

Virginia African-American Cultural Center

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



HANBURY





Virginia African American Cultural Center Inc.

Annual Report 2020

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Welcome from the Founder and Chariman



DR. AMELIA ROSS-HAMMOND

Dear Friends of VAACC,

We appreciate your ongoing support which yielded unexpected windfalls in the midst of unprecedented times.

One of our final community programs before the COVID-19 lockdown showcased an Off-Broadway Musical Concert at Kempsville High School for 500 diverse underserved students, funded with a grant from the Arts and Humanities Commission. The evening performance was a fundraiser held in collaboration with the Zeiders American Dream

Theater. Like premonitions of things to come, the story was about a young African American boy, (Blue) who travelled west to become a cowboy, seeking a better life. He experienced social and cultural inequities but was able to persevere and realize his dreams. Both performances were successful.

In the spring, we found creative ways to engage and give back to our community through educational programs that used teachable moments to help our youth understand and learn from the social, racial and political unrest across the nation. With the rise of the pandemic and dire needs for life saving masks for seniors, nursing homes, healthcare facilities and the City's homeless apartment complex, we jumped into action, fundraised, purchased, made cloth masks, collaborated with sewing circles & personally delivered over 1000 masks to these facilities.

True to the laws of reciprocity, our charitable efforts resulted in a turn of the tide. We were blessed with a very successful Membership Drive and several significant grants. These awards and donations enabled us to continue several socially distanced activities, hire a social media staff and an Executive Director. VAACC's vision for 2021, is to officially launch its Capital Campaign using the assistance of a Consulting Firm. We acknowledge and truly appreciate your various means of supporting this effort. After all, this is your story; this is my story and this is America's story. Together, we can make this Cultural Center, a physical reality.

Letter from the President



A. BRUCE WILLIAMS

In spite of COVID, exposed disparities and social unrest the VAACC has repositioned itself for change, staying relevant, strengthening its infrastructure, improving its processes, adding resources and establishing new relationships. The goal remains the same, the construction and operation of a viable center designed and focused to Curate, Cultivate and Communicate the myriad contributions made by people of African descent to the Commonwealth and by extension and impact, to America and the world.

The movement toward transforming this vision into reality is entering a new phase aimed at attracting the financial resources necessary to construct and operate a cultural facility. Current societal events and historical shortcomings have made the need for this facility vital. If this experiment in democracy is to survive and thrive, acknowledging its exclusive past, celebrating its current advances in achievements of equity and acknowledging what must be changed to ensure an inclusive future is vital.

In so many ways I see the strengths and potential of our organization. Our Board understands that this effort is for all people to gain understanding and the sense of the immense power of a united community that respects all its members.

As the body charged with this responsibility, we have a duty to our community, our country, our descendants and children yet to be born, to accomplish this task with our, time, talent, treasure and our resolve. With the blessing of the Almighty, may 2021 be the year when we see the distant goal approaching closer on the horizon.

Historical Background

With a goal of making Virginia Beach another “hub for African American culture and a historic resource in the region,” the Virginia African American Cultural Center (VAACC) is proposed to be constructed on 4.8 acres of land the city conveyed to the organization at 744 Hampshire Avenue. The site is surrounded by seven historically African American neighborhoods — Burton Station, Newsome Farm, Lake Edward, Reedtown, Grace Town and Lake Smith and L & J Gardens.

The Virginia African American Cultural Center will be a place where local and statewide residents and visitors can learn about the richness and diversity of the African American experience relating to their lives, historically, aesthetically and culturally.

The Center will transcend race and unite the history of many older communities by sharing stories that shaped the fabric of the City of Virginia Beach/and communities across the Commonwealth of Virginia. It will highlight the contributions of African Americans to the state of Virginia.

The VAACC will be a multi-purpose center and will be built in two phases

Phase One

- * Exhibition areas for collections and artifacts
- * A great Room (for events, exhibits and lectures)
- * Artist studios
- * Administrative and storage space
- * Multipurpose education meeting Rooms
- * A research library

Phase Two

- * A formal indoor multi-purpose Performance Hall (seating capacity - 250)
- * Infrastructure for outdoor events including film and live performances
- * A larger catering/teaching kitchen
- * Café and retail space

Amenities will also include a historic journey walking trail, outdoor event spaces, a rotunda hall and multipurpose classrooms.

Our Mission

To collect, preserve, interpret, inform, and celebrate Virginia's African American history, culture and community. To inform and educate the public about African Americans contributions in all areas of endeavor.

