

## 2023 Michael A. Hoffman Award Winner The Fairfax County Park Authority

*Thanks to J. Mark Wittkofski (Archaeologist, retired) for authoring and submitting the following nomination:*

In 1978, the Fairfax County History Commission sponsored the establishment of the Fairfax County Archaeological Survey within the County's Office of Comprehensive Planning. Extensive suburban development threatened to impact known and predicted archaeological sites in the county. At that time, only 78 sites had been recorded in the County. By 1987, the Park Authority recognized a need for an in-house archaeology program to identify and manage sites on its parkland, so an archaeologist was hired. In 1996, both programs were consolidated and administered under the Park Authority and until 2003, these two programs continued to pursue their individual efforts. In 2003, the county hired Dr. Elizabeth A. Crowell to serve as the manager of the Archaeology and Collections Branch of the Fairfax County Park Authority which was responsible for archaeology on parkland and countywide. The staff members of both groups then were moved to the newly- renovated James Lee Community Center to work in its offices and labs.



### **Presentation of the Hoffman Award at the COVA Meeting on May 17, 2024**

*From Left to Right: Dan Brown, COVA President; Jai Cole, Executive Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority; Dr. Elizabeth Crowell, Manager of the Archaeology and Collections Branch; Tyler Ball, Staff Archaeologist; Brittany Blanchard, Assistant Lab Manager; Colleen Boyle, Crew Chief; Aimee Wells, Senior Archaeologist. (Not Present at the Award Presentation: Elizabeth Paynter, Archaeology Lab Manager; Robin Ramey, Field Director; Dr. Alisa Pettitt, GIS Analyst; Kelsey Atwood, Archaeological and Museum Collections Manager; Heather Hembrey, Archaeology Collections Assistant; and Amanda Bengé, Archaeological Technician).*

The mission of the Park Authority is: “To enrich quality of life for all members of the community through an enduring park system that provides a healthy environment, preserves natural and cultural heritage, offers inspiring recreational experiences, and promotes healthy lifestyles.” In the three dozen years that the Park Authority has incorporated archaeology in its programs, the results are impressive:

- More than 3886 archaeological sites recorded,
- More than 3 million artifacts curated in the collections,
- Dozens of partnerships have been developed with local, regional, state, and federal agencies, as well as with George Mason University and area high schools, Friends’ Groups, historic sites and societies, and private organizations,
- Successful public outreach has been directed to public schools, libraries, civic groups, and summer camps,
- In 2006, a countywide Cultural Resource Management Plan was adopted by the county, and updated in 2012, 2018, and is currently being revised.

The Park Authority is to be commended for employing 11 professional staff who have or are pursuing advanced degrees. Furthermore, the staff has been able acquire and use GPS receivers and iPad, GIS mapping, virtual reality, and augmented reality to enhance their work as well as to employ social media to involve the public. They also are conducting a comprehensive cemetery inventory, a Section 110-like inventory of archaeological resources on park property, and an initiative to incorporate legacy data into current projects. The success of the Park Authority’s program has set the bar high for other localities and agencies. Virginia’s archaeology certainly benefits from the efforts of the Park Authority, its professional staff, its Friends’ Groups, and relationships developed to identify, document, and preserve important cultural resources.

**The Park Authority deserves to be recognized by COVA through its Michael A. Hoffman Award.**



The Council of Virginia Archaeologists (CoVA) supports the scientific and humanistic study of the human past, the preservation of archaeological sites and collections, and the dissemination of archaeological information for the benefit of the public. The Hoffman Award recognizes organizations who have made significant contributions to archaeological site preservation or historic preservation within the Commonwealth.