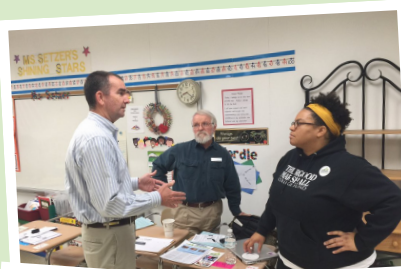




Lashawn Farmer and Ebony Guy from the Danville Chapter attended Attorney General Mark Herring's media conference announcing a pilot program to recruit more people of color to serve on the local police force.



Ray Scher and Janae Williams spoke with Virginia Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam while handing out information about Medicaid expansion at Remote Area Medical (RAM) in Warsaw.



Virginia Organizing held another three-day Dismantling Racism workshop in Harrisonburg at Massanutta State Park. Dismantling Racism has been a part of Virginia Organizing's work since 1996.

News From the Grassroots

'Flood of Voices' in Norfolk Shows There's More Than the Sea Level Rising

Virginia Organizing, in conjunction with the Sierra Club, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and the League of Women Voters, and with the support of other groups, held another successful "Flood of Voices" event in South Hampton Roads on November 11.

The "Flood of Voices" event was designed to collect stories to share in the community. For those who share their stories, the experience can be empowering and an opportunity to speak out about the damage caused by sea level rise and unmitigated climate change.

Virginia Organizing Chapters and leaders across the state use the organizing strategy of "storytelling" as one of many important empowerment tools for local leaders and to help decision makers connect important issues to actual people instead of statistics. When directly affected people share their story, it connects the issues to that person's struggle and makes it more of a reality.

Peggy Stamoulis lives in South Hampton Roads and has personally experienced the effects of flooding. She shared her story with Virginia Organizing and our partners.

"When it rained here for several days, school was cancelled, which means my kids missed an opportunity to learn," said Stamoulis. "It wasn't a big rain—just consistent. We should know how to deal with rain."

When Stamoulis shared her story, she admits it was a little hard at first. "I was a little nervous to get up in front of people I didn't know, but the cause is greater than my own discomfort with speaking in public," she said. "This is important for me and my children. It felt good to speak out and encourage others to speak about their own experience. I am one of many and there are so many others who have lost a lot more. It felt good to encourage others to band together and share their stories."

Flood of Voices is more than an event designed to share stories; it is an opportunity for grassroots leaders in South Hampton Roads to be involved in large-scale change on an issue that many residents have already faced or will face in the near future.

The World Resources Institute (WRI) noted in a recent study that the Hampton Roads area is the second largest population center at risk for sea-level rise and climate change—second only to New Orleans. In addition, the report noted that Virginia Beach and South Hampton Roads are ranked 10th in the world in value in assets exposed to flooding because of sea-level rise.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry recently visited Old Dominion University in Norfolk to discuss the grave dangers of climate change, including national security risks.

Kerry said, "When we talk about climate change, we're not just talking about the harm that is caused to the habitat for butterflies or polar bears—as some people try to mock it—as serious as those effects might be. We are talking about the impacts on people—people everywhere—of severe droughts, rapid sea level rise.

"We're talking about the impacts on whole cities of unpredictable and uncontrollable extreme weather events," Kerry said. "We're talking about the impact on entire countries of fundamental shocks to the global agricultural system."

"These threats are real," said Virginia Organizing Board member Debra Grant of Newport News. "I have seen the effects of sea-level rise. I know that we are facing real dangers if we choose to ignore this any longer."

The "Flood of Voices" has led to a documentary filmmaker getting in touch with participating organizations to amplify this issue to a national audience. Virginia Organizing will keep you updated as more details become available in 2016.

You can hear and see more coastal flooding stories from South Hampton Roads at www.tumblr.com/floodofvoices.

Real people. Real change.

New Board Members and Officers Elected

The Virginia Organizing State Governing Board welcomed two youth members, Emma Hale and Lily Hungarland, and elected new officers at their annual meeting on November 21.

The 2015-2016 State Governing Board:

Ladelle McWhorter, Chairperson
Debra Grant, Vice-Chairperson
Thomasine Wilson, Secretary
Ray Scher, Treasurer
Denise Smith, At-Large Executive Committee Member

Sandra A. Cook
Duane Edwards
Emma Hale
Lily Hungarland
Jay Johnson
Johnny Mayo

Be sure to read emails that come from our Board members for important Virginia Organizing updates and other information.

