

2004 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 244

Offered January 16, 2004

Commending Thelma Harrison.

Patrons—Alexander, Drake, Howell, A.T., Joannou, Lewis and Melvin; Senators: Miller and Rerras

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison of Norfolk, cofounder and director of the stellar pre-school reading program "Mama, I Want to Read," was declared one of Volvo's hometown heroes and is among the top 10 finalists chosen to receive the *2003 Volvo for Life Award*; and

WHEREAS, launched in 2002, the prestigious Volvo award honors outstanding and compassionate heroes nominated by fellow citizens across the nation; and

WHEREAS, a retired operating room nurse, Thelma Harrison moved from New York with her husband in 1980 and immediately felt the poverty, hardship and need that hindered the well-being of families and children and in her Park Place community; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison stalwartly began a mission 15 years ago to teach the children beginning kindergarten the reading skills desperately needed to arm them with knowledge, self-confidence and a lifelong love of reading; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison fiercely believes that inner city early reading and development programs like "Mama, I Want to Read" are great equalizers, enhancing later educational experiences and ensuring a greater quality of life for disadvantaged children; and

WHEREAS, Volvo's top award winner will be chosen by a distinguished panel of judges including Hank Aaron, Bill Bradley, Caroline Kennedy, Maya Lin, Paul Newman, Dr. Sally Ride, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, and the recipient will receive a \$50,000 cash prize for his favored charity and a Volvo for life; and

WHEREAS, at 88 years old, Thelma Harrison remains as vibrant and enthusiastic about reading as the three- and four-year olds she lovingly nurtures and encourages, and her greatest joy lies in helping the children help themselves; and

WHEREAS, honored and respected nationally as well as in her hometown of Norfolk, Thelma Harrison, a tireless advocate for quality early childhood development and reading programs, is a cherished hero; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Thelma Harrison on her recognition as a *2003 Volvo for Life Award* finalist; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Thelma Harrison as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration and gratitude for her exceptional dedication to the education and quality of life of the young people of Norfolk.

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