

Media Alert
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Emily Lucier, Manager of PR & Marketing
elucier@VirginiaHistory.org, 804.342.9665

Virginia Museum of History & Culture Announces the Winners of the First Ever Virtual Virginia History Day Contest

Richmond, VA – Between April 17th and May 5th, 2020, 273 Virginia students representing every region of the Commonwealth competed virtually in the state Virginia History Day (VHD) contest for the chance to advance to the National History Day Contest. Students created historical research projects in the form of either a paper, documentary, performance, exhibit, or website. After months of research, preparation, and regional competitions, the results are now in and can be viewed on the [Virginia History Day section](#) of the Virginia Museum of History & Culture’s (VMHC) website.

Many Virginia students started their historical research last fall in their classrooms. Roughly 8,000 in grades four through twelve participated in the program at the classroom level this year. Around 1,000 competed in regional contests held by local historical institutions and colleges. First and second place winners at the district level advanced to the state competition organized by the VMHC.

Due to the pandemic, the VMHC moved the contest to a virtual format. Nonetheless, with 168 projects submitted by 273 students, the contest was almost the same size as last year’s, making it one of the largest in VHD history. More than 80 volunteer judges deliberated remotely to decide on the winners. Every year, 36 projects are selected to advance to the national contest.

To announce the winners, VHD Coordinator Sam Florer recorded a virtual awards ceremony. Genisus Holland, a student activist with Richmond based *Girls For A Change*, provided the keynote address. On May 5th, more than 300 students, teachers, and parents tuned in to the ceremony as it premiered on the VMHC YouTube channel and the VMHC Education Facebook page. Since its premier, more than 1,700 have viewed the ceremony to celebrate the students.

Winners came from every region of the state. Chesterfield’s Julie Walton, a teacher at Manchester Middle School, received the Brenton S. Halsey Teaching Excellence Award (a \$500 prize) and 13 students from the Richmond region qualified for nationals, including Ally Lichtman from George J. Moody Middle School in Henrico, and Olivia Boisseau, Selena Santiago, and Jamie Tuck from James River High School in Chesterfield. The Charlottesville region also had a strong showing, with 14 national qualifiers. Additionally, Isabelle Jordan, a senior at Western Albemarle High School, won the Betsy S. Barton History Day Scholarship (a \$1,000 prize) for her project, “Reconciling American History: Breaking the Barriers of Lost History.”

Northern Virginia, with the largest number of students competing, sent 25 students to nationals. These include Sumaya Zahid from West Springfield High School and Carolyn Brown and Eva Weil from Haycock Elementary School. The Hampton Roads region saw large growth from last year, sending twice as many students to the state contest. Ultimately, six students from the area advanced to the national contest. Abigail Bodvake, a middle school student from St. Patrick Catholic School in Norfolk, won the 2020 Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commemoration Award (a \$500 prize) for her project, “More Than A Pretty Face: The Barrier Breaking Invention from Hedy Lamarr.”

Nine students from the Lynchburg region qualified for nationals, including Eliza Hayes, Isobel Rice, and Grace Doss from Forest Middle School in Bedford. Although the Blacksburg area did not have any students qualify for nationals, Trevyr Schultz and Zachary Craighead from Eastern Montgomery High School did win the George C. Marshall Award in Diplomacy (a \$100 prize) for their project, “International Space Station, Breaking Barriers at 17,130 Miles per Hour.”

The VMHC wishes all 67 Virginia History Day students good luck as they prepare to submit their projects to National History Day and compete against more than 3,000 students from around the world.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is owned and operated by the Virginia Historical Society — a private, non-profit organization established in 1831. The historical society is the oldest cultural organization in Virginia, and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the nation. For use in its state history museum and its renowned research library, the historical society cares for a collection of nearly nine million items representing the ever-evolving story of Virginia.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is located at 428 N Arthur Ashe Boulevard in Richmond's Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the research library. For more information call 804.340.1800, visit VirginiaHistory.org, or connect on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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