Our Vision

VAACC will be the statewide leader in generating historical and cultural content through programs, artistic performances and exhibits.

Goals

- * To create an opportunity for those who would love to learn more about African American culture, and to explore and revel in its history.
- * To reiterate the important role of African Americans and share the significance of African American culture and history.
- * To showcase the struggles of African Americans for civil rights and how they impacted freedom struggles--regionally and around the world.

Guiding Principles

CURATE
CULTIVATE
COMMUNICATE

VAACC Accomplishments During 2020

VAACC accomplished many of its goals and met many of the challenges during the COVID 19 pandemic.

* February 4, 2020 - VAACC was honored by the Virginia Beach City Council Members and Mayor Dyer with a Proclamation in Celebration of African American Heritage Month for its contributions of informing the community about African American history and culture.

* February 19, 2020 - the Virginia State Commission changed the official name of the African American Cultural Center to "Virginia African American Cultural Center, Inc."

* June 13, 2020 and June 23, 2020 - the VAACC Board Retreat was held. It was facilitated by Mrs. Donna Speller Turner, President, Advantage Business Strategies, Inc. The topic was "Board Governance". The retreat resulted in a revised VAACC Mission Statement to make it more succinct including a Code Square with three "Catch-Phrase" code words for marketing purposes: Curate, Cultivate and Communicate.

An additional outcome was for the Board to initiate a search for an Executive Director.

* August - September, 2020 - VAACC planned and launched a virtual Membership Drive spearheaded by Board Member, Shevette Jones, Parliamentarian. The drive was very successful and brought in over 100 new members. Additional membership levels were established by the board: \$25.00, \$50.00 - Individual; \$100.00 - Family; \$150-VIP Level; \$250 - Charter Member; and \$500 - Benefactor

* October, 2020 - Dr. Ross-Hammond, VAACC Founder and Chairman in partnership with the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, initiated and published the City's first African American tourist brochure, entitled "A Self-Guided Tour of African American History in Virginia Beach". Edna Hendrix Hawkins, a local author and historian,

assisted Dr. Ross-Hammond in the collection of relevant information for the project. The Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau submitted a press release in April, 2021 to commemorate Black History Month.

* October, 2020 - VAACC received its First African American Artifact which was donated by Ms. Jennifer Estes, owner of Aunt Rose's Slave darning basket. This priceless gift dates between 1862 and 1863 and was passed down from Mrs. Eliza Spratley Brock Nimmo Atwood to Ms. Jennifer Estes who gifted it to VAACC. Thanks to the generosity of



Virginia African American Cultural Center Inc.

VAACC Accomplishments During 2020

the Virginia Beach Historic Museum, the Slave basket will be stored in the Lynnhaven Education climate-controlled facility until the Cultural Center is built.

* November, 2020 - VAACC hired its first Executive Director, Joan Rhodes-Copeland, an experienced administrator with a background in arts and business administration. She formerly served as the Executive Director of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Hampton Roads.

* November, 2020 – President Bruce Williams received the Hampton Roads Gazetti Exemplary Award for his service to the community and to VAACC. The virtual ceremony was held in November.

* November, 2020 - a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Norfolk State University to partner with VAACC for programmatic events, lectures, art exhibitions and other activities in the coming year.

* A 3-D animated narrated rendering of the new VAACC building was created by Hanbury Architects. This video will be shown at VAACC programs.

* VAACC received several grants during the year to support its Programs, Operations and its Capital Campaign. These are detailed in the Financial Overview section of this report.



Highlights of Community Activities Sponsored by the VAACC in 2020



January 25, 2020 – VAACC participated in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Annual African American Male Summit. The many youth who attended were engaged through the booth that was set up by VAACC. (1,000 Attendees)



June 2, 2020, - VAACC joined the Virginia Beach Chapter of the NAACP and the Virginia Beach Interdenominational Ministers Conference for a peaceful, successful Prayer Vigil at Mount Trashmore. The gathering was to mourn the death of George Floyd in Minnesota after an attempted police arrest, plus other lives lost to police violence. (350)



February 25, 2020 – Dr. Ross-Hammond was the guest speaker at African American Heritage Month at Larkspur Middle School in Virginia Beach. (750)



June 17, 2020, - the Virginia Beach Office of Cultural Affairs launched an “Insta Live” streaming initiative; Dr. Ross-Hammond was interviewed about the purpose and progress of the Virginia African American Center. She was asked by Mayor Bobby Dyer to read Virginia Beach’s First Proclamation declaring Juneteenth a holiday with pay for all municipal agencies. Community Volunteer, Mary Dotson, joined Dr. Ross Hamond in the interview.



