

2022 Strong Men & Women in Virginia History Student Creative Expressions Contest

Eastern Regional Winning Submission

Thomas Patterson

Grade 12

Chesapeake Career Center

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During a web search, I came upon the Dominion Energy and Library of Virginia's Strong Men & Women in Virginia History web page. After reading the biographies of many honorees, I was astonished by the accomplishments of community leaders from all walks of life; however, I was most moved by the phenomenal story of Dr. Leonard Muse, a 2017 honoree and Arlington, VA pharmacist.

Dr. Muse utilized his career as a pharmacist and his acumen as a small business owner to give back to the Nauck African American community and positively impact youth. He showed that "ALL LIVES MATTER" 50 years before the "Black Lives Matter" movement erupted. His story inspires me because my personal educational goal is to become a registered pharmacist. I have worked towards this goal by attaining a 4.2 GPA in a demanding curriculum of high school classes. I have enjoyed the challenging honors-level science and math classes that I have taken and yearn to learn more and delve deeper into these areas. Currently, as a high school senior, I am engaged in a strenuous dual enrollment Pharmacy Technician program to jumpstart my pharmacy knowledge base.

There were several parallels between myself and Dr. Muse that led me to choose him as the Dominion Energy and the Library of Virginia's Strong Men & Women in Virginia History honoree who inspires me. For example, Dr. Muse attended Howard University, to pursue his pharmacy degree. I plan to attend Virginia State University for my undergraduate degree in biochemistry and afterward, hope to pursue an accelerated Pharmacy degree at Howard University. So essentially, I am headed in Dr. Muse's footsteps. In 1948, Dr. Muse graduated as one of only 60 African Americans across the country to receive a pharmacy degree that year. I can relate to that feat, since I achieved the Boy Scout Rank of Eagle Scout in 2020, and became one of the only 1% of African Americans to earn that distinction.

Lastly, Dr. Muse's photo moved me because it resembles a photo of my grandfather that I cherish. (I have attached the photos below so you can see the resemblance.) My grandfather served as a mentor and father figure to me and helped my single mother raise me since my biological father

wasn't around. My grandfather, whom I called Pop-Pop, died when I was fifteen years old, after a ten-year bout with kidney disease. I remember accompanying him to the pharmacy to pick up medications and watched the positive interactions he had with the pharmacist. Those memories helped me to choose a career in pharmacy; however, I knew I wanted to go beyond being a retail pharmacist. After reading about Dr. Muse, I realized that I would like to someday own my own pharmacy and, like Dr. Muse, utilize that business to benefit my community medically and socially.