



***"It Seemed Like Reaching for the Moon"***  
**Barbara Johns Quote from the Civil Rights Memorial, Virginia State Capitol Grounds**

January 26, 2026

Dear Parents and Teachers,

The Culpeper Branch of the NAACP, also representing Madison and Rappahannock counties, is excited to announce our 2026 annual Black History Month contest for students. This year, we have created an additional category: in addition to essays, we will also welcome entries in an "Artistic Expression" category, to include paintings, drawings, photographs, posters, songs, and poems. Prizes will be awarded in both categories at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Our 2026 theme focuses on the era of segregated schools and the decades-long fight for integration. In our tri-county region, African American students attended segregated schools for nearly a century, with the first field schools opening shortly after the Civil War and integration finally taking place during the 1960s.

With that history in mind, we would like to encourage students to explore the experience of African American students during this era, and/or examine the efforts to achieve integrated schools.

**Our contest prompt is:**

***Explore the history of segregated schools in our country or our community, and/or the fight for integration and equality in education.***

Students might address one or more of the following questions: what would it have been like to attend a segregated school? What happened during the era of "Massive Resistance"? Who are some champions who led the fight for integration? How was integration received in our local community?

For example, students might consider focusing their project on civil rights leaders in Virginia who were instrumental in the fight for desegregation such as Barbara Johns, Dorothy Hamm, Betty Kilby, Spottswood Robinson, or Oliver Hill, or a national figure such as Thurgood Marshall. They might learn about a particular school in our tri-county area, such as the George Washington Carver Regional High School in Culpeper County, the Scrabble School in Rappahannock County, or the Madison Training School in Madison County. Or (*and we especially encourage this!*), they might interview a former student of a segregated school in our community, and write about their experience or interpret their story artistically.

**Essay Entries:**

Essays should be limited to 500 words. Please include the student's name, grade, school, and contact information. The essays should be sent by February 28 to [bhm.essay@gmail.com](mailto:bhm.essay@gmail.com) or by mail (postmarked by February 28) to NAACP Culpeper, P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA, 22701.

NAACP Culpeper Branch #7058  
P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA 22701  
[admin@naacpculpeper.org](mailto:admin@naacpculpeper.org)

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**Artistic Expression Entries:**

Artistic Expression entries should include the student's name, grade, school, and contact information, along with a brief (25-50 words) description of the artistic intent. The entries should be sent by February 28 to [bhm.essay@gmail.com](mailto:bhm.essay@gmail.com) or by mail (postmarked by February 28) to NAACP Culpeper, P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA, 22701. Paintings and drawings may be photographed rather than sending the original artwork. Brief video statements and videos for musical entries or poems are also welcome.

**Resources:**

Many students will have grandparents, great aunts or uncles, a family friend, or a neighbor who attended school during the era of segregation, or know of the history of this era. If a student needs more information, the following organizations are available to assist and/or connect students with local residents willing to share their stories.

- African American Heritage Alliance (Culpeper)  
[aahaculpeper@gmail.com](mailto:aahaculpeper@gmail.com)
- Madison County African American Historical Association  
[mcaaha@gmail.com](mailto:mcaaha@gmail.com)
- African American Association of Rappahannock County  
[awesominsulation@aol.com](mailto:awesominsulation@aol.com)  
[jbaltimore923@gmail.com](mailto:jbaltimore923@gmail.com)
- Carver 4-County Museum/George Washington Carver Regional High School Alumni Association:  
[carver4cm@gmail.com](mailto:carver4cm@gmail.com)

We hope you will encourage your children or students to enter the contest, which offers prizes of \$100 to the winning elementary student, \$150 to the winning middle school student, and \$200 to the winning high school student in both categories. Students will also be invited to read their winning essay or present their artistic entry at the March 2026 NAACP meeting in Culpeper.

More information, including contest guidelines, may be found at [www.naacpculpeper.org/for-students](http://www.naacpculpeper.org/for-students). If you have any questions, please contact us at [bhm.essay@gmail.com](mailto:bhm.essay@gmail.com). Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

NAACP CULPEPER BRANCH #7058



Kaleb Hackley  
President, NAACP Culpeper Branch #7058

NAACP Culpeper Branch #7058  
P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA 22701  
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