

The Farmville Herald  
Dominion Donates \$200,000  
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**By ROB CHAPMAN**

PRINCE EDWARD — It has been a long journey for supporters who have dreamed of an interactive Moton Museum.

Sometimes—with a little corporate help—dreams can, indeed, come true.

The Dominion Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Dominion Resources, presented the oversized check to Museum President Robert Hamlin in a special ceremony Wednesday afternoon as a large crowd of guests looked on.

It was a very big check.

To the tune of \$200,000.

“I think we as corporations are placed in our community to give blessings to others,” offered Kenneth Barker, vice-president—Planning, Dominion Virginia Power. “And that’s what I bring to you today, a blessing from Dominion.”

Located at the intersection of Griffin Boulevard and Farmville’s Main Street, the former Moton High School and current Moton Museum is a crossroad in America’s education.

It is here in 1951 where a group of students led by Barbara Johns walked out on strike to protest separate but unequal schools.

It is a national landmark in the Civil Rights movement.

“We actively partner with communities to improve the quality of life, whether it’s Dominion employees volunteering to clear trails in Twin lakes State park or sponsor teacher workshops at Prince Edward Elementary or providing marketing support to the Regional Heartland Economic Development Partnership,” Barker said.

“Through the Dominion Foundation...we also support the broad range of worthwhile community causes, including historic preservation, which is why we are here today.”

The planned renovation and expansion of the museum, Barker offered, “will be a valuable resource to this and future generations.”

He added, “It will help those who pass through its doors to gain greater understanding of the history I saw as I walked (through) these halls—the history of Prince Edward County, of Virginia, of our nation, as we continue to pursue equality in educational opportunities for all Americans.”

Barker noted that as he’s talked with some before and during the program that he got excited about what the money is going to be spent for.

“It’s going to go to great things here at the museum. It’s going to go to renovation and expansion. It is well use of this foundation money.”

The Foundation, which represents 18,000 employees and 2.4 million customers.

“Thank you Dominion Resources. This comes at a very special time for the museum and it will certainly help us with a great jump start forward...,” Hamlin responded.

**First Director**

Hamlin would also introduce the museum’s first director, Lacy Ward Jr.

Ward has been involved in the Martha E. Forrester Council’s application for non-profit status, republication of They Closed Their School, securing and implementing a national Park Service special resource funding, securing national Historic Landmark status and securing national park Service Director for a special ceremony. Ward has also served as superintendent of the Tuskegee Airman Park, experience as a Congressional aide, vice-president for marking and communications at Tuskegee University. Ward holds a master’s degree in public administration and is a doctoral candidate in public administration at Virginia Tech.

Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors Chairman William “Buckie” Fore congratulated the board in the hiring of Ward.

“Lacy has a broad spectrum of knowledge and expertise rooted in education, team-building capability, and the political savvy that will be invaluable in developing opportunities for this museum,” Fore said. “The addition of Lacy to the Moton Museum staff as a full-time director will give the credibility that is needed to help establish the museum as one of the premier facilities in the Commonwealth.”

Fore added that the board welcomes the opportunity to continue working with the museum board as the museum moved forward toward great things.

“The financial support from the Dominion Virginia Power award will enable the Museum Board to develop a national marketing plan reaching much further than the borders of Prince Edward County,” Fore said.

He expressed hope that the award will act as a catalyst for other corporate sponsorship.

The contribution, he cited, will allow for regular operating hours, encourage visitors to stop by as they tour the Civil Rights In Education Heritage Trail.

“Funding will also be available for the fabrication of attractive interactive displays that will...interpret the magnitude of how the events that unfolded here in this little building in 1951 changed education in America forever,” Fore said.

Farmville Mayor Sydnor C. Newman also extended a welcome and Virginia Watson, aide to Fifth District Congressman Virgil Goode, read a statement on his behalf.

“It is important to have good ideas. It is even more important to be able to implement those ideas,” Ms. Watson said. “And, through the hard work of Lacy Ward Jr. and his associates in planning for and now securing the grant, this Moton Museum is well on its way towards serving as a living reminder of...an important part of our history and a chapter in the education outreach plan for 15 Civil Rights In Education Heritage Trail localities.”

#### **Ward Comments**

Ward thanked Fore and Newman and noted that their leadership is exhibited in the presence of economic vitality and the pace of development in the area.

“We, as a museum, are committed to matching the high standard for economic development projects within this community,” Ward said. “As evidenced in several recent and ongoing projects, big things can happen in small towns, and we’re committed to being one of those big things.”

Ward wished those gathered a happy 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was, to the day, the time sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns and a small group of high school students set in motion series of events that Ward noted forever changed the American educational system.

“The Moton student strike began Prince Edward County’s 13-year struggle for Civil Rights in Education,” Ward said. “On April 23, 1951, a representative group of each of the five grade levels within this building, a representative group of the 450-plus student body unleashed a plan that would strike a mighty blow against racial segregation in education.”

Within a month the court case *Davis v. Prince Edward County* would enter the court system, eventually becoming one of five such cases that is commonly known as *Brown v. Board* that struck down separate but equal court doctrine.

Ward recounted the history of Massive Resistance in Virginia, the end of government supported free public education, that schools did not operate from 1959-64, the operation of free schools, and the reopening of the schools in 1964.

“Along the wall to my left, you see this 13-year odyssey chronicled in a series of panels,” Ward said. “These panels represent the transformation to take place for this building over the next three years converting the former Robert Russa Moton High School to a museum housing a permanent exhibit chronicling our history.

“The panels depict how we will be attired when we come together again to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Moton Student Strike,” Ward said. “Put it on your calendar now. Saturday, April 23, 2011 will mark the opening of the permanent exhibit in the fully restored Robert Russa Moton Museum.”

The museum, Ward offered, will chronicle the growth of four educational systems in the county—Hampden-Sydney College, Longwood University, Prince Edward County Public Schools and Fuqua School.

“Each began as a segregated institution. Each is, however, today an integrated institution. Each institution has the Moton strikers to thank for setting in motion events which diversified their student body, diversified their faculty, staff (and) administration, and diversified their governance,” Ward said.