COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
FY20 Parks, Culture & Recreation Annual Report
Message from the Director

I am pleased to submit the FY20 Annual Report for the Parks, Culture & Recreation division of Community Development with Ms. Kisha Wilson-Sogunro, Division Manager and our fabulous volunteer leaders, Mr. Malcolm Richards, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee and Mr. Mark Olsen, Chairman of the Historic Resources Board.

FY20 was a challenging year. It began innocently enough with the division focused on expanding new program offerings, enhancing Stonewall Pool with free Wi-Fi, initiating a new winter gym offering at the Boys and Girls Club and settling into a new role managing the Harris Pavilion. Capital projects progressed with playground improvements at Cavalry Run and Haydon Elementary School. The community embraced the division with several new projects including the Manassas Garden Club members donating paved walkways at Nelson Park to enhance accessibility and local tech company SWIFT’s generous donation of 100 trees that were planted at several park and school sites. SWIFT employees have also adopted Cavalry Run Park which is located near to their offices.

It took a village to construct the Jennie Dean statue that is the new centerpiece of the revitalization of the Manassas Industrial School/ Jennie Dean Memorial. Both small and large contributions from more than 100 donors and many civic organizations, businesses, and churches enabled the project to progress in FY20. Improvements at Liberia have made it easier to enjoy the 18-acre historic site and park. New signage, a new bike rack, an accessible path to the house and a dog waste station have increased usage at the park ten-fold.

Then, in March, the Covid-19 pandemic made it necessary to close the Museum, cancel programs, concerts and events, and close the pool. But staff found ways to connect with visitors and patrons in new ways. In-person family workshops were adapted for Facebook videos, new Spotlight on History videos showcased new exhibits, and collection items that have seldom been displayed. The Museum’s popular Book Talk series went virtual with authors interviewed on Zoom and presentations posted to Facebook and YouTube. Concerts were live streamed or recorded and posted to the Harris Pavilion’s new YouTube channel. And, the Echoes staff promoted extra cleaning and social distancing measures when the Museum reopened and offered free same-day delivery to Manassas residents. Most importantly we kept the parks open. Many of our surrounding jurisdictions closed parks and taped off playgrounds, but early on the City decided that maintaining our community’s access to parks and historic sites was critical to everyone’s well-being. And, as we opened the new fiscal year in July, 2020, still under the cloud of the Covid-19 virus, that is the team’s commitment to the Manassas community: maintain our community’s access to the parks, culture and recreation facilities and programs that are so vital to physical and mental well-being.

Elizabeth Via-Gossman
Assistant City Manager
Director, Department of Community Development

The Jennie Dean statue being sculpted, with a scale model at front.
FY20 was an extraordinary year. And while it started out as any year, it certainly didn’t end like previous years. During the first half of FY20 the Board worked diligently on an update to the System’s strategic plan. That plan was intended to be adopted in Spring, 2020 prior to the start of the fiscal year, but in March the Coronavirus Pandemic became real in the City of Manassas as offices and businesses shut down in order to stop the spread of the virus. Overnight, the business plan of the System, grounded in in-person programs and exhibit openings, went virtual as residents and visitors hunkered down under stay-at-home orders.

Then, just as a rhythm was emerging for online events and programs, the City confronted the racial unrest in the Country with protests and marches through the Historic Downtown. The Museum lawn stepped up its role as the “town green” and played host to a What’s Next rally for Black Lives Matter advocates proving that the System had an immediate role to play in providing a safe space in which to engage in meaningful conversation. The pandemic and social justice events caused the Historic Resources Board to hold the publication of the 2025 Strategic Plan to allow a reconsideration of the goals and objects. It was ultimately adopted in early FY21 with an updated vision for the System and five ambitious goals for achieving that vision.

