

VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2020

Contacts:

Jimmy Hollins, Chairman, VIAHA
434-825-6117/burleyvarsityclub@gmail.com

Bernard R. Anderson, Recording Secretary
703-851-2989/banderson361@verizon.net

2020 VIAHA Hall of Fame Class Chosen

Fifth HOF Class features 12 Inductees

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA — Twelve individuals who have made outstanding contributions through high school, college and professional careers have been selected to the 2020 class of the Virginia Interscholastic Association Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame.

The class features four athletes (Arthur Ashe, Jr. – Maggie L. Walker HS, Richmond; Donald Culpepper – Dunbar HS, Lynchburg; Wheeler Hughes – Dunbar HS, Lynchburg; and Willie Lanier – Maggie L. Walker HS, Richmond;) three coaches (Harold Deane, Sr. – Lucy Addison HS, Roanoke; Robert Johnson – Based in Lynchburg; and Carnis Poindexter – Lucy Addison HS, Roanoke;) and five contributors (Afemo Omilami/Kenneth Lee – Peabody HS, Petersburg; Carolyn Rudd -- G. W. Carver HS, Chesterfield County; Melvin Stith, Central HS, Sussex County; Andrew “Jack” White – Beverly Allen HS, West Point; and Jonathan Williams, Peabody/Petersburg HS, Petersburg). Members of the Class of 2020 will bring total membership to 74. The fifth annual Hall of Fame Banquet will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, June 26, 2020 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Charlottesville, VA. The banquet ticket order form can be found at viaheritage.com.

The Hall is dedicated to recognizing and preserving the rich heritage and legacy of African American students and adults who participated in the Virginia Interscholastic Association (VIA) from 1954-70 and its predecessor organization, the Virginia Interscholastic Athletic League (VIAL). Therefore, promoting greater appreciation for and understanding of the contributions of African Americans to the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia is the primary objective of the VIAHA.

Prior to public school desegregation, one of the most influential organizations in Virginia was the VIA, which served young African American students who attended segregated high schools. The impact this association had on shaping the lives of these students went far beyond governing athletic events. The VIA brought together students, parents and mentors to develop a strong foundation of character and ethical responsibility in the students. The notable careers of many VIA graduates are testaments to the successful efforts of their teachers, principals and counselors.

Athletes and coaches considered for nomination are those who excelled on VIA and VIAL athletic teams. Contributors are professionals who excelled in VIA and VIAL non-athletic activities such as school administration, media, officiating, medical services and other professions.

The VIAL/VIA’s original home was at Virginia State College (now Virginia State University). After merging with the Virginia High School League (VHSL), all VIA records are now stored at Virginia State University.

The deadline for submitting nominations for the Hall of Fame Class of 2021 is September 30, 2020.

**VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame
2020 Inductees**

Athletes

Arthur Ashe, Jr.

Maggie L. Walker High, Richmond (Honorary)

Tennis

Arthur Ashe, Jr. began playing tennis in the segregated public parks in his hometown of Richmond, VA. As he improved, he was noticed by Dr. Robert W. Johnson of Lynchburg, VA who had coached Althea Gibson -- the first African American to win Wimbledon and the U. S. National (now the U. S. Open) Championships. Ashe continued to improve and, in spite of the racial discrimination which barred him from local and regional tournaments, he won national youth titles in 1960 and 1961. A successful collegiate career at UCLA boosted his recognition as one of the world's best amateur players. He was the first African American man to win the U. S. Open (1968), Australian Open (1970) and Wimbledon (1975) Grand Slam Titles. His dignified behavior as a world class athlete was a sharp contrast to the negative stereotypes he faced as a youth. He became an ambassador for equality and goodwill around the world. The sports network ESPN annually presents the Arthur Ashe Courage Award to individuals who "reflect the spirit of Arthur Ashe, possessing strength in the face of adversity, courage in the face of peril and the willingness to stand up for their beliefs no matter what the cost." He was elected to the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 1979 and the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1985.

