



# VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The Story of Virginia*

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## **Virginia Historical Society Recognizes Thirteen High School Scholars From Across the Commonwealth Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Tells Students Hard Work Will Take Them Far In Life**

Richmond, VA—On October 19, 2010, thirteen students from various high schools in Virginia were honored guests at the eighteenth-annual J. Harvie Wilkinson, Jr., Lecture, and they met Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

As participants in the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) Wyndham B. Blanton Scholars Forum, the students heard O'Connor talk about Bushrod Washington, a Supreme Court Justice from Virginia. After her formal presentation, O'Connor took questions from the crowd of more than 900. She spoke about everything from discrimination, to her toughest court case, to her first job. Justice O'Connor even offered some fishing tips to members of the audience.

When asked what advice she would give to the teenage scholars, O'Connor simply said, "Work hard at something worth doing."

"Every year we select a group of high school students to attend the Wilkinson lecture and listen to one of America's preeminent historians or history shapers speak—and I can assure you that the competition is not easy," said VHS President and CEO Paul Levensood. "Over three days during the summer, the Blanton Scholars worked closely with VHS staff to learn how history museums operate and created videos for the VHS online exhibition, *The Story of Virginia*. When the students returned home, they created entries for the VHS blog entitled "The Changing Face of Virginia," where they were asked to describe their perception of Virginia's identity in their own region of the commonwealth."

The Blanton Scholars Forum, named in honor of a former president of the VHS, was established more than a decade ago by an anonymous benefactor who wanted to create a statewide forum for juniors and seniors studying Virginia and American history. Previous speakers include Stephen Ambrose, Cokie Roberts, Rick Atkinson, David McCullough, and Ken Burns. Information about the 2011 Blanton Scholars program will be available on the education page of the VHS website in the spring.

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On the final evaluation, one scholar summarized the experience saying, “I’ve lived in Virginia my entire life and I felt like I didn’t know enough! The Blanton Scholars program really helped open my eyes to our amazing and historic state.”

Another scholar added, “I’m sure we’ll all carry this experience with us and the fond recollections of all we learned and the new perspectives we gained. We’ve shifted from passive spectators of history to involved students of the past.”

To see blog entries and videos by the 2010 Blanton Scholars, visit

<http://www.youtube.com/user/vahistorical> and <http://vahistorical.wordpress.com/2010/10/19/the-changing-face-of-virginia-diversity-in-annandale/>.

## **2010 Wyndham B. Blanton Scholars**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>School</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>
Leah Cassada	Monacan High School	Richmond
William Chapman	Lancaster High School	White Stone
Charles Condro	Maggie L. Walker Governor's School	Midlothian
Reuben Han	Clover Hill High School (Math & Science)	Chesterfield
Kidist Ketema	Annandale High School	Alexandria
Lindsey Matthews	Clover Hill High School (Math & Science)	Midlothian
Ciara Mills	Clover Hill High School (Math & Science)	Midlothian
Eric Morris-Pusey	Heritage High School	Lynchburg
Caroline Morse	Nansemond-Suffolk Academy	Chesapeake
Stephen Roach	Maggie L. Walker Governor's School	Chesterfield
Michael Saboe	Centreville High School	Centreville
Kieley Sutton	Jamestown High School	Williamsburg
Samantha Terry	Heritage High School	Lynchburg

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For more than 182 years, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) has been connecting people to America’s past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. The VHS—a history museum and research library—features award-winning exhibitions that are entertaining and educational for visitors of all ages. The Society is the only museum with all of Virginia’s history under one roof—all centuries, all regions, and all topics are covered. Although designated the Official State Historical Society, the VHS is a privately funded non-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations to sustain its operations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Museum hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. Library hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit [www.vahistorical.org](http://www.vahistorical.org), or find the VHS on Facebook and Twitter.

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