



February 2026

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.
- 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 Profile Form which includes:
 - a. Contact information.
 - b. Description of your organization and participants.
 - c. Estimated number and age range of participants.
 - d. Outline of your tentative plans as an Adopt-A-Ship Partner
 - e. Your top three preferences from the Confirmed Ship List (Norfolk only)
- 5) Submit your Partner Profile Form and Ship Preferences 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 PARTNER PROFILE 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 feasible.***

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 profile form?

You may submit your partner profile and preferences 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 early 2026 to allow maximum 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 early 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 (if desired), etc.

What should we include in the description of our organization and participants?

This information is to help your adopted ship learn more about you. For example, grade levels of your school or mission/purpose of your organization; your location – part of the state, urban setting, rural; special interests of participants – language, arts, STEM, special activities, etc.; affiliations with military, NATO, maritime interests.



| |
|---|
| ADMIN USE ONLY Date Recd: _____ Response Sent: _____ |
|---|

Sail250® Virginia Education Program
ADOPT-A-SHIP PARTNER PROFILE

Date _____

Name of School/Organization _____

Street Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Website: _____

Social Media: FB _____ IG _____

X _____ YouTube _____

Description of your school/organization and Adopt-A-Ship participants:

[Sal = Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr, Capt., etc. PLEASE INCLUDE for each contact!]

Primary Point of Contact:

Sal _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

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

Secondary Point of Contact:

Sal _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

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

Name of Principal/Organizational Leader:

Sal _____ First _____ Last _____ Suffix _____

Title _____ Email Address: _____

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

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.
- ___ Other ideas:

During the June 2026 ship visits to Norfolk:

- ___ Meet visiting ships on the pier as they arrive in Norfolk.
- ___ Provide translators during Sail250® Virginia to practice your foreign language skills.
- ___ Opportunities for select participants to tour visiting ships during the events in June 2026.
- ___ Host the captain and crew of a visiting ship for a meal, activity, or a field trip to a local museum, theme park, or shopping center.
- ___ Other ideas:

Any additional comments to share with your adopted ship:

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!

Sail250® Virginia Education Program
ADOPT-A-SHIP PREFERENCES

Date _____

Name of School/Organization _____

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

Ship

Comments (reason for choices)

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |

Confirmed Ships Eligible for ADOPT-A-SHIP Program:

Argentina, Libertad
Chile, Esmeralda
Colombia, Gloria
Cook Islands, Picton Castle
Ecuador, Guayas
France, Belle Poule
Germany, Gorch Fock
India, Sudarshini
Indonesia, Bima Suci
Netherlands, Oosterschelde
Netherlands, Urania
Peru, BAP Union

Portugal, Sagres
Romania, Mircea
Spain, Juan Sebastian de Elcano
Sweden, HMS Gladan
Uruguay, Capitan Miranda
USA, Bowdoin
USA, Godspeed
USA, Maryland Dove
USA, Pride of Baltimore II
USA, USCG Barque Eagle
USA, Virginia

Comments/Questions?

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