Looking for an Alternative Gift this Holiday Season?

Wouldn't it be nice to sit back and enjoy the holidays instead of fighting crowds at your local stores? Do you like giving gifts to family and friends but want them to mean something special? Do you know someone who is directly affected by Virginia Organizing's priorities or is a social justice ally? We have the perfect gift! Virginia Organizing created a series of special cards that you can print to give to a loved one for the holidays. Make a donation at <http://bit.ly/vaorgdonate> and then go to

<http://www.virginia-organizing.org/honor-donations-holiday-cards/> to choose your card to print to give as a gift!

Health Care as Moral Imperative

Virginia Organizing Chapters and leaders in South Hampton Roads and Blacksburg joined the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and Virginia Consumer Voices for the "Health Care as a Moral Imperative" series. Virginia Organizing State Governing Board member Denise Smith spoke about her experiences having limited to no access to health care services from lack of insurance, lack of Medicaid expansion, and an area hospital closing in Southwest Virginia.

"Medicaid expansion needs to happen and it needs to happen now," said Smith.

Monthly Sustainers Needed

Virginia Organizing's State Governing Board met on November 21 and put a new emphasis on getting more new monthly sustainers! A sustainer helps Virginia Organizing with a monthly gift that is automatically deducted from your bank account (which means Virginia Organizing does not pay credit card fees and keeps 100 percent of the donation for grassroots organizing). Will you consider being a Virginia Organizing sustainer? Every monthly donation—\$5, \$25, \$50, \$100, \$1,000, or any amount you choose to give—helps us build a more powerful grassroots force to organize for change in Virginia.

If you are interested in being a monthly sustainer, please complete the form found at <http://bit.ly/vaorgsustainer> and return to Sally Bastian at bastian@virginia-organizing.org or 703 Concord Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Leader of the Month Phil Grochmal



South Hampton Roads Chapter leader Phil Grochmal passed away this month following a sudden heart attack. He was known for his passion for his family and politics in the community. In his Chapter, he was

known for his passionate organizing for access to health care for all people.

In just this last month, Phil wrote two letters to the editor of his local paper to support Medicaid expansion. Phil was uninsured for many years and was able to access health insurance through the Affordable Care Act Health Insurance Marketplace. After getting his own health insurance, he wanted to help others do the same.

Phil became a certified application counselor and navigator in the South Hampton Roads Chapter Health Insurance Marketplace enrollment partnership with the Virginia Beach Department of Health. In addition, he was an active member of the South Hampton Roads Chapter Affordable Health Care Issue Team.

Virginia Organizing appreciates the service and dedication of Phil. Without his commitment and that of other volunteers, there may not be as many Virginians in the South Hampton Roads area with health insurance. When Virginia chose not to access federal grants to publicize open enrollment, Phil and others stepped up to make sure their neighbors knew about the program.



Thank you for your dedicated service, Phil. You will be missed. You made 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
Lynchburg
Martinsville/Henry County
New River Valley
Richmond
Roanoke
South Hampton Roads
Tri-Cities/Petersburg
Washington County
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

 www.facebook.com/virginiaorganizing
 @VAOrganizing

News in Brief

- Virginia Organizing is surveying small businesses in Virginia to find out what matters to our small business leaders. If you or someone you know owns a small business, please ask them to fill out our survey at <http://goo.gl/forms/O4KCtBkIKI>.
- The annual Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC) has begun. If you are a state employee, you can donate to Virginia Organizing through your payroll deduction using code #3168. Please contact Sally Bastian at 434-984-4655 ext. 229 or bastian@virginia-organizing.org with any questions.
- Virginia Organizing helped organize a house meeting with the ACLU to discuss ways to advance women's issues in Southside Virginia. Participants learned from each other about issues affecting them as women and talked about policies that can be changed to make improvements in their lives.
- The Fredericksburg Chapter continue to hold "School-to-Prison Pipeline" discussions with local residents and parents to strategize for this local campaign.
- Community leaders are working with local elected officials to discuss some problematic language that would prevent returning citizens from obtaining jobs in Amherst County and are strategizing on how to change this language.

www.virginia-organizing.org