Despite the many challenges brought on by the Pandemic and other events, the following successes show the Board continued to work hard and reinvent the ways in which the Museum engaged with our community. For FY20, we are proud to share the following accomplishments:

- Fund raising for the Jennie Dean Memorial realized $133,000 of the $175,000 needed to match the City’s appropriation.
- Accepted eleven objects for the Museum’s collection from six different donors, including a significant collection of documents from local residents Chip and Ann Paciulli that included an 1845 math exam from the Liberia Classical and Mathematical School, then on the grounds of Liberia Plantation.
- Proposed a commemorative automobile license plate for the City of Manassas in honor of our upcoming 150th anniversary of the founding of Manassas that was approved by the City Council and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for presales in FY21.

I am proud of the way our Board worked with the staff to meet the challenges of this past year with so many successes. I also offer my thanks to the City Council for the opportunity to serve on the Historic Resources Board and look forward to my continued involvement in the year to come.

Mark Olsen
Chairman
In FY20, under the leadership of former Chair Larry Smith and I, the committee has spearheaded many different park projects for which the citizens can be truly proud. As we introduce new and exciting opportunities throughout the City parks system and prepare for future projects and events, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the many great things we accomplished.

The Parks and Recreation Committee supported the improvement planning at Cavalry Run Park by hosting a community picnic and by participating in group discussions. The committee continued to engage community partners by extending invitations to its monthly meetings. In turn, the committee established a partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension to support a mini garden at the Martin K. Alloy Boys and Girls Club of Manassas. Additionally, through the HEAL (Healthy Eating, Active Living) initiative, the committee, in partnership with Baldwin Elementary, had the opportunity to make a presentation on healthier habits to both staff and students.

Citywide park inspection will continue, as the committee’s goal is to regularly evaluate City parks to identify problems and maintain park amenities in a safe and inviting manner. The committee looks forward to supporting the City’s parks system to ensure a quality experience for all citizens, and for the parks to be recognized as award-winning.

In closing, I would like to thank the City Council, Staff and Citizens for their hard work and continued success and for offering the LOVE of play. I invite you to please visit a park today!

Malcolm Richards Chairman Parks and Recreation Committee
When the Covid-19 pandemic made it necessary to close the Museum, cancel programs, concerts, and events, and close the Pool, staff found ways to connect with visitors and patrons in new ways. Parks, Culture & Recreation Manager Kisha Wilson-Sogunro led the creative efforts that will have lasting impacts for the division in a post-pandemic world.

National surveys indicated that families craved help with finding engaging hands-on activities at home. Program Coordinator Rachel Goldberg learned to adapt in-person family workshops for Facebook videos, and produced a series of historically-themed craft projects that are still available on facebook.com/cityofmanassasleisure and on YouTube.com/ManassasCityVa.

Curator Mary Helen Dellinger brought the Museum’s collection home to viewers through a series of Spotlight on History videos that showcased new exhibits, and collection items that have seldom been displayed.

Staff offered tours of historic sites, including a Liberia tour in cooperation with the Northern Virginia Graffiti Trail that engaged 203 viewers, reaching far more than an in-person tour.

Visitor Services Aide Nikolai Karavodin maintained the Museum’s popular Book Talk series, interviewing authors by Zoom and posting the talks on Facebook.

Recreation Supervisor Alex Hamilton quickly learned how to use a GoPro camera to record and stream concerts that could be posted to the Harris Pavilion’s new YouTube channel, and to coordinate with performers recording their own shows. With space available under the Pavilion, staff created a dining area that helped create more outdoor dining space in Historic Downtown.

Operations Supervisor Christen Fox focused on maintaining, improving, and getting the word out about parks that were seeing an uptick in usage.

Business Services Manager Danay Lewis, with Visitor Services Aides Ellie Hill, Nancy Mitchell, Matt Ford, and Nikolai Karavodin, promoted extra cleaning and social distancing measures for visitors, free same-day delivery, and a variety of promotions at Echoes.

Behind the scenes, Administrative Associate Jean Griffith coordinated Zoom meetings, created Park, Museum and Pavilion signage, and kept operations running even while some staff were working remotely.

