

Press Release
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Northern Virginia Area School Students Took Home Honors at Virginia History Day Massive History Contest Hosted by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture

Richmond, VA — On Saturday, April 27, students from across the Commonwealth competed during Virginia History Day at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) for the chance to advance to the National History Day Contest at the University of Maryland, College Park, this June. In response to this year's theme, "Triumph and Tragedy in History," students as individuals or groups 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 in.

Many Virginia students began their historical research last fall, selecting a topic related to the theme and gathering primary and secondary resources. While they could choose a topic from any time period or geographic region, many classroom teachers asked students to find one related to their coursework. More than 8,000 Virginia students in grades six through twelve participated in this year's History Day in their classrooms and some went on to compete in regional contests held at Emory & Henry College, Central Virginia Community College, Radford University, UVA Curry School of Education, Mount Vernon High School in Fairfax County, Virginia Wesleyan University, and John Tyler Community College. These district contests were judged by college professors, museum professionals, and other educators and provided students the chance to present their research to a new audience. First- and second-place winners at the district level advanced to compete at the state competition held at VMHC.

On [Virginia History Day](#), VMHC welcomed more than 700 students, teachers, and family members from every region of Virginia. With 169 projects submitted by 280 students, it was the largest state contest in years. More than seventy volunteer judges interviewed students about their research and historical interpretation. While the judges deliberated, contestants, teachers, and families explored the museum galleries with a scavenger hunt, created a mural mosaic, competed in a trivia contest, enjoyed lunch from food trucks, and viewed other students' projects. Virginia's Secretary of Education Atif Qarni gave a rousing keynote address at the awards ceremony, and VMHC President and CEO Jamie O. Bosket presented the awards. The Virginia History Day Cup award went to two schools that tied for the most History Day participation at the classroom level: Western Albemarle High School in Albemarle County and Blacksburg New School. To advance past the state level, students needed to place first or second in their project division and category (Senior Group Website, Junior Individual Exhibit, etc.). Every year, thirty-six projects make the cut.

Students from twelve Northern Virginia schools will advance to the National History Day Contest with first or second place awards from the Virginia History Day contest. Many students focused their research on subjects related to World War II. Zuha Hassen and Yasmeen Muktar, seventh graders at Francis C. Hammond Middle School in Alexandria City Public Schools, took first place in the Junior Group Exhibit category with their project on art looted by Nazis. James Hunt, a ninth grader at T.C. Williams High School also in Alexandria, focused his Senior Individual Exhibit on a different aspect of World War II, the Palau Islands in the Western Pacific. His in-depth research and artifact display also received the MacArthur Memorial Foundation award (\$100 prize) for an outstanding senior project highlighting an aspect of history impacted by General Douglas MacArthur. Nikhil Manandhar, a sixth grader at Lorton Station Elementary School in Fairfax County received the MacArthur Memorial Foundation junior project award and first place for his Junior Individual Website on the Battle of Saipan. World War II's Navajo code talkers were the subjects of the first place Junior Group Documentary, produced by Sahitya Balguri, Havana Medina, and Anya Raval, all seventh graders at Fairfax County's Rocky Run Middle School. Nicholas Teply, a George Mason High School ninth grader in Falls Church City Schools, focused his second-place

Senior Individual Performance on the USS Princeton and also received the VMHC's Naval History Award (a \$200 prize) for his efforts. Yuni Choi, an 11th grader at West Springfield High School in Fairfax County and veteran NHD student, joined teammates Hannah and Heather Che to produce a Senior Group Documentary on Korean Comfort Women that received a first-place award.

Other students researched the Civil War. Madison Charles, a tenth-grader at Fredericksburg Academy, took second place with her Junior Individual Exhibit on the Battle of Chancellorsville. Thomas McKenna, a homeschooled ninth grader in Loudoun County received first place for his Senior Individual Performance on the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. He portrayed Abraham Lincoln and William Seward, among others, and is hoping to win another gold medal at the National History Day Contest, like he did in 2018. Carson Shin, a tenth grader at Oakton High School in Fairfax County wrote his first-place Senior Paper on medical innovations during World War I, while Alyssa Kiffer, a seventh grader at Prince William County's Louise A. Benton Middle School, took first place with her Junior Individual Documentary on the Little Rock Nine.

Students are not limited by geography or time period for their topics, and events in world history sparked award-winning projects. Jaya Gupta, an eighth grader at Loudoun County's J. Michael Lunsford Middle School, researched the triumphs and tragedies of India's independence and partitioning for her Junior Individual Exhibit. And, Shreya Aravindan, Qukua Neves, Sathvika Sangoju, and Eva Smart from Westfield High School in Fairfax County crafted their exhibit on the effects of Christopher Columbus on indigenous peoples. They, along with all the other first and second-place winners now have the chance to incorporate judges' feedback and improve their projects before the National History Day National Contest in June.

We wish all sixty-three Virginia History Day student winners good luck as they head to Maryland, June 9 through 13, to 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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