May 5, 2020, - Our “HIGH 5 GIVE \$5 CAMPAIGN” was held in partnership with the Giving Tuesday Now Movement for COVID-19. The goal was to donate masks to minority healthcare facilities, seniors and the homeless. Over 1,000 masks were distributed to the community.



June, 2020, - VAACC participated in the Mayor’s African American Roundtable to discuss racial uprisings in the City. (30)

Highlights of Community Activities Sponsored by the VAACC in 2020



June 18, 2020 - VAACC participated in the Black Lives Matter Boardwalk Public Artwork Display (40)

On June 19, 2020 - VAACC in partnership with the Vibe Creative District and Crocs 19th Street Bistro, hosted a "Juneteenth Community Gathering". Southern entrees were on the menu and a portion of the sales was donated to the Cultural Center. Board member Cheryl Davidson also participated in the Skit (created by Dr. Ross-Hammond) along with some youth from Black Lives Matter and a music teacher from Norfolk Public Schools. (20)



July, 2020 – VAACC held a "Kids Peaceful March" on the future site of the Center. Children, accompanied by adults and



the 3rd Precinct police and EMS, gathered and were taught the principles of peaceful marching and advocacy. They received masks from VAACC. (45)

August, 2020 - The Virginia Beach Health Department conducted COVID-19 tests on the VAACC site as part of its private public partnership with the City. The goal was to encourage the community to be tested; health related information resources were also distributed. (over 200 tests conducted)

Highlights of Community Activities Sponsored by the VAACC in 2020



Hon. Kevin Duffan

August, 2020 - The City of Virginia Beach held an historic Investiture Ceremony for District Court Judge, The Hon. Kevin Duffan. He is the first African American to be sworn in for this appointment in 68 years since the establishment on the Judicial Court. VAACC members were very proud to attend this Ceremony; Hon. Kevin Duffan was a former Board member and stepped down when he was appointed as a Circuit Court Judge.

November, 2020 - The Kamora Cultural Corner Production Company from Hartford, Connecticut, spent the first day of their Ten Cities Tour in Virginia Beach, on our site, filming and interviewing community leaders who participated in the VAACC "Portraits from A Place of Grace" Public art -also located on our site. Their theme was "Art Heals". (20)

November 19-22, 2020 - VAACC Board members participated in Cultural Heritage Enrichment Seminars for high school girls Basketball College Scholarships tryouts sponsored by the Athletes for Excellence Camp. The members also interacted with students from the Seatack Elementary/Achievable Dream Academy and their families.

The seminars were held at the newly built Virginia Beach Sports Center. (75)

December 1, 2020 - the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department held a virtual panel discussion to celebrate Unity Week entitled: "Race--A Conversation about Solutions and Sustainable Changes". Dr. Sabrina Lindsay-Law, Diversity officer Virginia Beach City Public Schools; Ms. Debbie Woodbury, Regional Program Director, Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities for the City of Alexandria, and Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, Founder and Chairman were the panelists. (100-virtual)



VAACC Sponsored a Major Fundraiser in 2020

February 7/8, 2020 – VAACC presented a fundraiser, “Cross That River.” A theatrical presentation that had been performed off-Broadway in NYC. With the recent commemoration of 400 years when enslaved Africans were brought to North America and some escaped to Fort Comfort/Fort Monroe in 1619, in Virginia, there have been questions about where else did some of the enslaved Africans relocate?

"REMARKABLY INFECTIOUS MUSIC. EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCES. AND ENGROSSING HISTORICAL BACKGROUND."
-THEATER'S LETTER SIDE

"A MUSICAL SUCCESS WITH ITS REMARKABLE SCORE THAT RUNS THE GAMUT FROM JAZZ TO BLUES AND FROM GOSPEL TO COUNTRY"
-A SEAT ON THE AISLE

"A STORY THAT NEEDS TELLING... TOLD IN EXQUISITE MUSICAL DETAIL"
-THEATERPZZAZZ

"THE VOICE OF A BENIGN STORYTELLER. A DEEPLY ROMANTIC TRUE BELIEVER WITH A HEROIC VISION OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION."
-NY TIMES

"DEVASTATINGLY MOVING"
-BACKSTAGE

Award winning Jazz Musician, Allan Harris wrote Cross That River to tell the untold story of the Black West and empower Americans with an inspiring story of hope and freedom.