The successful initiatives that began as a response to the pandemic will become permanent as the division seeks new ways to engage the community.
Although park rentals were suspended during the pandemic, interest in parks, playgrounds, and trails grew as they became safe places to recharge and recreate. Social media posts about trails, bike lanes, and park improvements consistently ranked among the most popular posts and park usage was visibly higher.

Capital Improvement projects completed in FY20 included:

- Cavalry Run Park’s upgrades; and
- Haydon Elementary School’s playground upgrades with a resurfaced basketball court, new soccer goals, a new sensory trail, and benches.

Projects underway include:

- Manassas Museum renovation and addition.
- Harris Pavilion improvements.
- Preliminary work at Dean Park to help the City and the community craft a final plan for new fields and amenities. Community meetings are expected to begin in Winter, 2021.
- At the future Dean Dog Park, efforts are underway to grow a hearty turf to withstand the future use and installation of the waterline for the drinking fountains.
- Baldwin Elementary School playground upgrades.

Walkway Donation Makes Nelson Park More Accessible

Manassas Garden Club members donated paved walkways at Nelson Park. The walkways make it possible for those in wheelchairs and with strollers to better enjoy the park, a popular wedding spot and shady picnic area.

Arbor Day Donation Has Lasting Impact

Thanks to a generous donation from SWIFT, the world’s leading provider of secure financial messaging services with an office in Manassas, four City parks and three Manassas City public schools have more shaded space to enjoy. SWIFT donated 100 trees to celebrate Earth Day at a time when parks and the outdoors have become an increasingly important part of daily life and places to de-stress.

The 100 donated trees will have a big impact on parks in the years to come. Liberia House Historic Site received 30 trees, Mayfield Earthwork Fort has 10 trees, Winterset Park has seven trees, and Cavalry Run Park has five trees. SWIFT employees also adopted Cavalry Run Park, located near its office.

Donated trees take root at Winterset Park.
The Harris Pavilion enjoyed a successful winter ice skating season in 2019-2020, including Wednesday free skates.

Pickleball lines were added to tennis courts at Osbourn High School, Dean Park, Stonewall Park, and Cavalry Run Park to accommodate the growing number of pickleball players. The sport, which combines elements of badminton, table tennis, and tennis, uses solid wooden paddles with a ball much like a wiffle ball that is hit over a net. It has become one of the country’s fastest growing sports in the last several years.

Neighbors turned out for a planning meeting at Cavalry Run Park in the fall of 2019. Their suggestions helped design an expanded play area, and the installation of new bike racks, a dog waste station, adult fitness equipment, refurbished tennis/pickleball and basketball courts, a picnic area, signage, and fencing.

Accessible walkways and benches were installed as part of the first phase of planned improvements at Mayfield Earthwork Fort. New interpretive signage will also be installed. The Fort, first built by Confederate forces to defend Manassas in 1861 and later occupied by Union forces during the Civil War, is a popular place for walks.
Historic Sites

MIS/Jennie Dean Memorial Update

It has taken a village to construct the Jennie Dean statue that is the centerpiece of the Manassas Industrial School/Jennie Dean Memorial Update. Both small and large contributions from more than 100 donors and many civic organizations, businesses, and churches enabled the project to progress in FY20 and to be completed in FY21.

Staff and members of the Update Committee continued to attend area civic organization meetings, festivals, and community events with a scale model of the statue to publicize the effort. Donors also purchased benches, trees, the statue’s base, and additional base sculptures to complete the surrounding plaza.

(clockwise from top left) Visitor Services Aide and Dean Historian Ellie Hill presents a program on Jennie Dean to the Lifelong Learning Institute; The Jennie Dean High School Alumni Association has supported the Jennie Dean Update; Corliss Udoema (center) presented a major donation to former Mayor Hal Parrish and Parks, Culture & Recreation Manager Kisha Wilson-Sogunro; Curator Mary Helen Dellinger talked about Jennie Dean for a WDVM story.

