

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 239

Commending Alexandria Searls.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 10, 2026
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 12, 2026

WHEREAS, after 22 years of diligent leadership, Alexandria Searls retired as executive director of the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center in Charlottesville on September 1, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center was established in 2000 to study and interpret the historic expedition by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, both of whom had once lived in Albemarle County, to cross the newly acquired western territories of the United States after the Louisiana Purchase between 1804 and 1806; and

WHEREAS, after Alexandria Searls began serving as executive director in 2003, she oversaw the creation of a 2,500-square-foot facility for the center, which originally operated out of the Keelboat Barn, a full-size replica of one of the boats used on the expedition; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria Searls was highly admired for her humility and incomparable work ethic; she went above and beyond to keep the center operating efficiently and effectively, wearing many hats and undertaking any task required of her; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria Searls acquired a grant through the Bama Works Fund, a philanthropic fund established by musician Dave Matthews that is now administered by the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, to develop new programs that intertwine literacy skills, historical education, and outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria Searls worked to keep fees low for schools, ensuring that all students had an opportunity to experience the center; she also partnered with Congregation Beth Israel Forest School to allow students to interact with the center's many artifacts; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure as executive director, Alexandria Searls published eight books, had multiple films featured at international film festivals, and launched education programs connecting local students and refugee children to the arts and outdoors along the Rivanna River, where the center is located; and

WHEREAS, after her well-earned retirement from the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center, Alexandria Searls plans to pursue her passion for art by studying at James Madison University; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Alexandria Searls on the occasion of her retirement as executive director of the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Alexandria Searls as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her dedication to preserving the Commonwealth's historical resources.

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