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Laurel Museum reopens after being closed 15 months due to the COVID pandemic

By [Katie V. Jones](#)

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Though the doors to the Laurel Museum have been closed for 15 months, the staff and volunteers of the Laurel Historical Society have remained busy. The year 2020 — with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement and a mostly canceled 150th Laurel anniversary yearlong celebration — had the staff collecting and documenting the historic year to create and add to the museum’s exhibits.

“The year 2020 changed us individuals and as a society,” said Ann Bennett, executive director of Laurel Historical Society. “We have two big displays, ‘Response to COVID’ and ‘Social Justice in Laurel.’ ”



The Laurel Museum reopened to the public Saturday and is now open every weekend. (Courtesy photo / HANDOUT)

Handwritten signs, a collection of face masks and many photographs tell the story of Laurel's past year. A video interview featuring Carlos Hinojosa, the Laurel High School student who organized Laurel's Black Lives Matter protest in June 2020, and Martin Mitchell, a speaker at the protest, is also part of the new exhibit.

"It adds a multilayer approach," Bennett said. "You see the pictures, protest signs and hear the interview." These new exhibits and more were on display when the museum reopened its doors Saturday to the public for the first time since March 2020.



The Laurel Museum reopened to the public Saturday, including a new exhibit about the Black Lives Matter movement, and is now open every weekend. (Courtesy photo / HANDOUT)

“In some ways ... it feels like we just closed the doors a month and got right back into our routine,” Bennett said. “When you see what is on display and how much you lived through, you realize the time that went by.”

“It was very well received,” said Karen Lubieniecki, chair of the Laurel Historical Society board of directors. “A number of people had never been to the museum before. It was exciting to have them walk through and learn all sorts of new things.”

In May, the museum celebrated its 25th anniversary. While there is an exhibit about the milestone event, Bennett said there was no formal celebration though there might be a program in the fall about it.



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The museum is now open every weekend from noon to 4 p.m. It will be closed Sunday for the Fourth of July holiday.

“I didn’t realize how much I missed it,” Bennett said. “To be able to put out the open flag again and get back in the swing of things. Everyone was a little nervous but overall, by the end of the weekend, we felt much more comfortable.”

The Laurel Museum, 817 Main St., is open noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Admission is free. For more information, call 301-725-7975 or go to laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

Katie V. Jones

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