



Michelle's Mailbox September 2026





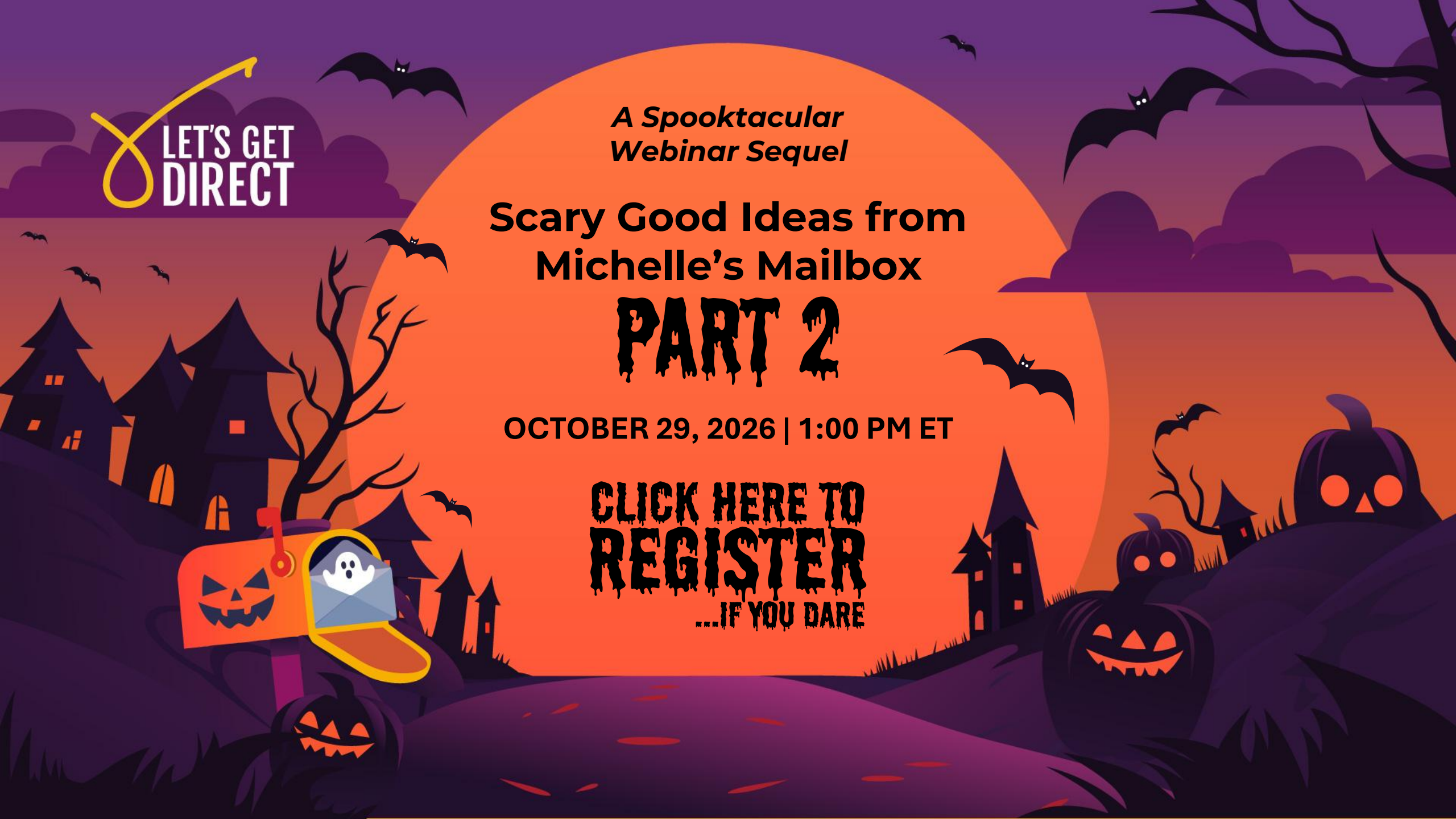
*A Spooktacular
Webinar Sequel*

Scary Good Ideas from Michelle's Mailbox

PART 2

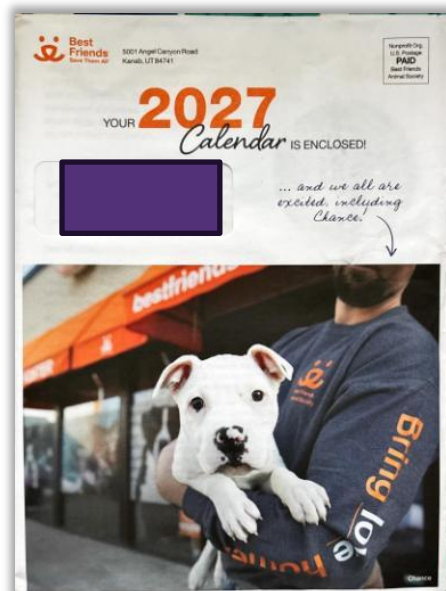
OCTOBER 29, 2026 | 1:00 PM ET

**CLICK HERE TO
REGISTER**
...IF YOU DARE





Best Friends Animal Society



Best Friends Animal Society



Animal/Wildlife



Format:

- OE: 9 x 12, RE: #9, Letter/reply: 8.5 x 14, Calendar: 10.875 x 8.5 (folded size) , Insert: 8.5 x 5.5

Received: August 2026

Program: Lapsed

What works:

- The monthly format creates a natural bridge to a monthly giving message. An insert promotes a \$200,000 challenge gift if 300 donors enroll in monthly giving.
- Donors are directed to enroll online or by phone rather than by check, helping ensure recurring gifts are established through an appropriate payment method.
- The highest ask on this reply was \$55, but donors were still given options for making a gift through a DAF or IRA. You never know where your next DAF or IRA donor may come from.

Worth considering: Can the premium itself create a natural connection to the next behavior you want from the donor?



Virginia Tech Alumni – Hokies Club



10:28 A campus icon for your sh...

LAST CHANCE FOR BURRUSS BLOCKS!

We're building the future – piece by piece.

Meredith, each piece may be small, but together they build something extraordinary – because when Hokies come together, we do more than create opportunities. We shape the future of Virginia Tech.

BRING BURRUSS HOME

Make a gift of \$30 or more today to claim an exclusive, limited-edition set of Burruss Hall micro building blocks and help ensure the next generation of Hokies has access to the life-changing opportunities and experiences that define Virginia Tech.



Thank you for making a gift to Virginia Tech once again! Your generosity impacts our university, students, and Hokie community in powerful ways. Here are examples of what we achieved together last year:

- Virginia Tech was voted the No. 6 best public college in the U.S. by the Wall Street Journal and College Pulse.
