



About 45 people gathered in Washington County for the first of four economic discussions about creating a new economy for Southwest Virginia that works for and includes all people.



South Hampton Roads Chapter leader Shelia Carter attended a restoration of rights outreach event in Portsmouth and was selected to introduce Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe.



Lee Irvin and Vicente Gonzalez, Lynchburg area leaders, posed for a photo before a recent planning meeting. The group is organizing to become a Virginia Organizing Chapter this year.

News From the Grassroots

Virginia Organizing Grassroots Gathering 2016

Virginians from Harrisonburg to Southwest Virginia to South Hampton Roads and everywhere in between gathered September 16-18 at Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Center to celebrate accomplishments, learn new skills, and become better equipped to organize to build strategic power in the state.

Grassroots Gatherings are annual meetings that began in 1995. Early on, the meetings spanned the entire weekend. For a while, Virginia Organizing held one-day workshops in place of a full weekend, but found more value in the weekend retreat-style format for Chapter leaders to go in-depth on particular issues and to attend multiple workshops.

This year, leaders learned more about education justice issues like the school-to-prison pipeline, opportunity gaps in schools, and suspension rates. Virginia Deputy Secretary of Education Holly Coy spoke on Saturday and answered questions about reducing suspensions and bias in the schools.

"I was excited to see the passion for education from parents, grandparents,

students, and community members with Virginia Organizing," said Coy. "I am hopeful that these leaders will take what they learned back to their localities and support positive changes for all students in our commonwealth."

"Grassroots Gathering 2016 was quite empowering and moving, and definitely showed the powerful impact the organization is making," said Fredericksburg Chapter leader Reva English. "I realized that it literally takes the masses and we are collaborating with organizations like People's Action and others to create big changes in Virginia and the U.S. I learned that endurance, partnership, and perseverance solidify change."

"I have been a part of Virginia Organizing since the beginning and I am still learning new things," said Maura Ubinger, who was at the first meeting in 1995. "It was a wonderful weekend and I was particularly moved by what I learned in the school-to-prison pipeline breakout session this year. I am glad I got to participate in this year's gathering!"

"This was my first Grassroots Gathering. This weekend was really inspiring and I'm excited to bring this momentum back to Lynchburg," said Lynchburg leader

Susie Joiner. Lynchburg leaders are working to become the next Virginia Organizing Chapter.

"What I learned was about the obstacles of the deaf and hard of hearing community. I wish all citizens that reside in our country would have been able to witness the struggles of this often overlooked community," said Harrisonburg Chapter leader Jeff Dyche.

Grassroots Gathering 2017 is currently being planned for next fall. Look for details on our website and in your inbox early in 2017. If you'd like to be a part of the planning committee, contact Nik Belanger at nik.belanger@virginia-organizing.org for more information.

Important Dates!

October 5: Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign begins! Use code 3168 to support Virginia Organizing by state payroll deduction.

October 17: Last day to register to vote for the November 8 election

October 22: Virginia Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit: <http://www.equalityvirginia.org/ties/>

Real people. Real change.

Support Virginia Organizing by Shopping at Kroger or Through Payroll Deduction!

Do you shop at Kroger for groceries? If you do, you can support Virginia Organizing just by purchasing groceries and using your Kroger Plus Card. Register to support Virginia Organizing at <http://www.kroger.com/communityrewards>. You can search for us by name or use organization code 82207.

Virginia Organizing also participates in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC). CVC begins in mid-October and allows state employees to donate to organizations through payroll deduction. Virginia Organizing will receive 100 percent of your donation with no fees or additional charges! Our CVC code is 3168. Thank you for considering a donation to Virginia Organizing!

Pete Myers Discusses Chemicals in Materials and How to Create Better Recyclables

Pete Myers, the founder of Environmental Health Sciences — working with Virginia Organizing through a joint plan of work — which publishes Environmental Health News (EHN.org) and DailyClimate.org, spoke in London recently as part of the Circular Economy 100 workshop. In his talk, Myers discussed how we need to better understand the materials that we create and use as recyclable. Some of those plastics are toxic. Myers also discussed the merits of a new "green chemistry framework" that is helping chemists think about making consumer products non-

toxic and safer for people and animals. Learn more about Myer's message and hear his entire talk at <http://bit.ly/2c2elro> (this is a case-sensitive link; photo courtesy of Environmental Health News).



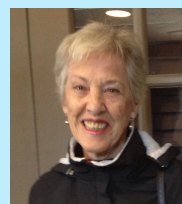
Education Justice Issues Become Front and Center in Portsmouth Chapter

Portsmouth Chapter leaders have worked hard to bring about change in their local school system and will continue to speak out at school board meetings. The Chapter has organized newly active, directly affected parents, students, and grandparents to share their stories (you can see some at the Community Advocates of Portsmouth Facebook page). The Chapter is primarily focused on reducing suspensions and providing alternative forms of discipline in the school system.

Take Action!

We still have a couple of weeks left to stop payday predators by telling the CFPB to close loopholes and issue strong rules in support of consumers. If you have not already done so, please visit <http://stop paydaypredators.com/VirginiaOrganizing> to submit a comment by **October 7, 2016!**

Leader of the Month Trish Philon



Trish Philon has been a member of the Harrisonburg Chapter for many years and is particularly interested in criminal justice issues in her community. Recently, her Chapter developed a community-police

relations survey to learn more about perceptions of local law enforcement and get ideas from the community.

In addition to community-police relations, Trish is also interested in racial discrimination in the justice system.

"We know that people of color are incarcerated at a disproportionate rate in our city," said Trish. "We want to understand how this affects the community and what changes need to be made."

Trish got active with Virginia Organizing because she values diversity and wanted to be a part of an organization that represented a wide array of people.

Trish went to the 2014 Grassroots Gathering and said she was very impressed with the work that all Virginia Organizing Chapters are doing across the state.

Trish said, "I learned so much! Everyone is doing such great organizing in their own communities and then we come together as a part of this larger organization."

Trish is also interested in immigration reform, environmental issues, and more. She is especially proud of the work her local Chapter did to rename a Harrisonburg street after Martin Luther King, Jr. in the face of opposition.


Thank you, Trish, for your dedication and work to make Virginia a better place.

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters and Areas Served

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville/Albemarle County
Danville
Eastern Shore
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County
Fredericksburg
Lee County
Lynchburg
Martinsville/Henry County
New River Valley
Portsmouth
Roanoke
South Hampton Roads
Washington County
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

 www.facebook.com/virginiaorganizing
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News in Brief

- Danville Chapter leaders spoke at an August school board meeting to shine a light on the racial disparities in the school system's Advanced Placement classes.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter is hosting a one-day online fundraiser on September 28. Any donations made through our website on this day will be matched and will support the South Hampton Roads Chapter.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter has reached out to returning citizens in more than 17 voter outreach events in the region. They are also making progress with community/police relations in addressing minority representation, implicit bias training, mediation, and transparency issues in Norfolk and Virginia Beach.
- On Tuesday, September 27 at 9 a.m. there will be a rally at the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. with People's Action and other allies in support of the Clean Power Plan. If you or someone you know would like to attend, please contact Brian Johns at bjohns@virginia-organizing.org or 276-619-1920.

www.virginia-organizing.org