

Virginia Press WOMEN FOUNDATION

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Virginia Press Women Foundation Names Winner of Agnes Cooke Scholarship
University of Richmond student awarded \$2,000



RICHMOND, Va., June 16, 2023— The [Virginia Press Women Foundation](#) is proud to announce Ananya Chetia, a journalism major at the University of Richmond, as the 2023 winner of the [Agnes Cooke Scholarship](#).

Chetia has won a \$2,000 scholarship to assist with education expenses and student membership in [Virginia Professional Communicators](#) (VPC). She has also been invited to attend VPC's fall conference on Oct. 13, at the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond.

"To be selected as an Agnes Cooke Scholarship winner is a significant achievement, and we are proud to announce Ananya Chetia as our 2023 winner," said Kimberly Loehr, president of the Virginia Press Women Foundation. "Ananya's application was among several outstanding entries we received, but her selection as our scholarship winner was unanimous among our judges. We are excited to see what Ananya will accomplish and contribute to the field of Journalism in the future."

In her application, Chetia wrote she dreams of being a foreign correspondent in the Middle East. "As someone who was born in India and raised in Saudi Arabia and the United States, I recognize the significance of reporting on underrepresented nations. Growing up in Saudi Arabia, I was always told to censor myself and that the purpose of my voice was to support the Saudi monarchy. Now, I want to return to the Middle East, report on the politics unique to each region and inspire young girls to create their own political opinions."

Chetia serves as a humanities fellow, in which she wrote and presented a thesis on how Iranian journalists rely on political satire in exposing the atrocities and hypocrisies of the authoritative Iranian regime. She is also executive editor of the University of Richmond's student-run news organization, The Collegian.

"I deeply believe words have the power to inspire tangible change in our society. If I can report on underrepresented stories and make a difference for a single person, then that's it," Chetia said. "I will be forever grateful and humbled. I report on politics and social justice issues because I care about my community, and I will never stop caring."

The Agnes Cooke Memorial Scholarship honors a charter member of what was then called Virginia Press Women, which was founded in 1958. Today VPW is known as Virginia Professional Communicators. Agnes Cooke, who lived in Kinsale, served as VPW president from 1964 to 1966. Described by the Kinsale Foundation as "an inveterate newshound and editor," Cooke won an award for the photo she took (while clad in her nightgown and with cold cream on her face in the wee hours of the morning, as the story goes) of the tragic fire that claimed the historic Kinsale Methodist Church on Oct. 18, 1969.

She was well known in the Northern Neck of Virginia for the columns she wrote and edited for 35 years chronicling the everyday events in her community for the Northern Neck News and the Northumberland Echo. In 1985, Cooke was honored by the Kinsale Foundation for "years of promoting and securing the well-being of the community." Shortly after her death in 1991, VPW created the foundation that now administers the scholarships in her honor.

The Virginia Press Women Foundation is a nonprofit which supports student excellence in communications through its annual scholarship program. The group raises money and awards scholarships to outstanding college and graduate students who wish to pursue careers in journalism, public relations and other related fields. Learn more about VPWF at vpwfoundation.org.

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