Donald Culpepper

Dunbar High, Lynchburg (1966)

Basketball

As a high school student, Donald Culpepper participated in football, track and basketball. As co-captains of Dunbar's 1966 basketball team, he and Wheeler Hughes together averaged more than 50 points per game in winning the VIA's Western District and Group I State Championships. In the VIA State Tournament at Hampton Institute (now University), they defeated Langston High (Danville) 72-62 in the final. Culpepper was selected to the VIA all Western District and all state basketball teams. The team then entered the National Negro High School Tournament in Montgomery, Alabama. In Dunbar's semi-final win over defending National Champion Lanier High (Jackson, Mississippi), Culpepper scored 22 points including game winners at the foul line. In the National Championship game, Dunbar lost to Coleman High (Greenville, Mississippi), but Culpepper was elected to the all-tournament team. He continued his basketball career at Norfolk State College (now University) where he averaged 15.4 points and 3 rebounds per game. After graduating from Wayne State University, he remained in the Detroit, Michigan area and enjoyed a 39 year career with General Motors Cooperation. His community involvement included service as a youth basketball coach and Chairman of the Southfield, Michigan Planning Commission.

Wheeler Hughes

Dunbar High, Lynchburg (1966)

Basketball

Wheeler Hughes was a well-rounded student who was elected Vice President of the Student Council and was one of Virginia's best high school basketball players. Dunbar's 1966 team played with an aggressive style, averaged 92 points per game and won the VIA's Western District and VIA Group I Basketball Championships. Dunbar then entered the National Negro High School Tournament in Montgomery, Alabama. In the National tournament, Hughes averaged 20 points per game as Dunbar defeated defending National Champion Lanier High (Jackson, Mississippi) 79-78 in the semi-final and lost the National Championship game to Coleman High of Greenville,

Mississippi. In 1966 he was the Most Valuable Player in the VIA's Western District and State Group I Basketball tournaments. He made history that same year when he and Jerry Venable (B. T. Washington, Staunton) were the first black basketball players selected to the Virginia Sportswriters and Sportscasters All-State Team. Hughes played collegiate basketball at Kansas State University where they won the 1970 Big Eight Conference Regular Season Championship. He returned to Lynchburg in February 2014 when his number 12 Dunbar jersey was retired.

Willie Lanier

Maggie L. Walker High, Richmond (1963)

Football

Willie Lanier played high school football under Coach Fred "Cannonball" Cooper. Their 1962 Maggie L. Walker team won the Virginia Interscholastic Association's football championship. Lanier graduated from Morgan State University in 1967 where he was a two time All-American linebacker and Most Valuable Player in the 1966 Tangerine Bowl. Picked in the second round of the American Football League's 1967 draft, Lanier became a starter his first year with the Kansas City Chiefs. He was the first African American to play middle linebacker in professional football, the position described as the leader of the defense on the field. He retired in 1977 and is recognized as one of football's greatest linebackers. He was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1986 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 2000. In 2019 he was recognized as one of the NFL's "100 Greatest Football Players." Mr. Lanier has had a long career in financial services and is now president and Chief Executive of the Lanier Group, LLC. His longstanding commitment to his community and education is demonstrated by his selection as NFL Man of the Year in 1972 and the establishment of an Endowed Lectureship in Business Ethics at Morgan State University in 2015.

Coaches

Harold Deane, Sr.

Lucy Addison High, Roanoke

Coach Harold Deane, Sr. graduated from Lucy Addison High in 1956. During his senior year his basketball team was VIA Group I Basketball Tournament Runner-up. He attended Virginia State College (now University) where he received the B. S. degree in Physical Education in 1961. At VSU he competed in basketball and track and field. He was a three year starter in basketball and selected to the CIAA All-Tournament Team. He received professional basketball offers from the Detroit Pistons, Washington Capitals (ABA) and the Harlem Clowns. As an ROTC graduate, he served in the U. S. Army from 1961-1963. Coach Deane was Head Basketball coach at VSU 1969-1979 and 1987-1994. He led his team to the Central Intercollegiate Association (CIAA) championship in 1988. He was selected as conference Coach of the Year four times. From 1969 until his retirement in 2015, he was a professor of Physical Education at VSU. For many years Coach Deane officiated high school basketball, baseball and softball games and collegiate men and women basketball games in the CIAA, Big South and the Atlantic Coast Conferences. Coach Deane's contributions to education and his community have been recognized by the City of Petersburg and Chesterfield County, VA. He was elected to the CIAA Hall of Fame in 2014.

