



Colonial Williamsburg

Colonial Williamsburg and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Announce the Winner of the National Civics Bee® Virginia State Finals

Middle school students across Virginia tested their civics knowledge for cash prizes and the chance to compete nationally

WILLIAMSBURG (June 11, 2024) — Zoey Downer from Joseph T. Henley Middle School in Crozet, Va., was named the first-place winner at the 2024 [National Civics Bee® Virginia State Finals](#) competition. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation hosted the State Finals on June 8. Downer advances to the inaugural national finals that will be held on Nov. 12 in Washington, D.C.

The National Civics Bee®, spearheaded by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, encourages young people to engage in civics and contribute to their communities. The state-level competition was held at the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg in partnership with [The Civic Trust®](#) of the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#).

Students participated in a live quiz event and answered questions from judges to test their knowledge. Downer won first place, followed by second-place winner Jayden Allen from Joseph T. Henley Middle School in Crozet, Va., and Addie Freund from Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax County, Va., who placed third.

Downer impressed the judges with her knowledge and her essay on new development and rezoning in Charlottesville and Albemarle County. In addition to specifying the problem, Downer presented several diverse solutions for consideration.

“Civic engagement is central to Colonial Williamsburg’s mission,” said Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. “The students who competed in this Civics Bee remind us of the many ways that the future can learn from the past. My sincere congratulations to Zoey Downer and all the competitors on a job well done.”

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Americans’ civics knowledge has fallen significantly in recent years, with more than 70% failing a basic civics literacy quiz. At the same time, 79% of eighth graders score below a level of proficiency.

“Through the National Civics Bee®, we aim to reverse this trend, and inspire a new generation of Americans to be civically engaged and active in shaping the future of our communities and our nation,” said Hilary Crow, vice president of civics at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

Eight finalists advanced to the State Finals through a local competition held on April 23 at the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Jamestown Settlement. The Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce administered the local competition, which determined the participants in the Virginia State Finals.

The judges for this year’s state competition were Nicholas Kent, deputy secretary of education for the Commonwealth of Virginia; Sam Futrell, president of the Virginia Council for the Social Studies; and Caroline Legros, director of education and programs at the John Marshall Center for Constitutional History & Civics. Kurt Smith, who portrays Colonial Williamsburg Nation Builder Thomas Jefferson, served as emcee.

The finalists received cash prizes, including \$1,000 for the first place. Downer advances to compete amongst 27 other state winners in the inaugural nationwide competition on Nov. 12, 2024, in Washington D.C. For more information on the National Civics Bee®, visit nationalcivicsbee.org.

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About Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia’s 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 36 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center, pools, retail stores and gardens. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg’s educational programs and preservation initiatives.

About The Civic Trust®

The Civic Trust® is a nonpartisan educational initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation focused on elevating civics as a national priority with programs that advance and promote civic knowledge in schools, workplaces, and communities.

About the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation harnesses the power of business to create solutions for the good of America and the world. We anticipate, develop, and deploy solutions to challenges facing communities—today and tomorrow.

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