

News Story

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Virtual Gum Springs Museum

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Gum Springs 191 Anniversary Gala Celebration

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Photographer: Catherine Fogden,

On November 16, 2024, the community of Gum Springs, the oldest continuous Black community in Fairfax County, gathered to celebrate its rich 191-year history at a gala held at the Mount Vernon Estate. The event underscored the ongoing efforts to preserve and protect this National Treasure.

Gum Springs was founded in 1833 when West Ford, a man born into enslavement in 1784, was granted his freedom and 160 acres of land under the will of Hannah Washington, George Washington's sister-in-law. Fords family history storyline connects him with General Washington as his son from an enslaved woman. Over time, Black families purchased land from the Joint Stock Company created by the first minister of Bethlehem Baptist church and his Deacons at cost and built the community that stands today. However, this historic community now faces threats from rising housing costs, development, and gentrification. Efforts are underway to designate Gum Springs as a historic overlay district to protect its legacy.

The evening kicked off with soulful musical selections from saxophonist Keith Wilson and vocalist Kat Rollings, setting a celebratory tone. Emcee Tony Perkins, anchor of News4 Today, brought humor and warmth as he guided the crowd through the night, sharing both historical facts and the importance of preserving Gum Springs' legacy. Ronald Chase, founding director of the Gum Springs Museum and Cultural Center, spoke passionately about the community's 191-year history and the critical work being done to ensure its future.

Notable attendees included descendants of the founding families such as the Ford and Chase families, Brown, Carter, King, Webb, Young Taylor as well as local dignitaries including Virginia Delegate Paul Krizek, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck, Franconia District Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Fairfax County History Commission President Lynn Garvey-Hodge and Reverend Dr. Clyde Nelson. Their presence underscored the strong community ties and support for the preservation of Gum Springs.

The keynote address was delivered by Delegate Don Scott, the first Black Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. In his speech, Scott shared his personal journey of overcoming adversity and stressed the importance of education as a path to success. His message, "Don't let your past predict your future," resonated deeply with the audience, highlighting the transformative power of perseverance.

The evening concluded with a silent auction and a delicious meal, bringing together the community in both celebration and support of the Gum Springs Museum and Cultural Center. The event hosted was by the Gum Springs History Museum and Cultural Center, and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

The event chaired by Ronald Chase and Mrs. Theresa Moore, was made possible through the dedication of local organizations, the Mildred & Jube Shiver Foundation, Inc, Gum Springs Community Center Advisory Board, Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services and Virginia State Delegate Paul Krizek. These groups were Community Citizen Plus Sponsors. Brian Wilder, The New Gum Springs Civic Association, Theresa and Zack Moore, Mrs. Dorthy Best, Youlonda McCoy, Sybil Olivia Williams, Sheryl Templeman, Mary Futrell, Avis Catchings, including the Fairfax County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., who served as hostesses. Together, they reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring Gum Springs' history and legacy endure for generations to come.