Artist Christopher Hill (left) finished sculpting the full-sized clay Jennie Dean statue in his studio before transporting it to be bronzed. Part of the bronzing process included separating the statue into parts and covering the clay with wax (far right).
Annaburg became the City’s sixteenth park when the historic house and surrounding 3.65 acres was acquired from the Prince William Hospital Corporation and the sale was finalized in early FY20. The grounds are open for passive recreation.

Annaburg Master Planning

An October 2019 Community Meeting (above) attracted interested residents and neighbors for a look inside the recently acquired Annaburg Manor house. Those who attended shared their ideas and vision for what Annaburg should be. Although the pandemic postponed a planned spring meeting, a socially-distanced meeting with stakeholders was held in the fall of 2020 and the Master Planning process is ongoing.

The priority for Annaburg has been stabilizing the historic 1892 manor house. In FY20 bids for a slate roof replacement were accepted and that work began in FY21.

Pianos Find New Life

Generations of Manassas youth learned to play piano under the stern but loving direction of Virginia Speiden Carper. Now both the Steinway piano that she played for most of her 96 years, and her upright teaching piano will find new life thanks to a donation by her estate.

The upright piano has been painted and decorated thanks to a community art project, and will become a street piano at the Harris Pavilion. The Steinway piano was moved to the Osbourn High School auditorium, Mrs. Carper’s alma mater, where it will be featured in school performances.

(top) Suggestions for Annaburg Park. (bottom) Curator Mary Helen Dellinger discussed Annaburg’s significance for a WDVM news segment.

Photos by John Hartt
Recent improvements have made it easier for visitors to enjoy the 18-acre Liberia House Historic Site. New signage, a new bike rack, and a new dog waste station were installed for the many walkers who regularly enjoy the grounds.

The long-planned garden became a reality in FY20. Named the Turberville Memorial Garden in honor of the late Randy Turberville, a long-time Museum supporter, it was established by volunteers from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners (Prince William), Buds n’ Roses Garden Club, Manassas Museum Associates, Manassas Garden Club, Manassas Beautification Committee, Manassas Historic Resources Board and many more individuals with a passion for gardens. The garden’s brick walk was installed in FY20, while plantings are ongoing in FY21.

Pictured clockwise from top left: new signage at the Portner Avenue entrance; a new accessible lift was installed on the rear porch; 30 trees that were part of a City-wide donation from the SWIFT corporation, were planted on Liberia’s grounds; preparations for the installation of the brick garden walk; the completed brick walk; a new bike rack; a new dog waste station; and new fencing at the Portner Avenue entrance.
**Recreation**

Winter Open Gym sessions at the Martin K. Alloy Boys & Girls Club of Manassas fulfilled a strong community desire for recreational opportunities. The sessions also took advantage of the gym at our partner facility when it would have been unused. The program proved so popular that more open gym sessions will be planned post-pandemic.

**Tuesday Night Open Gym**

Members of the National Capital Trackers set up their O gauge trains during the 2019 Winter Wonderland Train Show at the ARTfactory.

**Harris Pavilion Adapts to Keep the Music Playing**

On Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons in summer, the Harris Pavilion usually pulses with the energy of musical performers and patrons dancing to the rhythms of the music. All that changed in 2020.

With restrictions on large gatherings that made in-person concerts impossible, staff worked to keep scheduled performers and produce virtual concerts. Some performed at the closed Manassas Museum during Facebook Live events. Others recorded their own performances from their homes or studios. A few performed at Jirani Coffeehouse in a partnership with Jirani TV. Those pre-recorded polished videos—along with the livestreamed performances—were then posted on the Harris Pavilion’s new YouTube channel.

Without concerts under the Pavilion’s roof, the space was transformed into an outdoor dining area where visitors could bring take-out from nearby restaurants and enjoy warm spring and summer breezes.

