

# Dominion Energy and the Library of Virginia Honor Four Leaders as “Strong Men & Women in Virginia History”

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- 14th annual program recognizes African American leaders and their contributions to the Commonwealth
- Honorees include a Corporate Attorney, U.S. Army Officer, Civil Rights Pioneer, Public Health Advocate
- Four high school student finalists of creative contest also recognized

[Dominion Energy](#) and the Library of Virginia are pleased to announce the 2026 Strong Men & Women in Virginia History honorees and Student Creative Expressions Contest finalists.

This annual program recognizes notable African American business and community leaders who have trailblazed meaningful change across the state.

"This year's Strong Men & Women in Virginia History honorees exemplify courage and determination, leaving a lasting impact on their communities," said Ed Baine, Executive Vice President of Utility Operations and President of Dominion Energy Virginia. "We proudly recognize these remarkable individuals who used their professional skills and talents to inspire progress and positive change for generations to come."

Members of the armed forces, engineers, medical professionals, community leaders, educators, writers, judges and elected officials have been celebrated throughout the program's history.

"We are proud to partner with Dominion Energy in honoring African Americans whose extraordinary achievements have shaped their professions and enriched the lives of Virginians," said Librarian of Virginia Dennis T. Clark. "This year's honorees exemplify inspiring stories of perseverance and excellence, continuing legacies that uplift our Commonwealth."

The 2026 honorees:

Sharon Bowen  
Corporate Attorney and Chair of the New York Stock Exchange, Chesapeake

William Hughes Dillard (posthumously)  
U.S. Army Officer, Arlington County

Sheary Ann Darcus Johnson  
Civil Rights Pioneer, Harrisonburg

Florence Neal Cooper Smith  
Public Health Advocate, Richmond

The leaders were celebrated at a special event on Wednesday in Richmond. Along with the event, the Library of Virginia will host a traveling exhibition featuring each of the honorees and their biographical information. The exhibition will be on display at various community, business and educational institutions throughout the year so that Virginians can learn about these outstanding leaders and their contributions to the Commonwealth.

In 2013, Strong Men & Women in Virginia History was born when Dominion Energy and the Library of

Virginia began a new educational initiative that merged two phenomenal Black History Month programs: Dominion Energy's 22-year-old series, Strong Men & Women: Excellence in Leadership and the Library of Virginia's eight-year-old program, African American Trailblazers in Virginia History.

As a part of the initiative, Virginia high school students can participate in a creative contest to honor outstanding African Americans and share stories they feel may be missing from the mainstream narrative.

Each finalist received an Apple MacBook Air laptop and money for their school.

The winner of the student creative contest was Vrinda Shah from the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School in Richmond. Vrinda designed a website to bring awareness to and celebrate the legacy of the late Dr. Gladys Mae West, whose work was foundational to the development of the modern GPS. In honor of those efforts, Vrinda's school received an additional monetary award.

The 2026 Student Creative Expressions Contest finalists:

Tris Meagher  
Appomattox Regional Governor's School, Petersburg

Sihyun Kan  
Westfield High School, Fairfax County

Vansh Goel  
Tucker High School, Henrico

For more information on Strong Men & Women in Virginia History, photos and full honoree biographical information, go to: Strong Men & Women in Virginia History - Library of Virginia Education.

#### About Dominion Energy

Dominion Energy (NYSE: D), headquartered in Richmond, Va., provides regulated electricity service to 3.6 million homes and businesses in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and regulated natural gas service to 500,000 customers in South Carolina. The company is one of the nation's leading developers and operators of regulated offshore wind and solar power and the largest producer of carbon-free electricity in New England. The company's mission is to provide the reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean energy that powers its customers every day. Please visit [DominionEnergy.com](https://www.dominionenergy.com) to learn more.

#### About the Library of Virginia

The Library of Virginia is the leading source of information on Virginia's history, government and people. The Library's collections, containing more than 134 million items, document and illustrate the lives of both famous Virginians and ordinary citizens. Our online resources draw nearly 2 million website visits per year, and our on-site records, exhibitions and events bring in thousands of visitors annually. The Library is located in downtown Richmond near Capitol Square at 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219. Learn more at [www.lva.virginia.gov](https://www.lva.virginia.gov).

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