- More than 3,200 privately funded scholarships helped students access a Virginia Tech education.
- Nearly \$180,000 in emergency funds aided more than 170 students during their most challenging times.
- Over 25,000 Hokie Club members contributed \$38,328,900 in new gifts and commitments this past fiscal year, which supported more than 600 student-athletes.

Your gift helps us provide life-changing opportunities and experiences that allow students to achieve their full potential. Please accept this token of our appreciation. We are grateful for your support and commitment to the future of our university. Thank you again for making great things possible at Virginia Tech!



Virginia Tech Alumni – Hokies Club



Virginia Tech Alumni – Hokies Club



Education

Format: Unknown

Received: Summer 2026

Program: Acquisition/Alumni

What works:

The experience doesn't end with the acquisition offer.

- A social ad offered donors a small building-block model of Burruss Hall. After making a gift, the donor experience continued through physical mail.
- The donor received:
 - 1. A thank-you with a Hokie sticker
 - 2. Fulfillment of the building set
 - 3. A gatefold welcome piece

Rather than treating digital acquisition, acknowledgment, premium fulfillment and direct mail as separate activities, the pieces feel like stages of one donor experience.

The channels are different, but the donor experience is continuous.



Smithsonian American Women's History Museum



CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY

Ms. Michelle Johnston
25 Concorde Circle Box 1356
Leesburg, VA 20177-8719

007062

0000999999 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

MEMBERSHIP
PO BOX 96037
WASHINGTON DC 20090-6037

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

0000999999 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY

Yes, Karri! I'm proud to support the museum every day, but especially during Women's History Month! Please match my enclosed gift of:

- ☐ \$30 becomes \$60
- ☐ \$45 becomes \$90
- ☐ \$60 becomes \$120
- ☐ \$other_____

To give online, please visit go.si.edu/WomensHistory or scan this QR code.

