



**CONTACT**  
Robin Crawford  
2019 Commemoration  
[Robin.crawford@finnpartners.com](mailto:Robin.crawford@finnpartners.com)  
P: 202.974.5025  
C: 703.966.7616

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**VIRGINIA'S 2019 COMMEMORATION HONORS STUDENT CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST  
ON FIRST ANNUAL BARBARA JOHNS DAY**

*Barbara Rose Johns led the 1951 student protest at Robert Russa Moton High School  
that sparked the national Student Civil Rights Movement*

**JAMESTOWN, VA** (April 23, 2018) –Today the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the first annual Barbara Johns Day and the national significance of Farmville, Virginia's student civil rights movement. On April 23, 1951, Barbara Rose Johns, a 16-year-old African American student activist at Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, VA, organized her peers to protest the deplorable conditions at their racially segregated school. After the student-led protest, Ms. Johns secured the support of NAACP lawyers Spotswood Robinson and Oliver Hill, leading to the case *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*. In 1954, the Farmville case became one of five cases that the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* when it declared segregation unconstitutional.

In 2017, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation declaring April 23 as "Barbara Rose Johns Day," throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The resolution, first introduced by former Virginia State Senator and current U.S. Representative Tom Garnett, and championed by Virginia State Senator Mark Peake, was created to commend the significant impact Ms. Johns had on race relations and education in Virginia and nationwide. The *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* was the only school integration case initiated by a student strike.

"Today we feel privileged to honor Ms. Barbara Rose Johns, a Virginia pioneer in the national Student Civil Rights Movement. Ms. Johns' courageous actions helped make quality education accessible for millions of students across the United States," said Kathy Spangler, Executive Director of the American Evolution. "American Evolution's goal is to share untold stories about Virginia trailblazers, like Ms. Johns, in order tell a more authentic and inclusive narrative of Virginia and American history. We hope that Ms. John's story inspires Americans young and old to become active and involved citizens."

This May, American Evolution will launch the Virginia History Trails, a digital curated tour guide that will take you to important places in Virginia history, including landmarks, monuments and places where historic milestones occurred. The stop at Virginia Civil Rights Memorial on

Richmond's Capitol Square features a monument that recognizes Barbara Rose Johns, her fellow students from Robert Russa Moton High School and their parents, and community leaders and attorneys who risked everything in the struggle to gain full and equal rights for all. The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution recently created a video with Virginia Tourism Corporation featuring Barbara Rose Johns' story. You can find a link to the video [here](#).

The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution commemorates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of several pivotal events that took place in 1619 Virginia, which have had an enduring impact on Virginia and America's history. These 1619 events set the state and the nation on a course towards the ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity and include the arrival of the first recorded Africans to English North America, the First Representative Legislative Assembly in the New World, the recruitment of English women in significant numbers to the Virginia colony, the launch of free enterprise in the Commonwealth, and the first official English Thanksgiving in North America.

### **About the 2019 Commemoration**

The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution™, highlights events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 that continue to influence America today. Featured programs, events and legacy projects will position Virginia as a leader in education, tourism and economic development. American Evolution commemorates the ongoing journey toward the key ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. Dominion Resources is an American Evolution Founding Partner and Altria Group and TowneBank are Virginia Colony Partners.