VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF HISTORY & CULTURE

Virginia Museum of History & Culture Applauds Strong Student Participation for Virginia History Day Virtual District Contests

Richmond, VA – This week marks the culmination of four Virginia History Day district contests. Virginia History Day (VHD), a massive history competition for students in grades four through twelve, is coordinated by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC), in conjunction with the National History Day Contest. Overcoming challenges presented by school closures and the banning of public gatherings, over 170 students from Tidewater, Central, Southside, and Western, Virginia submitted projects in a virtual format for a chance to advance to the state Virginia History Day contest. VHD remains one of the only extracurricular programs in the state that has not been cancelled due to the public health emergency.

Virginia History Day is the state affiliate of the National History Day program. Similar to science fair, but for history, the National History Day Contest was founded in 1974 to inspire students to conduct original historical research. Since its creation, the contest has grown into an international competition with more than half-a-million participants and thousands of dollars in scholarship awards and prizes annually. "Creating a project for the National History Day Contest is challenging. It requires hard work and dedication. But, it also provides great reward," said Dr. Cathy Gorn, National History Day® Executive Director. "The skills of conducting research and recognizing credible sources are crucial to increasing civic engagement in young people."

District contests were originally planned to take place at local universities/colleges (Radford University, Virginia Wesleyan University, Longwood University, and Central Virginia Community College). Following Virginia's stay-at-home order, the decision was made to switch to a virtual format. The VMHC's local partners strongly supported this move.

Students created projects on historical topics ranging from Alfred the Great to Malala Yousafzai to Maggie Walker. This was the first year students from Southside, Virginia participated in the program, from Prince Edward County High School, and the Tidewater district's participation grew by almost 50% from last year, despite challenges students faced with the public health crisis.

Teachers and students appreciated the chance to continue with the program. "I think it created a sense of normalcy in our chaotic lives right now, and it gave the kids something to work on. Allowing them to finish and see their projects judged brought the year-long process full circle for these students. History Day kids at Forest Middle School are so excited," said Melinda Sprinkle, a middle school teacher in Bedford, Virginia.

Students who placed first or second at their district contest will compete in the state contest, which, originally scheduled to take place at the VMHC in April, is also moving to a virtual format. Winners from the state contest will compete against students from all over the world in the national contest in June.

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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