*During the 2019 summer season, concerts such as the Summer Sundaes series (top right) attracted large crowds; Shane Gamble (middle right) opted to livestream his performances from the Manassas Museum; The Special Occasions Band (bottom right), performed at the Jirani Coffeehouse and had a large YouTube following.*
By the Numbers

Despite a pause in park rentals due to the pandemic, park rentals increased 132%. With restrictions on team play, field rentals decreased 44% and park revenue decreased by 51%.

Although Stonewall Park Pool had a strong 2019 season--offering Wi-Fi for the first time, an enhanced snack bar, and a refurbished pool house--it was closed for the entire 2020 season. Revenue decreased by 40% while the number of pool admissions was down 63%.

Movie nights were a popular attraction during the 2019 season.
In the fall and winter of 2019-2020, the Museum's gallery and multi-purpose spaces filled with patrons creating craft projects, learning new skills, or listening to lectures about something new. At Liberia, tours and talks focused on the site's rich African American history. Crowds filled the Museum lawn and Harris Pavilion for the annual Edgar Rohr Antique Car Show and Latino Festival.

By the spring, lectures, hands-on craft projects, tours and talks had moved online to Facebook and YouTube. Postings gained a following from families craving new activities, and from those who could glimpse exhibits, artifacts and historic sites while quarantining.

(clockwise from top left) The annual Edgar Rohr Antique Car Show in 2019; The Latino Festival featured entertainment at the Harris Pavilion; An African American Genealogy Workshop helped many to trace their roots; Toddler Story Time also featured craft projects; A Stories of Preservation & Progress lecture on Civil War remains found in Centreville; The Naylor family held a reunion at Liberia, where their ancestors were enslaved.
Although the Liberia Front Porch Talks were a pre-pandemic favorite, the aptly-named lectures were able to continue in a socially-distanced way. Speakers brought African American history to life, particularly in the programs that explored Liberia’s enslaved Naylor family with descendant Linneal Naylor.

An Evening for Educators offered area teachers the chance to enjoy a casual evening in the Museum’s gallery while learning about area African American history and previewing the new African American History traveling trunk.

A series of hands-on Family Workshops was cut short by the pandemic, but the two sessions offered enabled families to create crafts related to the Native Legacy exhibit.
Exhibits in FY20 continued partnerships with Manassas City Public Schools, took advantage of a new community partnership with the Patawomeck Indian Tribe of Virginia, and showcased rarely seen objects from the Museum’s archives.

The Consider the Source exhibit challenged visitors to think about the meaning of historical documents. Many, such as the ledger book with furniture values for Prince William County Schools (at right), highlighted the disparities in schools and in everyday life in a segregated town.

Manassas City School students mounted two exhibits that have become an annual tradition: Deck the Museum, with works by Weems Elementary Students, and Artistic Expression, by Osbourn High School students.

(top right) Students view the Artistic Expressions exhibit. (middle right) The Consider the Source exhibit featured documents from the archives. (bottom right) Weems Elementary students decorated trees in the gallery for the Deck the Museum exhibit.
Researching an African American Walking Tour

A summer internship focused on African American history in anticipation of a new walking trail.

Emma Long, a recent Randolph-Macon College graduate, researched historic African American neighborhoods on Lincoln, Grant, Douglas, Prince William, Jefferson, Lincoln, McKinley, and School Streets. She traced land deeds and conducted oral interviews with longtime Manassas residents. Her research will be incorporated into a walking tour of the neighborhoods between the Manassas Museum and what is now Jennie Dean Elementary, but was once the Manassas Industrial School.

A 2018 internship project examined aerial and insurance maps to help recreate the location of buildings on and near the Manassas Industrial School campus.

A committee of community representatives is advising staff on what should be included in the walking trail. Interpretive signs along the route are expected to be unveiled this summer.

(above) A church baptism at Annaburg in the early 20th century.

RECREATING A NATIVE AMERICAN VILLAGE

NATIVE LEGACY: THE PATAWOMECK INDIANS OF VIRGINIA

To help visitors truly learn about the lives of nearby Native Americans, staff partnered with the Patawomeck Tribe to create an immersive exhibit that made it appear as if a Native person just walked away from their village.