Robert W. Johnson

Based in Lynchburg

Dr. Robert W. Johnson's work to improve access to the sport of tennis greatly facilitated the development of tennis as a competitive sport in the Virginia Interscholastic Association. He had been an All-American running back at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He graduated from the Meharry Medical School in Nashville, TN and established a successful practice in Lynchburg. An accomplished player himself, he worked for more than 30 years to integrate tennis tournaments at the local, state and national levels. To provide better training for young African Americans, he founded the Junior Development Program of the American Tennis Association. He hosted tennis

camps at his Lynchburg, VA home and provided transportation to local and regional tournaments at his own expense. His guidance was a strong influence on the development of Grand Slam Champions Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe, Jr. who broke down racial barriers in the 1950s and 1960s. In his honor, Virginia State University hosts the Annual Dr. Robert W. Johnson Memorial Tennis Invitational. Dr. Johnson was elected to the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 1972 and the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1979. His home and adjoining tennis court was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Carnis Poindexter

Lucy Addison High, Roanoke

Carnis Poindexter grew up in northwest Roanoke and lived across from the Upper-Springwood Park tennis courts. In 1956, the year before he graduated from Lucy Addison High, he met Dr. E.D. Downing who was associated with the American Tennis Association's (ATA) Junior Development Program founded by Dr. Robert W. Johnson. Dr. Downing encouraged him to play and suggested that he might get a college scholarship for tennis. In 1957 Poindexter entered Arkansas A.M. & N College (now the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff) on a tennis scholarship. In 1959 he won the ATA National Inter-Collegiate Singles Championship. In 1964, as an unseeded player, he won the Roanoke City Championship. This was the first year the tournament was integrated. He won the tournament three more times. He began his coaching career at Burley High in 1964 where he started their first tennis team. In 1965 he became tennis coach at Lucy Addison High where he won the 1967 VIA State Tennis Championship. Before retiring in 1994, he also coached at Jefferson Senior and Patrick Henry High Schools. Twenty five of his players were awarded athletic scholarships. In May 2018, Roanoke's River's Edge Sports Complex tennis facility was officially named the Carnis Poindexter Tennis Courts.

Contributors

Afemo Omilami (Kenneth Lee)

Peabody High, Petersburg (1969)

Actor

Among his activities at Peabody High, Mr. Omilami played football and was a member of the Drama Club, igniting his interest in acting. In the community, he worked with the NAACP and helped with voter registration. He attended Morehouse College as a political science major and later attended the New York University School of Drama. Over his long career as a character actor he has appeared in films such as Trading Places (1983), Glory (1989), The Firm (1993), Forest Gump (1994), Remember the Titans (2000), Ray (2004), The Blind Side (2009) and Hidden Figures (2016). He had a recurring role in the television drama In the Heat of the Night (1989-1993). At the 2013 NAACP Image Awards he was nominated for Best Actor in a Television Movie for his role in the Lifetime Network's production of Steel Magnolias. Currently living in Atlanta, GA, Mr. Omilami is very involved with the nonprofit organization Hosea Helps which was founded by his father-in-law, the late Reverend Hosea Williams. This is one of Atlanta's largest social services organizations for the poor and hungry. In 2018, at Morehouse College's Ray Charles Performing Arts Center, Mr. Omilami received the BlackManCan Legacy Award for "embodying the definition of a positive black male image."

Carolyn Rudd

G. W. Carver High, Chesterfield County (1968)

Corporate Executive

Valedictorian of her high school graduating class, Ms. Rudd received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia State University and an Ed. D in higher education from William and Mary (1978). She is believed to be the youngest African American to receive a doctorate from the university. Before starting her own business she served

in positions at Virginia State, Bowie State and Howard Universities. In 1988 she founded and became CEO of the Washington D.C.-based multifaceted professional services and management consulting firm CRP, Incorporated. CRP provides solutions in research, policy assessment and analysis, program management and support to federal agencies, colleges, universities and other nonprofit organizations. CRP was recognized by the D. C. Chamber of Commerce as its Small Business of the Year in 2017. Ms. Rudd has served as chair of the DC Commission for Women and on the board of Family Matters of Greater Washington. She currently serves as a Trustee of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and has been committed to providing employment opportunities to UDC graduates. She helped establish and actively supports a nationally endowed scholarship in education at Virginia Union University.

Melvin Stith

Central High, Sussex County (1964)

Academic Administrator

Melvin Stith grew up on a family farm in rural Jarratt, VA in Sussex County. He received a B.S. degree in Sociology from Norfolk State University (NSU) in 1968. He served in the U.S. Army 1968 to 1972, achieving the rank of Captain. He received an M.B.A. degree (1973) and a Ph.D. degree in Marketing (1978), both from Syracuse University. He was an Assistant Professor of Business and an Associate Dean at the University of South Florida's College of Business (1977-1982). After serving as a visiting professor at the Florida A&M University School of Business and Industry (1982-1985), he was an Associate Professor of Marketing at Florida State University (FSU), later serving as the department's chair. In 1991, Stith was named Dean of the Business School and Jim Moran Professor of Business Administration. He left FSU in 2005 to become the Dean of the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University. Dr. Stith has served on many boards, including AFLAC and the Keebler Food Company. He was named a top influential black corporate executive by Savoy Magazine in 2016 and 2017. Dr. Stith left retirement in 2017 to serve as interim President of NSU. In 2018 he returned to Central High School to give the commencement address.

