

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 439

Commending the Alexandria Library Company.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2019

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Company was founded on July 24, 1794, by the citizens of Alexandria as one of the first subscription libraries in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Company is one of the United States' oldest libraries to operate continuously, as it has from the 18th century to the present day; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Company was legally recognized by the Virginia General Assembly in 1798; and

WHEREAS, its successor agency, the Alexandria Library Association, retained custody of the Alexandria Library Company's books in 1897; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Association entered into an agreement with the City of Alexandria in 1937 to transform the subscription library into a public library and establish a governing board; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Company was recognized by the Virginia General Assembly in the 1980s as the successor agency to the Alexandria Library Association by reinstatement of the 1799 charter; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library was segregated for "whites only," and, as such, its Queen Street location became the site of the first known non-violent sit-in of the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 1939, five young black men organized by civil rights lawyer Samuel Tucker—Edward Gaddis, Morris Murray, William Evans, Clarence Strange, and Otto Tucker—visited the library and requested library cards, and upon having their requests denied, selected books off the shelves, sat down, and read them; and

WHEREAS, while the Alexandria Library system remained segregated into the 1960s, it is today a safe and inclusive place for people of all races and cultures; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Alexandria Library is commemorating the 225th anniversary of its founding with special programming, guest speakers, exhibits, performances, and an honorary ceremony, to be held on July 27 at the Charles E. Beatley, Jr., Central Library; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Alexandria Library Company, the precursor to the Alexandria Library, hereby be commended on the occasion of the 225th anniversary of its founding; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Mayor of Alexandria as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for the profound contributions, history, and legacy of the Alexandria Library Company.

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