To depict life inside a Patawomeck dwelling, floor to ceiling graphics covered the walls on both sides of the exhibit hallway. The outdoor "scenes" were accompanied by panels explaining how the local Native Americans built their homes, what they ate, and the tools they used.

Staff borrowed objects—like real animal skins, reproduction Native American tools, weapons, and pots—from Jamestown and several private lenders to use as props in this space. One case also displayed real stone tools.

The Patawomeck Tribe of Virginia, based in Stafford County, offered advice and lent objects like a large graphic that detailed the history of their tribe in this region, and Chief Charles Bullock spoke at the exhibit opening.
When Chip and Ann Paciulli began frequenting auctions, flea markets and antique stores to collect historic documents while still in their twenties, they had no idea that someday their finds would help tell little-known stories of Manassas history.

The Purcellville couple donated a treasure trove of historic documents to the Manassas Museum, including an 1845 math exam from the Liberia Classical and Mathematical School, then on the grounds of Liberia Plantation. It was the first document about the school that Museum staff had ever seen, other than an 1847 newspaper ad.

Seeing the Liberia name on the yellowed piece of paper was an unexpected thrill for Curator Mary Helen Dellinger. “When I first talked to Chip and Ann, they told me they had ‘a few Manassas papers’ to give us” Dellinger says. “These papers included a few Civil War letters that are just fantastic first person accounts of the battles that were fought here. The letters paled in comparison though to the document with ‘Liberia School’ written across the top. I felt my heart skip a beat when I saw that.”

The collection also includes Civil War military orders signed by Confederate Colonel Thomas Jordan, who was a spymaster and had his headquarters at Liberia. Many of the documents like receipts and letters predate the Civil War and outline what Chip Paciulli describes as the minutia of history—the details that tell the stories of everyday life that are often lost in the accounts of history books.

Chip’s family roots in Fairfax County and Alexandria extend back to 1744, when his family began a land surveying business where he also worked for many years. Although Ann’s family’s roots in Nokesville were more recent, her family had no less interest in area history. Her father Samuel Cole, a local optometrist, was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the Manassas Museum and instrumental in its creation. The couple thought the museum would be a fitting home for the collection.

“You can gain some window into a period of time in Manassas and Prince William County,” says Chip of the collection. “Holding these documents connects you to another person and another time.” Dellinger hopes to mount an exhibit of the documents once they are organized and transcribed, and expects they will be an important research resource for the community.

Other Donations

Other donations to the collection included a Civil War period letter recounting the Battle of First Manassas; and two small felt banners from the Civil War Centennial celebration in 1961.
Manassas Museum volunteer activity was largely suspended in March due to the pandemic, but volunteers still contributed an equivalent value of $39,000 in the previous seven months while serving as docents and assisting in collections and programs. Parks volunteers were able to continue some clean-ups while safely distancing during the pandemic. The Museum’s Volunteer of the Year was Lourdes Kite, who serves as a docent, translates exhibit materials, and volunteers for special projects. The Parks Volunteer of the Year winner was Lisa Baird, who with the Kiwanis Club of Manassas Battlefield, adopted and organizes regular cleanups at Baldwin Park.

Nancy Rohr, (far right) Secretary of the Manassas Museum Associates, helps serve visitors during the Native Legacy exhibit opening. The Associates support events and fund exhibits, programs and capital projects.

(top left) NOVA Geocache group at Mayfield Fort; (top right) The Miller family at Winters Branch Trail; (middle left) American Heritage Girls at Oakenshaw Park; (middle right) The Buds N’ Roses Garden Club planted a bed at Annaburg Park; (bottom left) Manassas Garden Club members at Baldwin Park; (bottom right) Girl Scout Troops 6848 & 4413 at Byrd Park.
Measures

The Museum’s temporary closing and cancellation of many in-person programs, tours, concerts and the Pool due to the pandemic changed the way we reached potential visitors and connected with community members.