The Virginia African American Cultural Center and the Z presents the new Concert Series performance of
CROSS THAT RIVER
Zielder's American Dream Theater • 4509 Commerce Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23462
ONE NIGHT ONLY February 8th, 2020 at 7:30pm
For more info & tickets visit : aaccvb.org VIP and Advertising Packages available

VAACC Z CROSS THAT RIVER

Allan Harris, an award-winning jazz musician, along with his wife Pat, authored a book about the West in the 1860s which provided a new life and new dreams for a run-away slave, Blue, who escapes from slavery to Texas to become one of America's first Black Cowboys. This compelling tale of freedom integrates fiction with historical fact, and each song presents a different page in this complicated chapter of American history.

The second performance, held on February 8, 2020 was a Fundraiser in partnership with the Zieder's American Dream Theatre. Both performances were well received and gained rave reviews from the audience. There were special bonus surprises following the show with an appearance of local Buffalo Riders on stage who addressed the audience. The multi-generational and ethnically diverse audience totaled 277. Several tickets were donated to underprivileged youth and their families. Both performances were very successful. The event raised a total of \$7,000.

VAACC sponsored two performances of this play. The first performance was held on February 7, 2020 with 550 students from Kempsville High School and 30 adults including Administrators from the Virginia City Public Schools and several elected officials. This production was funded by a grant from the City of Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs Arts and Humanities Commission.

Financial Highlights

During the 2020 fiscal year, the VAACC's financial results were highlighted by grant awards in support of its programs, operations and capital campaign initiative. Additionally, these grants reflected a diverse base of support for VAACC's mission with awards coming from municipal, corporate and foundation funders.

\$8,000 - Hampton Roads Community Foundation COVID Recovery Act Grant (Operations)

\$50,000 - Virginia Beach Economic Development Office Community Grant program as partial funding towards the hiring of a Capital Campaign Consultant Firm. (Capital Campaign Planning)

\$5,000 - Virginia Beach Arts and Humanities Cultural Arts Grant to sponsor the "Cross that River" theatrical performance at Kempsville Middle School. (Programs)

\$10,000 - Black Lives Matter Service grant from Flipcause--a web management hosting company located in California, selected VAACC to receive this grant.. This provides VAACC the ability to upgrade our website, and our financial portal to achieve an efficient process for processing memberships, events, and merchandising. (Operations)

\$16,000 - Virginia Beach CARES Act Grant (Operations)

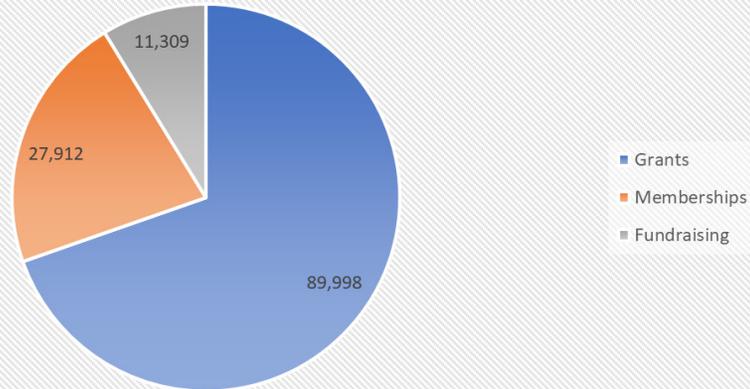
\$2,000 - Chartway Credit Union Grant (Operations)

\$500 - The Women's Group Foundation Grant (Operations)

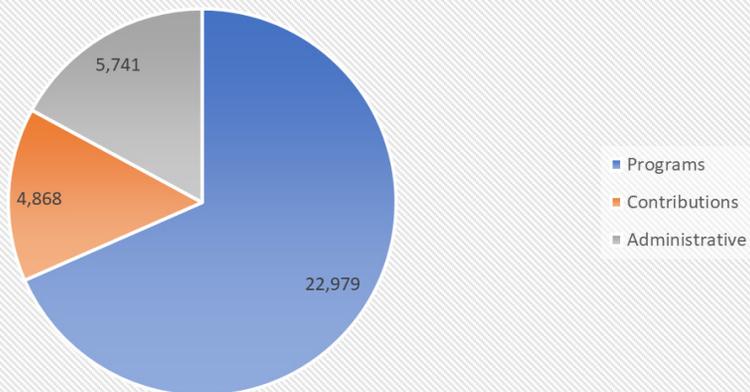
\$500 - Anonymous donor via the Hampton Roads Community Foundation in memory of George Floyd (Operations)