Andrew "Jack" White

Beverly Allen High, West Point (1949)

Baptist Minister

Reverend Andrew White was born in King and Queen County. He attended the Rappahannock Industrial Academy for one year and graduated from Beverly Allen High School in 1949. In high school he played baseball and basketball and joined the drama and debate clubs. He received his B. S. and M. Div. degrees from Virginia Union University in 1953 and 1956, respectively. He taught history and social studies at A. T. Johnson High in Westmoreland County for ten years. Throughout his distinguished career, he was a champion for education, health care and community service. In 1969 Rev. White helped found the interracial Downtown (Petersburg, VA) Churches United, which worked with other community groups to provide food, clothing, shelter, and job assistance. He was the first African American President of the Southside Virginia Mental Health Association, and was a member of the Petersburg Hospital Authority, which oversaw the construction of a new facility. He co-chaired the successful capital campaign to construct a new public library in Petersburg (2014). Prior to his retirement, he concurrently pastored Zion Baptist Church (Petersburg) and Union Branch Baptist Church (Prince George County, VA) for more than 40 years. Still a resident of Petersburg, VA, Rev. White was recognized in 2019 among a group of Strong Men & Women in Virginia History for his contributions to the state.

Jonathan Williams

Peabody/Petersburg High, Petersburg (1971)

Musician

Growing up in a musically talented family, Jonathan joined Peabody High's marching band in the 8th grade. Because of his enthusiasm and ability to learn different instruments, his music teacher, Mr. William McKinley (now

deceased), suggested that Jonathan learn to play the bassoon. Mr. McKinley also encouraged Jonathan to learn to write and arrange music. He began his professional career with a Petersburg area band called Nat Turner's Rebellion. Subsequently, he was introduced to music producers at All Platinum Records. He was a part of the label's in house band that was later known as The Rimshots. They recorded with noted artists Chuck Jackson, Brook Benton, Solomon Burke, Hank Ballard, Silvia Robinson and Etta James. Between 1973 and 1976 they recorded more than 50 projects for Platinum-Chess Records. In the mid-1970's the Rimshots had great success with their cover recording of "7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (Blow Your Whistle)," and "Super Disco," which reached number seven on the disco singles charts. Today Jonathan says his music career is still a work in progress. In 2017 he released his first jazz album entitled "Sir Jonathan Williams, To Sir with Love." He recently released a single entitled "Your Place or Mine". Mr. Williams continues to do productions for the Sugar Hill Record Label.

2019 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:

Athletes – Charles Bonaparte, Benjamin Brown, Warren Canada, Robert Dandridge, Fred Harold Sawyer and Louis Richard Harris.

Coaches – William Bailey, James Earley and Carl Peal.

Contributors – William A. Brown, Cheryl Anthony Epps and Roger Gregory.

2018 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:

Athletes – Ronald Bolton, Joseph Bradley, Earl Faison, Jim Lewis and Jerry Venable.

Coaches – Alphonso Hamilton, Eugene Thompson, Arnold Thurmond and Willie Travis.

Contributors – William Bailey, Julian Earls and Marguerita Ragsdale.

2017 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:

Athletes – Mattie Parham Bell, Leroy Keyes, Albert Arthur Megginson, Marty Miller and Charles Price.

Coaches – Howard Allen, Walter Lovett and Harry Waters.

Contributors – Garwin DeBerry, Clarence Oliver and Knox W. Tull, Jr.

2016 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:

Athletes – Walter Bowser, Roosevelt Brown, Joseph Buggs, Jesse Jefferson, Jr., Louvenia Johnson, Earl Lloyd, Raymond Pollard, Benita Fitzgerald Moseley, Bryant Stith, Charles Stukes and Donald Ross.

Coaches – Fredrick Cooper, Arthur Gardner, Robinette Hayes, George Lancaster, William Lawson, Jr., Thad Madden, Carl Pinn, George Quarles, Maxie Robinson and Robert Smith.

Contributors – James Hayes, Calvin Jacox, Clarence Jones, George Peterson, Elmer Sampson and Ernest Shaw.

Special Recognition – The Armstrong-Walker Football Classic.