The division’s WEB PAGES had 70,908 views in FY20, an overall decrease of 16%. Before the pandemic restrictions, the Museum, Events, and division pages appeared in the City’s top 30 pages 12 times. Parks and Harris Pavilion pages were in the top 30 pages six times. After pandemic restrictions began, views of the Parks pages increased 71% from March until June of 2020, while views of Museum, Events, and Pavilion pages decreased.

Likes on the division’s FACEBOOK PAGE increased 50%, while reach and engagement rates were well above average. The move to virtual programs meant that staff made a strong commitment to video production, increasing video posts 940%. Videos promoting park amenities and store sales also performed well.

The number of CONSTANT CONTACT emails decreased, but the average open rate was well above industry averages.

ONLINE AND PRINT MEDIA featured the division in 86 stories in FY20, a 19% decrease that corresponds to the decrease in events this spring.

MUSEUM ATTENDANCE fell 35% to 8,568 visitors. No attendance comparison could be made with peer institutions like the Fairfax Museum, because most other museums closed for longer periods during the pandemic.

Satisfaction with both Museum programs and facilities, and with the variety and quality of cultural and recreational programs increased to 90% in this year’s SURVEYS.

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The Manassas Museum’s total revenue increased 25% due to a large rise in donations for the Manassas Industrial School/Jennie Dean Memorial Update.

Echoes Store had a 44% decrease in revenue, reflecting the months when the store was closed due to the pandemic.

Program revenue was also impacted by the pandemic and restrictions on larger in-person tours and programs.

A new eye-catching merchandise cart can be transported to the Museum lawn, Harris Pavilion, and other sites during events. The mobile sales have increased visibility and made it easier to buy small seasonal items.

To boost sales during the pandemic, staff offered free touchless local delivery, and free delivery by mail. Visitor Services Aide Matt Ford delivered this order.

Business Services Supervisor Danay Lewis talked about new offers during a video promotion.

Visitor Services Aide Nancy Mitchell designed a window welcoming visitors after reopening.
The Manassas Museum won third place in the Northern Virginia Museums category of Virginia Living Magazine’s Best of Virginia contest. It was the fourth straight year that the Museum won one of the top three places while competing against such well known museums as Mount Vernon and the Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum.

In 2018, the Museum received a MAP grant for Community and Audience Engagement, which has bolstered efforts to reach more diverse audiences. The Museum was also selected for a special MAP revisit grant in which AAM professionals assessed progress in implementing the Community and Audience Engagement recommendations.

Parks, Culture & Recreation Manager Kisha Wilson-Sogunro served as a panelist at an American Association for State and Local History Conference session on Using the Museum Assessment Program As Your Museum’s GPS on the Road to Excellence.

The Manassas Museum received an American Alliance of Museums Museum Assessment Program (MAP) grant for Education and Interpretation.

The grant includes an ongoing one-year process of self-assessment, institutional activities, and consultative peer review with a site visit assessment to help evaluate how well our Museum is carrying out its educational role and mission, and meeting core standards for education and interpretation.

In addition to looking at the Museum’s current exhibitions, tours, and programs, the MAP considers our community, audiences, and other aspects of operations so the Museum can be a responsive, relevant, and trusted source of learning and educational partner, keeping in mind the need for diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

In 2019, City of Manassas employees helped brighten the holidays for many in the community during the fifth annual 12 Days of Giving service initiative in 2019, which was spearheaded by Parks, Culture & Recreation Manager Kisha Wilson-Sogunro.

The initiative encourages City staff to give the gift of time and take a hands-on role—rather than simply making a monetary donation—to improve the lives of those in need. This year city staff packed food bags and 24-hour emergency kits, sewed blankets for foster care children, and conducted a blood drive.

In total, City of Manassas staff gave more than 396 hours of service to the community and donated over 5,000 items to support pressing needs.