Virginia Organizing Begins to Celebrate 20th Anniversary in 2015

On August 19, 1995, the Organizing Committee met and Virginia Organizing was founded as a non-partisan statewide grassroots organization with a mission of challenging injustice by raising the voices of traditionally marginalized people. No other group was organizing on multiple issues all across Virginia before that time.

Twenty years later, Virginia Organizing has a long list of accomplishments and many lessons learned along the way. We are still one of the few groups organizing at the grassroots level on multiple issues. We have grown to 12 organizers and Chapters all across Virginia from our initial start in Southwest Virginia. Most importantly, Virginia Organizing has stayed true to our commitment to diversity, raising the voices of directly affected people, and focusing on local issues and campaigns that are important to communities.

"It's easy to be busy, it's hard to be strategic" is a common phrase around Virginia Organizing. We're focused on our strategic capacity and building power so that the people of Virginia have a voice. Lasting change is slow and incremental and not an easy task. With all the work that needs to be done for Virginia to be a more equitable place for all people, it is very easy to be busy, but Virginia Organizing has worked tirelessly for 20 years to make sure that every step is part of a bigger strategic picture.

This work has not gone unnoticed. In recognition of the 20th anniversary, the Virginia General Assembly passed a commending resolution to acknowledge Virginia Organizing's service to the people of the Commonwealth.

Local governments have also honored the work Virginia Organizing has done. Danville and Martinsville Chapters have both received proclamations from their City Councils congratulating Virginia Organizing on 20 years and commending the work the organization does.

The Harrisonburg City Council voted to change the hiring policy language to affirmatively state that the city seeks a diverse and inclusive workforce. Other language was added to the policy to ensure that this goal is considered in hiring decisions.

The South Hampton Roads Chapter leaders volunteered to help their community members sign up on the Health Insurance Marketplace and access health insurance and discounts available.

Virginia Organizing Charlottesville area Organizer Harold Folley received the High Achievement Award from the Ebony Social Club. Way to go, Harold!

Martinsville/Henry County Chapter leader Martha Woody. "As a non-partisan group that tries to find common ground on issues of concern such as restoration of rights and health care reform, Virginia Organizing works to empower all citizens to participate in the betterment of their communities.”

At the Danville celebration in January, State Governing Board member and local leader Johnny May said, “This is truly an ‘Oh Happy Day’ for Virginia Organizing, a day to celebrate 20 years of a hard-working organization standing side by side with the citizens of Virginia.”

In Charlottesville, a benefit concert is scheduled for March 13 the Paramount Theatre. The Paramount will be transformed to a New Orleans style "Festivale" and feature several unique performances. For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit http://www.theparamount.net/2014/virginia-organizing/.

Follow Virginia Organizing on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VirginiaOrganizing to learn more about 20th anniversary celebrations across Virginia. Be sure to check out our new calendar at www.virginia-organizing.org/events for events in your area.
Medicaid Expansion Not Included in General Assembly Budgets

The Virginia General Assembly money committees (the Senate Finance Committee and House of Delegates Appropriations Committee) excluded Medicaid expansion.

“Virginia Organizing is appalled and extremely disappointed that our lawmakers are ignoring the basic needs of 400,000 people, most of whom are employed taxpayers in the Commonwealth. Their proposed solution is unreasonable and does not begin to address the health care needs of many Virginians,” said Virginia Organizing Chairperson Sandra A. Cook.

Medicaid expansion will provide health insurance coverage for up to 400,000 people, create about 30,000 jobs, and is good for the economy.

Help us continue to spread the word about the benefits of Medicaid expansion by writing a letter to the editor of your local paper. Visit www.virginia-organizing.org/speak-out for helpful tips on writing letters to the editor.

Local Chapters Working to Dismantle Racism

Virginia Organizing leaders across the state are working to dismantle racism and engage in dialogues on the effects of racism on our communities.

Thirty people from the Fredericksburg area got together for a full day of dismantling racism work. This was a longer, more in-depth follow up to a dismantling racism workshop this year and work on community race relations.

Join the 2015 Club!

Virginia Organizing is pleased to announce the launch of our 2015 club. You can be a part of our history and support our goal of having 20 organizers by 2016 to build more power for Virginians to raise their voices. Help us raise or pledge to donate $2,015 this year to join the club! The 2015 club was designed to help Virginia Organizing raise money in honor of our 20th anniversary and focus on building more Chapters across Virginia. For more information on the 2015 club and how you can help, contact Michele Mattioli at mattioli@virginia-organizing.org or 434-984-4655 ext. 223. You can make a donation by mail or online at https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1388125.

News in Brief

• The Charlottesville Chapter, the Public Housing Association of Residents, and the City of Promise visited the General Assembly to meet with local lawmakers and other state officials. The group was diverse in every way, but shared a common interest in learning more about state government!

• The Fredericksburg Chapter celebrated a local campaign victory! The Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors meeting room mural will get an update to include African-American and Native American contributions to the county history. Great work, Fredericksburg Chapter!

• Do you participate in #tbt or “throwback Thursday?” We do! Every Thursday in 2015, we will post a #tbt on our Facebook page. Check it out at www.facebook.com/VirginiaOrganizing to see some of our favorite oldies but goodies!

• The Danville Chapter held a workshop with Voices for Virginia's Children to discuss health care needs of children and families.

• Leaders in the Richmond Chapter are canvassing bus riders to document real experiences in an effort to make positive changes to help those that rely on public transportation.