To pay by check or with a credit card, see reverse side of this form.

PO BOX 37012, MRC-057
WASHINGTON, D.C. • 20013-7012

Ms. Michelle Johnston
25 Concorde Circle Box 1356
Leesburg, VA 20177-8719

007092

0000999999 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY

March 11, 2026

Dear Ms. Johnston,

From the very first Women's History Week in Santa Rosa, California in 1978, a movement was born. Local activists received such an enthusiastic response that dozens of schools planned special programs for Women's History Week.

Every year since 1995, the public has celebrated the incredible stories of American women in March. But you and I both know this history deserves to be recognized every single day.

At the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum, we proudly continue this work.

Today, with help from supporters like you, we're building a forever home for women's history on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

To mark this moment, generous friends of the museum **Ms. Mona Sinha** is matching all gifts up to a total of \$25,000. Why you celebrate Women's History Month by sending back a gift of \$30, \$45, or even \$60 today?

Every dollar you donate will go twice as far towards honoring and amplifying the timeless contributions of American women 350 days a year.

That means your gift of \$30 grows to \$60 to harness new technologies to uncover previously hidden stories.

Your gift of \$45 becomes \$90 to build new partnerships and grow grassroots support in communities across the country.

And your gift of \$60 will double to \$120 to fill in the gaps of our nation's history with stories of women from all walks of life.

For more than 250 years, women have advanced the promise of

(over, please)

Smithsonian American Women's History Museum

-2-

America—from the Declaration of Independence to modern breakthroughs in leadership, law, science, and civic life.

The milestones of women's history are milestones of American history. Because women's history is American history.

This March, we have an opportunity to honor past legacies and build the work that lies ahead. Don't miss this chance for your gift to have twice the impact.

From early calls for equality to modern legislation, activism, and achievements, women continue to shape our nation. But the progress they made did not happen all at once. It unfolded step by step, through courage, persistence, and collective action.

An Onondaga woman skilled in the food and medicinal arts, Polly Cooper, traveled hundreds of miles to teach and tend to soldiers in the Continental Army at Valley Forge.

Mary Katherine Goddard became a publishing pioneer during the Revolutionary era and is the only woman whose name appears on the Declaration of Independence.

Sojourner Truth and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe—"The Battle Hymn of the Republic"—made her one of the most well-known women in America during the Civil War and inspired change long after her death.

Claudette Colvin's bravery in protesting bus segregation set the stage for Rosa Parks' actions and advanced the Civil Rights Movement.

These are just a few moments in the vast tapestry of our nation's history. Between the lines above, there are so many more waiting to be told.

Our mission is committed to bringing women's stories to light. And your matched Women's History Month gift will help us fulfill that vision.

As you read this, your support is already helping the museum change the narrative of how women's experience and understory shaped American history. In commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our multi-faceted and history project, *We Do Declare: Women's Voices on Independence* explores when, how,

-3-

and why generations of women have sought to increase their economic independence.

Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA)—which banned banks from discriminating on the basis of sex or marital status—we *We Do Declare* gathers the voices of women in communities across the country as they discuss their own relationships to economic power.

Together, these interviews offer us a glimpse into how social change happens, especially the little-known yet pivotal history of ECOA and the phenomenon of women's banks that flourished in the decade after its passage.

As part of the museum's 250th anniversary activities, we are launching a series of virtual reality experiences at museums and memorials across the National Mall. All summer, people will be able to "meet" important women from American history through their devices—including our legacy legend, Claudette Colvin and Revolutionary Era printing pioneer Mary Katherine Goddard.

And while American women have made history from the very beginning, their names, activities, and accomplishments have not always been recorded or digitized in a way that makes them findable.

When women's history isn't discoverable, it's forgotten.

Our Digitally Visible Lab is a cooperative effort among historians, data scientists, and the public to use emerging technologies and bring women's history from the margins into the mainstream.

By combining data science, crowdsourcing, experimental approaches, and museum collections, we're making women's history visible in a whole new way.

This new approach gives us the power to surface women's stories hidden in vast networks of historical data, shaping the future of historical research.

By making a gift today, you can help us change the way American history is found and told for generations to come.

(over, please)

-4-

Everyone in America has a woman who has influenced their life, their community, or even our country.

