportunities for select participants to tour visiting ships during the events in June 2026.
____ Host a dinner or cookout for the captain and crew of a visiting ship.
____ Host the crew of a visiting ship for a baseball or soccer game.
____ Organize a run/walk with the crew of a visiting ship.
____ Host the crew of a visiting ship for a field trip to a local museum, theme park, or shopping center.
____ Other ideas:

_____
_____
_____

Would you like to receive an application for a transportation grant to offset costs of transporting students to June 2026 events? *(applicable for schools only)* Check here _____

Would you like to schedule a phone meeting with Paula Cook? Check here _____

Comments/Questions?

_____
_____
_____

Please complete this form and send to
Paula Cook via email at **CookP@festevents.org**

Thank you for your interest in welcoming the Sail250® Virginia fleet!

Revised: 12/11/25