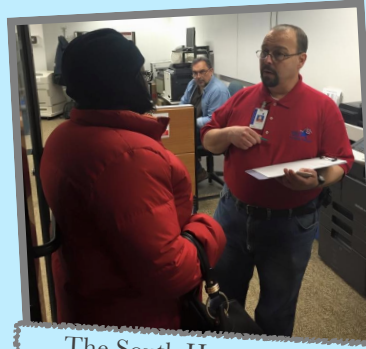




The Harrisonburg City Council voted to change the hiring policy language to affirmatively state that the city seeks a diverse and inclusive workforce. Other language was added to the policy to ensure that this goal is considered in hiring decisions.



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!

News From the Grassroots

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 Martinsville Chapter was the first to be recognized. The City Council designated December 13, 2014 as Virginia Organizing Day.

"We are grateful to the city of Martinsville for their recognition of Virginia Organizing's 20th anniversary in 2015 and for designating December 13 as Virginia Organizing Day," said

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.

Real people. Real change.

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 workshop in November. Participants shared stories of their personal

experiences with race and racism, identified examples of institutional racism that shape their communities, and agreed on action steps moving forward. Overall, it was a productive day that energized people and highlighted the importance of organizing, inspiring several new participants to sign up with Virginia Organizing!

The Danville Chapter also hosted a workshop with leaders from Henry County, Pittsylvania County, Danville, and Martinsville. Local leaders Betty Chew and Anita Royston helped facilitate the training. In addition to the workshop, Danville leaders also held several #BlackLivesMatter strategy sessions to address racial profiling in the community.

In South Hampton Roads, Harrisonburg, Richmond, and other areas of the state, Chapters are working to hold their own dismantling racism workshops 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>.

Leader of the Month Davon Miller



Davon Miller got active with Virginia Organizing after a Charlottesville Chapter leader asked him to register to vote and he was unable to since his rights had been taken away. He decided that he wanted to help other people get their right to vote back so he

began volunteering.

Davon went to his first Chapter meeting, which helped him understand the importance of voting. He then went to Richmond with a group to meet with the Secretary of the Commonwealth to discuss the restoration of civil rights process for formerly incarcerated people. After that meeting, the Secretary's office implemented some positive changes, including shortening the thirteen page application to one page.

In addition to getting his own rights back and registering to vote, Davon has helped others do the same. He has knocked on doors to register voters in his community, but he also uses social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to encourage and help others through the process. Davon believes civic engagement is incredibly important.

He is also thankful to Virginia Organizing for the focus on leadership development. "What I like about Virginia Organizing is that we work hard to be in tune with the community," said Davon. "We are teaching people how to take action on issues that are really important to them. When I first got involved, other Chapter leaders took the time to make sure I knew how and why we act, not just what to do."

Thank you, Davon, for getting active in your community and making a difference!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters and Areas Served

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville/Albemarle County
Danville
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County
Fredericksburg
Lee County
Louisa County
Martinsville/Henry County
South Hampton Roads
Washington County
Tri-Cities/Petersburg
Richmond
Roanoke
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU,
EMU, MBC



www.facebook.com/virginiaorganizing



@VAOrganizing

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.

www.virginia-organizing.org