Their stories deserve to be preserved and shared, and we can all benefit from a deeper understanding of American history.

The groundwork has been laid. The momentum is building. And it's your generosity that will bring this museum's full promise to life.

Thank you,

Kari Nussle
Kari Nussle
Associate Director for External Affairs
and Chief Advancement Officer

P.S. Learn more about women's history by exploring the enclosed insert featuring women's stories from *We Do Declare: Women's Voices on Independence* and our upcoming augmented reality experiences.

P.P.S. This is a time to double down on our commitment to the museum's future—and for you to have double the impact! Can we count on you today?

LEARN MORE ABOUT
WE DO DECLARE:
WOMEN'S VOICES
ON INDEPENDENCE

ANN LEVEN, Treasurer of the 20th Century Fund, is the first woman to be elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities.

In commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we're exploring how women have shaped and reshaped American history through a multi-faceted, all-historical project. *We Do Declare: Women's Voices on Independence* is the latest in a series of projects that explore the lives of women who have shaped our nation's history.

Read and listen to a piece about the first woman to be elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, Ann Leven, in the *We Do Declare* podcast.

"In my career, there were many moments when I was the only woman in the room."

I remember the first time I felt that way. It was in 1995, when I was elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities. I was the only woman in the room.

It was a moment that I will never forget. It was a moment that I will never forget.

It was a moment that I will never forget. It was a moment that I will never forget.

ANN LEVEN

ELIZABETH L. BLOCK

MARY KATHERINE GODDARD

AMERICA WOULD NOT HAVE WITHOUT THE EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN ACROSS GENERATIONS — there was never and there hasn't been a moment in history.

Our mission is to identify, tell, and amplify the stories of women who have shaped and reshaped American history through a multi-faceted, all-historical project. *We Do Declare: Women's Voices on Independence* is the latest in a series of projects that explore the lives of women who have shaped our nation's history.

Julia Ward Howe was a writer and activist who wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which became an anthem of the Civil War. She was also a social reformer, and her work in the women's suffrage movement and helping to establish the first women's rights organization in 1848.

Her work spans two centuries and continues to inspire and challenge.

Polly Cooper was an Onondaga woman who skilled her Continental Army at Valley Forge by delivering food and tending to the sick. She was a pioneer in the field of nursing and was the first woman to be elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities.

Cooper's legacy highlights the crucial role of Indigenous women and the power of innovation and community in American history.

Claudette Colvin was a young woman who gave us her name as a symbol of resistance in 1955. Though not named as the first person to challenge the segregation of the South, her act of defiance is a powerful symbol of resistance.

Claudette's legacy challenges us to imagine a world where everyone is equal and to build a future where we all have the right to justice.

Mary Katherine Goddard was the first woman to publish a newspaper in the United States. She was also the first woman to be elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities.

Mary Katherine Goddard's legacy challenges us to imagine a world where everyone is equal and to build a future where we all have the right to justice.

Smithsonian American Women's History Museum



Art & Culture



Format:

- OE: #10, RE: #9, Letter: 11 x 17, Reply: 8.5 x 3.5, Insert: 5.5 x 28 (flat size), 3.5 x 5.5 (folded size)

Received: March 2026

Program: Active members and donor non-members

What works:

- The 5.5" x 28" insert folds down to just 3.5" x 5.5", allowing the organization to feature multiple short stories without adding a large component to the package.
- A QR code on the insert leads to video and additional stories about women's place in history. Once online, the donor is also presented with an opportunity to give.
- A separate QR code on the reply directs donors straight to the donation page.

USPS Promotion Reminder: The qualifying QR code for the promotion cannot appear on the reply device or reply envelope. Be sure to review the specific promotion requirements when determining placement and destination.



