

## **Selected Highlights of the First Hundred Years of the Virginia Academy of Science, 1923-2023**

On April 26, 1923, 135 scientists and science educators convened in Williamsburg at The College of William and Mary to form the Virginia Academy of Science (VAS). In the ten decades since, the VAS has nurtured successive generations of scientists, advocated for science education, supported scientific research, and promoted science-based decision-making in our Commonwealth and in society. Among the Academy's significant accomplishments and activities in its first 100 years are these:

### **Public Service**

- In partnership with the Garden Clubs of Virginia and the Izaak Walton League, met in 1929 to establish the **Virginia State Parks** system, which opened with six parks in 1936
- In the 1960s, lobbied vigorously to create the **Science Museum of Virginia**; the museum dedicated its first exhibit gallery in 1977
- Established and administers the **Kiser Fund for Science Teacher Education**, which makes awards annually
- Has provided **scientific advice** to Virginia governors and state agencies, beginning with the state's kepone disaster in the 1970s

### **Science Education in Grades preK-12**

- Has been involved in hundreds of **teacher education and training programs** in the sciences, mathematics, medicine, and technology
- Founded the **Virginia Junior Academy of Science (VJAS)** in 1941 to foster original research in Virginia middle and high schools
- Numbering more than 100 affiliated schools, the VJAS provides a **national model for state junior science academies**; it has been ranked among the top three junior academies in the nation for over two decades
- Established the **VJAS Research Fund** that supports scientific investigations by Virginia's secondary school students
- Features more than 500 science research presentations by middle and high school students in the **Annual VJAS Research Symposium**; awards over \$80,000 in sponsored or endowed scholarships and prizes each year to Virginia middle and high school students for original research
- Brings together **secondary school students with research mentors** at Virginia colleges and universities each year; students visit campuses and conduct research under professors' mentorship
- Worked with the Virginia Department of Education to develop **two diploma seals to encourage and recognize science achievement by the Commonwealth's high school students**: The Board of Education's Diploma Seal for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); and The Board of Education's Seal for Excellence in Science and the Environment. The first seals were awarded in 2021 and 2022.

### Supporting Scientific Research

- Established, with the early support of the DuPont family, the first **scientific research fund** in Virginia; continues to award funds for research
- Beginning in 2001, has sponsored the **Annual Fall Undergraduate Research Meeting** to encourage and financially support collaboration by students and faculty in conducting original research as part of science curricula in four-year and two-year colleges and universities
- Founded the **Virginia Institute for Scientific Research** (established at the University of Richmond), the forerunner of Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology (CIT), which is funded in part by the Virginia General Assembly

### Research Publications

- Published the *Flora of Richmond and Its Vicinity* (1930)
- Founded the *Virginia Journal of Science* in 1940 and continues to publish this research periodical
- Published *The James River Basin: Past, Present and Future* (1950), which was funded by the Virginia General Assembly; the book provides the first comprehensive, multidisciplinary account of the James and its resources, landforms, flora, fauna, industries, and businesses
- Part of the leadership team for the development and publication of the *Flora of Virginia* in 2012; the *Flora* is the first comprehensive guide to the Commonwealth's vascular plants published since 1762 (250 years earlier)

### Social Justice, Education, and Environmental Protection

- In 1925, Academy leaders **submitted testimony in *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes***, in which high school teacher John Scopes was tried for teaching evolution, a violation of state law at the time
- Supported **the inclusion of women and persons of color** in professional meetings of scientists and science educators
- Enacted resolutions supporting the **modern theory of evolution** and its teaching (1981), the Talloires Declaration on **environmental sustainability** (1993), the importance of **laboratory experiences in science education** (1995, 1996), the **elimination of coal ash ponds** (2018), the **conversion to renewable energy** (2019), and the **reduction of greenhouse gas emissions** (2022)

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*Prepared by the Virginia Academy of Science, Ad Hoc Committee on Publicity, 2019-2020*

*For further information about the Virginia Academy of Science: [www.vacadsci.org](http://www.vacadsci.org)*