

IN RECOGNITION OF
THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIRGINIA SCHOOL
FOR THE DEAF, BLIND AND MULTI-DISABLED AT HAMPTON

WHEREAS, for a century, the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-Disabled at Hampton has provided services to students with sensory disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in 1884, William C. Ritter, a deaf man, began a vigorous campaign to call attention to the neglect of the Commonwealth for “not providing a school for deaf and blind colored children of school age”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ritter wrote articles for newspapers and journals and drafted a bill in 1900, providing for separate schools for deaf and blind children, to be presented in the Virginia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the draft for the bill was dropped, and variations of the draft were submitted in 1902, 1903 and 1904 by several members of the General Assembly, but these state delegates were also unsuccessful in their efforts to establish a state school; and

WHEREAS, in 1906, the Honorable Harry R. Houston of Hampton, known as the “Patron Saint of the School,” introduced a bill in the House to establish the school; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ritter personally paid an expert from another state to speak in favor of the bill in the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the bill passed and \$5,000 was appropriated to begin the work, but a few lines were omitted from the bill by a clerk of the legislature, and the bill was discontinued; and

WHEREAS, during the year, litigation was filed for recovery of the \$5,000 appropriation, and Governor Swanson appointed the first Board of Visitors to oversee the establishing and running of the school; and

WHEREAS, in 1907, the legislature appropriated money to establish and maintain the school, and in 1908, the Board of Visitors adopted by-laws for governance of the school and appointed William C. Ritter Superintendent; and

WHEREAS, in September 1908, Dr. Clarence Porter Jones delivered the first deed for twenty-five acres of land from the Newport News Chamber of Commerce, and Superintendent Ritter turned the first shovel of dirt for the main building; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Visitors authorized the taking of a five-year option on a fifty-acre parcel of land in front of the building to extend the campus fifty acres across the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad tracks; and

WHEREAS, the cornerstone of the main building was laid with a Masonic ceremony, and the building was completed in April 1909; and

WHEREAS, September 1909 was set for the official opening of the school, with an enrollment of 32 pupils; and

WHEREAS, in April 1910, twenty-five acres in front of the school was rented for five years and was later purchased from Old Dominion Land Company; and

WHEREAS, construction began on a superintendent and teachers’ residence hall, a boiler shop, a dining room and a kitchen; and

WHEREAS, although the name of the school has changed: Virginia School for Colored Deaf and Blind Children (1909-1946); Virginia State School (1946-1966); The Virginia School at Hampton (1966-1980); Virginia School for Deaf and Blind at Hampton (1980-2000); Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-Disabled at Hampton (2000-Present), the school has continued its historical mission to educate and train deaf and blind children;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Ross A. Kearney, II, Mayor, on behalf of the City Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia, do hereby recognize the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-Disabled on its 100th Anniversary and commend them for their continuous dedication and many contributions to the children, adolescents and young adults from the City of Hampton and throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, as the school honors the past, reflects on the present and anticipates the future.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Hampton, Virginia, to be affixed, this Thirteenth Day of September, Two Thousand and Six.



Ross A. Kearney, II
Mayor