Living Classrooms Foundation



☐ Title Sponsor - \$75,000- 75 all access tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Admiral - \$50,000 60 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Stage Sponsor - \$30,000 50 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ VIP Tent Sponsor - \$30,000 50 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ VIP Vice Admiral - \$27,500 50 all access tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Vice Admiral - \$25,000 45 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Screen Sponsor - \$20,000 40 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Beer Tent - \$20,000 40 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Wine Garden - \$20,000 40 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table	☐ Commander - \$15,000 35 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ VIP Captain - \$12,500 20 all access tickets □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Captain - \$10,000 30 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Centerpiece - \$7,500 20 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ VIP First Mate - \$7,500 15 all access tickets □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ First Mate - \$5,000 20 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ VIP Circle - \$3,900 6 all access tickets □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Table Sponsor - \$3,000 10 tickets (includes one table) □ High Top Table □ Low Top Table ☐ Individual Ticket[s] Number of Tickets: _____	Count me in! I want to support Living Classrooms Foundation. Name: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____ ☐ I won't be able to attend but would like to make a contribution of \$_____ to support Living Classrooms Foundation. ☐ My check is enclosed. (Made payable to Living Classrooms Foundation) If you are purchasing in honor of a Rising Star, please list honoree's name below: _____ *Tickets will be sent digitally to the email address listed above. Each guest must have a digital ticket in order to gain entry to the event.*
--	---	--



Living Classrooms Foundation



Education

Format:

- OE: 7.25 x 5.25, Reply: 6.25 x 4.5, Poster: 5 x 7 (folded), 10 x 22 (flat)

Received: 2026

What works:

- The 7.25" x 5.25" outer envelope has the proportions of an invitation rather than a traditional fundraising package.
- Inside, a piece measuring just 5" x 7" when folded opens to 10" x 22", creating significantly more visual real estate without requiring a large outer envelope.

Think beyond the dimensions of the envelope. Folds can create size, surprise and storytelling space after the package is opened.

Note: The sample I received did not include a reply envelope, so I can't confirm whether one was originally part of the package.



Operation Homefront



Military families can't wait.

We weren't planning to include this note, but the need is just too great right now. Every day, more military families are reaching out to Operation Homefront for help, and this time of year, it's overwhelming.

- ▶ **Rising costs. Job instability for veterans. Delayed benefits.** These complications are putting even more pressure on the families who sacrifice so much to serve our country.
- ▶ **The requests for support are coming in faster than we can fulfill them** — rent assistance, utility shutoff notices, food support. The need is real, and it's urgent.
- ▶ That's why we're reaching out to you. **Because when a military family is in crisis, we must act immediately.**



Scan here or visit OperationHomefront.org/WhyNow to make a gift today. ▶

Why now? Because this is our busiest season.

This time of year, we see the highest volume of requests for help.

- Back-to-school expenses
- Rising utility and rent bills
- Emergency needs ahead of the holidays

And this year, it's even harder. With rising inflation and gaps in military support services, more families are slipping through the cracks.

They're doing everything right. But it's just not enough. We serve the families of those who have served us — and we can't do it without you.

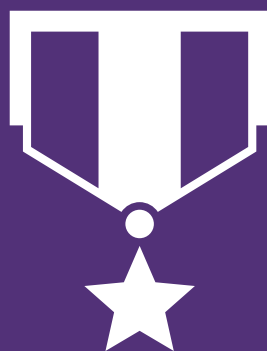
Let's show them they're not forgotten. Not now. Not ever.

Please don't wait. Your gift can make an immediate impact. Scan here or visit OperationHomefront.org/WhyNow to make a gift today.



OHF-2500-WN-INS

Operation Homefront



Veterans' Services/Military

Format:

