

Education, adventure

One more reason why Charlottesville and Albemarle County are special: the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center.

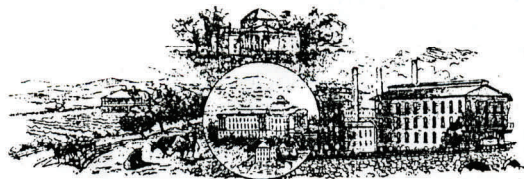
The center is expanding its presence as an educational tool, and is only \$100,000 shy of its \$1.3 million fundraising goal.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition, of course, explored a large chunk of America. Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson to find a route to the Pacific, the two men and their companions completed an arduous journey that added immensely to young America's knowledge, confidence and aspirations.

The significance of their efforts captured public attention anew just a few years ago, on the expedition's 200th anniversary. From that impetus, and based on local ties to both Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis, a group of visionaries created the Exploratory Center, with its replica of a keelboat such as the expedition would have used. The center sits in Darden Towe Park.

Organizers want to improve and expand on that accomplishment. "We want to be a place where people can see the hard work that went into building the United States but have fun while doing it," said Alexandria Searls, executive director. "We want to provide [a] love of nature" and "showcase the beauties we have here in our backyard."

Excellent goals. Hats off to those who have pushed ahead with Lewis-and-Clark-like determination to create a top-notch learning center and reconnect us with our history and our natural heritage.



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