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NAACP Culpeper to Honor Prominent Educators

The Culpeper Branch of the NAACP, which also serves Madison and Rappahannock counties, has announced that the branch has increased its scholarship funding for 2025. The organization will now offer four scholarships—one for each high school in the tri-county region—valued at \$1,000 each.

The branch has also named the four scholarships to honor educators esteemed and fondly remembered for their contributions in the local public schools. The scholarships will now be known as:

The Rev. Willis Jackson Madden Memorial Scholarship: Born in 1862, the [Rev. Willis Jackson Madden](#) is considered “the father of education for African American students in Culpeper.” He began teaching students in his home in Maddensville near Lignum, and later taught at the Colored Graded School No. 2 in Culpeper. He was the first Black principal and one of the first Black teachers in the county. Madden also served as pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Culpeper for 40 years, and as a founder of the Wayland Blue Ridge Baptist Association in 1888. Madden advocated tirelessly for community involvement, equal rights, and equal education for African Americans. He died in 1948.

The Annie Laura Payne Lovell Memorial Scholarship: [Annie Laura Payne Lovell](#) was born in 1892. She taught in the Culpeper County schools for more than 40 years, and was one of the first Black women in the county to register to vote in 1920. She taught in several one-room schoolhouses in the county and later transferred to the Culpeper County Training School on South Main Street in the 1920s. Lovell was also among the first teachers at the newly constructed training school in 1936. She continued to volunteer and serve in Culpeper for many years after her retirement, and died in 1990 at the age of 97.

“My grandmother, Annie Laura Payne Lovell, was a passionate, inspiring, motivated, and very dedicated schoolteacher in the Culpeper County Public Schools system,” says Angie Chapman, historian for Culpeper’s African American Heritage Alliance. “She nurtured, instilled, and encouraged all of her students with great knowledge, wisdom, citizenship, and the desire to learn at a time in society when education was limited for African American students.”

The Sadie Ward Crowder Memorial Scholarship: Born in 1922 in Madison County, Sadie Ward Crowder was a beloved educator who taught for 47 years in the county. Her career began in 1941 in the one-room Midway School, followed by a two-room school in Uno and a three-room school in Radiant. She also taught at the Madison Elementary School and was the first Black teacher to teach at Waverly Yowell

when the schools were integrated in the late 1960s. She served as president of the Madison and Green Retired Teachers Association and volunteered extensively in the Madison community.

According to Dorren Brown, a former Madison County educator and a board member of the Madison County African American Historical Association, Crowder was loved by her students. “She was bubbly and energetic—there was always a lot of singing and music in her classes. She is remembered fondly by many community members in Madison.”

The Austin-Green-Williams Memorial Scholarship: Named for three teachers in Rappahannock County the Austin-Green-Williams Memorial Scholarship honors Mrs. B.B. Austin of Lynchburg, Virginia, who taught grades 1-3 for many years at the Scrabble School in Castleton; and Miss. C. A. Williams of Washington, Virginia, who was a principal and teacher for grades 4-7 at the Scrabble School. The school is noted as an outstanding example of the historic Rosenwald Schools, built during the Jim Crow era of segregation to provide education to African American students.

The scholarship also honors Mrs. Anna Williams Green, who was a teacher and supervisor of the Jeanes Fund (also known as the Negro Rural School Fund) era to support elementary education and practical skills such as cooking, sewing, and woodworking. Green, also of Washington, Virginia, is credited with being a major influence in the planning and development of the George Washington Carver Regional High School in Rapidan, which opened for African American students in 1948.

According to Nan Butler Roberts, president of the Scrabble School Preservation Foundation, “These three women are remembered fondly by former students throughout Rappahannock County for the dedication and sacrifices they made to ensure that African American children received a quality education in preparation for higher education and career placement.”

Applications for the NAACP Culpeper scholarships are available at each of the four high schools in Culpeper, Madison, and Rappahannock counties, or by contacting admin@naacpculpeper.org. The deadline for submission is April 7.

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