- Insert: 8.5 x 3.5

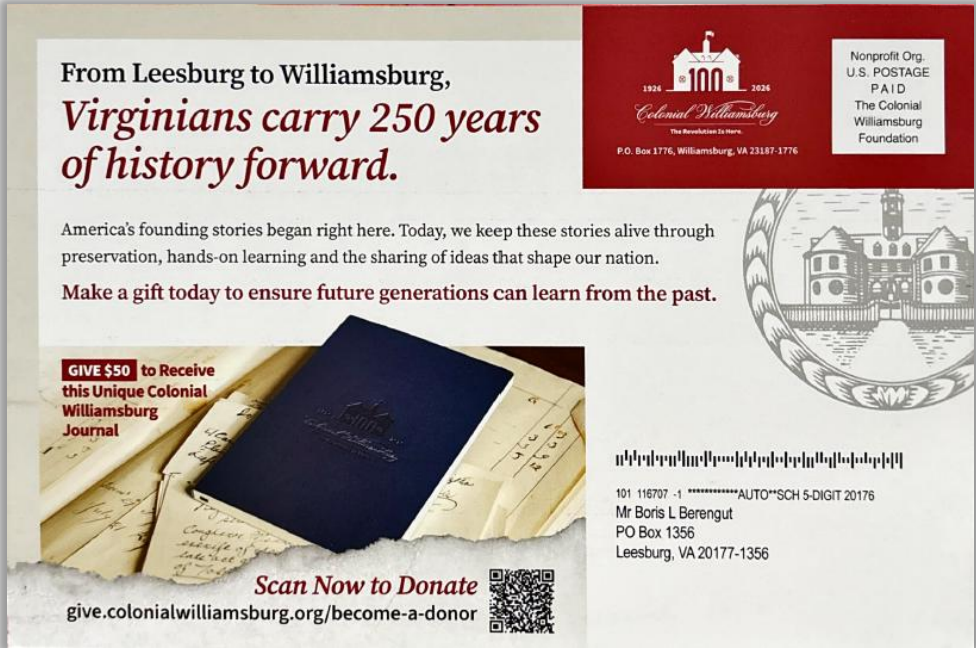
Received: Unknown

What works:

- The insert connects current economic pressures with specific challenges facing military families—from back-to-school expenses and rising utility bills to emergency needs ahead of the holidays.
Instead of relying on a general statement of need, the organization gives the donor a reason that support is particularly important right now.
And it does it in a very small amount of space.

Urgency doesn't always require urgent-looking creative. Sometimes it simply requires answering the donor's question: Why does my gift matter today?

Postcard of the Month



The red box behind the white logo on the mailing panel visually resembles a custom indicia—but it isn't one.

It's a small design choice that helps integrate the postal area into the overall creative rather than treating it as leftover space.

Even the mailing panel is part of the design.

Self-Mailer of the Month



This self-mailer incorporates the reply device and return envelope directly into the format.

That allows the piece to maintain a traditional mail-back response option without requiring separate loose components inside an outer envelope.

The format isn't just the carrier for the message—it does some of the work of the package.



Premium of the Month



Not every premium needs to be a label, notepad, calendar or greeting card.

This air freshener caught my attention simply because it was different. It's lightweight, highly branded and gives the organization enough space for both supporter messaging and its recognizable rose imagery.

Sometimes the idea worth testing isn't a more expensive premium. It's a less expected one.

Techniques

Create the Look of Colored Stock

Want the appearance of a colored envelope without using colored envelope stock?

A flood tint can recreate the look of many common paper colors using standard printing processes.

Here are a few examples of how PMS colors can be used to recreate the look of solid colored stock. The examples on the left show several color builds; on the right, a single PMS color is screened back to create additional shades from the same ink.

Why consider it? It can provide another option when a specific colored stock is unavailable or when printing the color makes more sense for the requirements of the job.

Always review the specific color and stock combination with your production partner—paper and ink can affect the final result.



1) **Canary:**
PANTONE® YELLOW 0131,
PANTONE® 600,
4/C Process C2 M0 Y53 K0



4) **Fluorescent Orange:**
PANTONE® 151,
PANTONE® 1575,
PANTONE® 811,
4/C Process C0 M51 Y85 K0

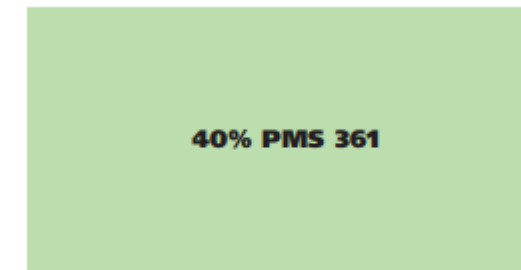


9) **Blue:**
PANTONE® 0821,
PANTONE® 635,
PANTONE® 2975,
PANTONE® 9464,
4/C Process C29 M1 Y5 K0