VAACC Financial Overview and Report

TOTAL INCOME - \$124,219



TOTAL EXPENSES - \$33,588



VAACC Goals and Strategies for 2021

As VAACC goes forward into the new year, it is imperative that we review our strategic plans and goals so that the organization is solidly strong and ready to meet the challenges of the future.

These goals include the following:

Launch an ongoing VAACC formal Capital Campaign to achieve the goal of erecting the brick-and-mortar Center. The acquisition of the Capital Campaign Consultant; the structuring of the Capital Campaign committee and execution of the strategies and processes for a successful campaign is a major goal for VAACC in 2021.

Increase footprint around the Commonwealth of Virginia – as the revised title for the organization indicates, the “VIRGINIA” African American Cultural Center has to launch programs and build partnerships and alliances with the regions, communities and organizations around the State of Virginia. This can be accomplished by reaching out and connecting with organizations and agencies and partnering with them through communications, programming, and financial support—where possible.

Produce programming that reflects the history and culture of African Americans around the entire Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia has a rich statewide history and partnerships with arts and cultural institutions around the state, along with colleges and universities, will provide considerable opportunities for this goal to be accomplished. Building alliances with nationwide African American historical cultural arts and educational institutions is a part of the fulfillment of this goal.

Continue to sponsor Board Governance training to enhance the efficiency of Board members and to solidify the infrastructure of the VAACC. This will include increase efficiency in membership services, fiduciary obligations, budgeting, sustainability and fundraising. These systems are needed to accommodate the increased impact that the Capital campaign will have on the organization and its overall structure and capacity.

Board of Directors

Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond
Founder and Chairman

A. Bruce Williams
President

William T. Calhoun
Vice President

Cheryl Davidson
Secretary

Kelvin Arthur
Treasurer

Shevette Jones
Parliamentarian

Dr. James Bonds
Board Member

Justin Cowell
Board Member

Wayne Jones
Board Member

Mike Anderson
Board Member

Shanti Mullen
Board Member

Tony Spencer
Board Member

Joan Rhodes-Copeland
Executive Director

VAACC Oral History Sub-Committee

Purpose - To collect, videotape, preserve stories, photographs and articles that will be a part of the historical collection from African American seniors, Churches, Historians, and other Civic-organizations throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

OFFICERS

Margie Coefield and Becky Livas - *Co-Chairs*

Denice Marsden - *Secretary*

Regina Taylor - *Treasurer*

Sharon Felton - *Parliamentarian*

Minister Georgia Allen - *Prayer Leader*

MEMBERS – Sara Benson, Gwendolyn Brown, Kia Cabbler, Linda Carrington, Cheryl Davidson, Mary Dotson, Sharon Felton, Alys Fentress, Deborah Freeman, Edna Hendricks, Rita Jones, Jordan and Justin Lucas, Monika Parker, Lucynthia Rawls, Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, Brenda Sears, Seiko Varner and Pam and Anthony Williams.

VAACC Donors and Partners

Armada Hoffer, Properties	Lindsay Brothers Plumbing & Heating, Inc	Virginia Beach GIGS
City of Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs	Lynnhaven River Now	Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department
Chrysler Museum of Art	McLeskey & Associates	Wall, Einhorn, & Chernitzer
City of Virginia Beach	Mirage Homes	Westin Hotels and Resorts
Clark Nexson	Naval Air Federal Credit Union	WNSB 91.1
Community of Destiny	Norfolk State University	Yale University African American Cultural Center
Hampton Roads Community Foundation	Sandler Center for the Performing Arts	Young Audiences Arts and Learning of VA
Hanbury Architects	Sunbelt Rentals	Zieder's American Dream Theater, The "Z"
Hampton Roads Gazetti	Teens With a Purpose--The Movement	
Hyatt Place	The New Journal and Guide	
Interfaith Alliance at the Beach	The "VIBE" Creative District	
John Lindsay & Sons	Virginia Beach Interdenominational Ministers Conference	
Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys-at-Law		



CURATE CULTIVATE COMMUNICATE

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