

February 7, 2020

Five Trailblazers Named 2020 ‘Strong Men & Women in Virginia History’

- *Eighth annual program recognizes African-American leaders*
- *Community activist, judge, Super Bowl champion among those honored*
- *Four high school student essay winners also recognized*

RICHMOND, Va. – Dominion Energy and the Library of Virginia celebrated the achievements of five African-American leaders during the eighth annual “Strong Men & Women in Virginia History” awards program held Thursday, Feb. 6, at the Richmond Marriott. The program honors prominent African Americans past and present who have made noteworthy and admirable contributions to the commonwealth, the nation and their professions.

“These honorees are leaders in their communities that have earned this recognition through their passion and hard work,” said Maria Pia Tamburri, senior community engagement policy director at Dominion Energy. “They are exemplary individuals, paving the way forward for those who wish to serve their community. We are pleased to recognize them for their leadership and accomplishments.”

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Dominion Energy’s “Strong Men & Women” series.

"The Library of Virginia is pleased to partner with Dominion Energy again in 2020 to present the Strong Men & Women in Virginia History program," said Librarian of Virginia Sandra G. Treadway. "The experiences and accomplishments of the men and women honored this year are inspiring, and it is wonderful to have this opportunity to share their stories with a wide audience."

This year’s honorees are:

- **Kaci M. Easley** *Government Official, Charles City County*
- **Penny J. Franklin** *Community Activist, Montgomery County*
- **Joycelyn S. Harrison** *Chemical Engineer and Mentor, Hampton*
- **Torrey Smith** *Super Bowl Champion and Philanthropist, Westmoreland County*
- **Marcus D. Williams** *Judge and Civic Leader, Fairfax*

Four high school student essay winners were also recognized during the ceremony. Each wrote essays, selected from over 200 entries, about the perseverance of African Americans and the importance of their contributions to American history and culture.

The winners of the 2020 Strong Men & Women in Virginia History student essay competition are:

- **Rebekah Bautista** Massaponax High School/The Commonwealth Governor's School, Spotsylvania County
- **Jy'Mir Starks** Great Bridge High School, Chesapeake
- **Ilaria Cabell** Forest Park High School, Woodbridge
- **Ava Seagle** Gate City High School, Gate City

Each student will receive an Apple MacBook Air laptop and \$1,000 for their school.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

- Photos and biographies of this year's honorees are available at <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/changemakers/strong-mw-2020>.
- Winning student essays are available at <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/strong-men-women-in-virginia-history/student-essay-contest/student-essay-contest-winners/>.
- Photos of the event will be posted on the Dominion Energy media downloads page at <https://www.dominionenergy.com/contact-us/media-downloads>.

About the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation

Nearly 7.5 million customers in 18 states energize their homes and businesses with electricity or natural gas from Dominion Energy (NYSE: D). Through its [Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation](#), as well as [EnergyShare](#) and other programs, Dominion Energy contributed \$48 million in 2019 to community causes. The Foundation supports nonprofit causes that meet basic human needs, protect the environment, promote education, and encourage community vitality. Please visit www.DominionEnergy.com to learn more.

About the Library of Virginia

The Library of Virginia (www.lva.virginia.gov), located in historic downtown Richmond, holds the world's most extensive collection of material about the Old Dominion and has been a steward of the commonwealth's documentary and printed heritage since 1823. The story of Virginia and Virginians has been told in many ways since 1607. At the Library of Virginia it is told through more than 119 million manuscripts and nearly 2.5 million books, serials, bound periodicals, microfilm reels, newspapers and state and federal documents, each an individual tile in the vast and colorful mosaic of Virginia's experience.

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