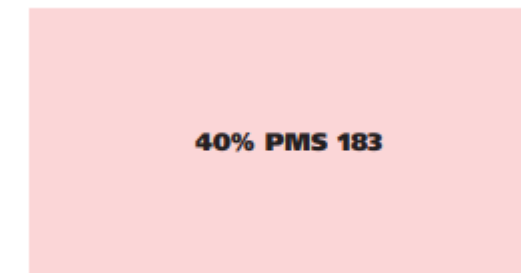
50% YELLOW

CANARY



40% PMS 361

GREEN



40% PMS 183

PINK

Certificates

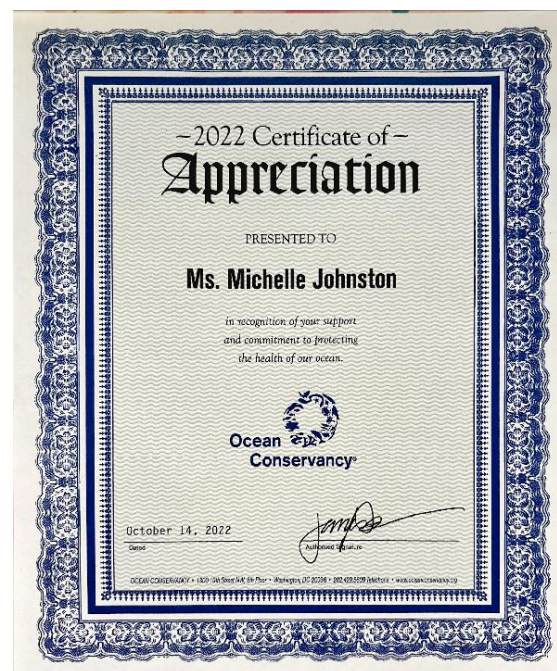


Certificates are a long-standing direct mail technique that continues to show up in today's mail. And not just from one organization or one type of program.

- Some recognize a donor.
- Some create a sense of membership.
- Some nominate the recipient for something.
- Some simply say thank you.

The execution changes, but the underlying idea is remarkably consistent: Turn a piece of paper into something that feels like recognition.

Personalized Recognition



Personalization changes the certificate from a generic insert into something created specifically for the recipient.

Both of these examples use the familiar visual language of an award—borders, formal typography, signatures and the recipient's name—to give the piece a sense of importance.

Personalization doesn't always have to live in the appeal. It can also turn a relatively simple involvement or recognition device into something that feels specifically created for the donor.

Static to Interactive



A certificate doesn't have to be passive. This package includes a gold foil embossed seal on the reply device. The donor is instructed to remove the seal and attach it to the certificate before returning the gift. It's a very simple action, but it changes the certificate from something the donor simply receives into something they help complete. The involvement device becomes part of the recognition device.

Recognition Doesn't Have to Be Elaborate



Recognition doesn't have to require an elaborate format.

This 5" × 7" Chesapeake Bay Foundation certificate uses personalization, formal typography and carefully chosen language to recognize the recipient as a Chesapeake Leader.

The language goes beyond thanking the donor for a gift. It recognizes generosity, leadership and commitment to the cause.

The value comes from what the organization says about the donor—not from the cost or complexity of the piece.

From Recognition to Involvement



Heifer takes a slightly different approach with a Certificate of Nomination.

Instead of simply recognizing past support, the language suggests that the recipient has been selected because of their leadership and commitment.

It's a subtle shift, but it changes the role of the piece from acknowledgment to involvement.

The device may be familiar. The language determines the role you're asking the donor to play.



September 2026 Wrap-Up: What We're Seeing in the Mail

Make individual components work harder.

A calendar can introduce monthly giving. A fold can create additional storytelling space. A certificate can create recognition or involvement. Look beyond what a component *is* and consider what else it can *do*.

Think about the experience beyond a single mailpiece.

The Virginia Tech example moves from social acquisition through acknowledgment, premium fulfillment and welcome. Different channels and pieces can still feel like one continuous donor experience.

Small production choices can change the experience.

A flood tint, an integrated reply device, an unexpected fold or even the treatment of an indicia area can make a familiar format work differently.

Familiar techniques aren't necessarily tired techniques.

Calendars, premiums, certificates and involvement devices have been used in fundraising mail for decades. The opportunity is often in how they're connected to the message, donor or response.

The Production Perspective

This month's mail is a good reminder that innovation doesn't always mean inventing something new. Sometimes it's using a familiar format differently, asking an existing component to do more, or connecting individual pieces into a stronger overall experience.



THANK YOU VERY MUCH!



Please feel free to reach out with any of your questions!

Michelle Johnston

Senior Manager of Strategic Development

Email: mjohnston@psmail.com

Phone: 703.734.4476

Sign up and stay informed! To receive Michelle's Mailbox each month, send an email with the subject line "Subscribe" to mjohnston@psmail.com.