



The Fredericksburg Chapter held a fundraiser in Washington, D.C. to support grassroots organizing and expand Virginia Organizing's network of supporters.



Virginia Organizing leaders from across the state came together for the 20th Anniversary Grassroots Gathering. Attorney General Mark Herring spoke to a diverse crowd of Virginians.



The South Hampton Roads Chapter participated in one of several local workshops on the moral imperative of health care for all Virginians.

## News From the Grassroots

### 20th Anniversary Celebration Successful

Virginia Organizing held the statewide 20th Anniversary Grassroots Gathering in Blackstone, Virginia on October 9-11. The annual Grassroots Gathering is Virginia Organizing's meeting where Chapter leaders, board members, and staff come together to reflect on what we have done in the last year, learn new skills for organizing, and ask public officials to support changes to unjust policies.

The celebration kicked off with Friday night's dinner and music by reggae band Mighty Joshua and the Zion #5.

On Saturday morning, Virginia Organizing welcomed keynote speaker Attorney General Mark Herring for the mass meeting portion of the Gathering. Attorney General Herring discussed predatory lending, LGBTQ rights, racial profiling, criminal justice issues, and the "school-to-prison pipeline" plaguing many Virginia schools.

Virginia Organizing leaders from Danville, Fredericksburg, and South Hampton Roads asked important questions of the Attorney General. As a result, the Attorney General committed to meeting with Virginia Organizing and about 10 police chiefs across the commonwealth to discuss data collection for racial profiling. He also agreed to meet with our Chapters throughout the year to discuss law enforcement issues.

In addition, Attorney General Herring provided Virginia Organizing leaders with information about his Consumer Protection section that deals with complaints about predatory lenders, price gouging, and more. You can access this section of the Attorney General's office at <http://bit.ly/vaconsumer>.

"It was great to be with a group of Virginians committed to making our commonwealth a better place and to discuss issues that are important to all of us," said Herring. "Virginians win when we raise our voices and work together for social justice. That's what Virginia Organizing is all about."

After the mass meeting, participants attended workshops to learn new skills and build on existing ones. Everyone was also invited to a Chapter fair to see the work of other local Chapters and make connections.

U.S. Senator Mark Warner was unable to make it to the Gathering, but recorded a special video for Virginia Organizing leaders that can be seen at <http://www.virginia-organizing.org/u-s-senator-warner-sends-message-to-virginia-organizing/>. Senator Warner said, "I'm sorry I couldn't be with you in person today, but I want to congratulate everyone on the 2015 Grassroots Gathering and also congratulate Virginia Organizing on 20 fantastic years of service."

Senator Warner also commended Virginia Organizing for "tremendous work" for social justice at the local, state, and federal level. "I know many times in my public service career,

I've had members of Virginia Organizing knocking on my door as Governor and as Senator, making sure I continue to keep the fight against injustice going," said Senator Warner. "We may not always agree on every issue, but I always know that Virginia Organizing brings a sense of justice and progressiveness to issues that are terribly important."

Virginia Organizing's history book, *Building Power, Changing Lives: The Story of Virginia Organizing* was also sold at the Grassroots Gathering and is available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/vaorgbook>.

"The annual Grassroots Gathering gives us a chance to celebrate with our Chapters and leaders all across Virginia," said Virginia Organizing State Governing Board Chairperson Sandra A. Cook. "It's exciting to see so many grassroots activists in one place, working together for the common good."

About 165 people attended the 20th anniversary Grassroots Gathering weekend to celebrate the momentous occasion, including members of every local Chapter.

Chapter leaders looking for a way to stay connected to other Chapters can visit Virginia Organizing's website at [www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org) and view the calendar to see upcoming events.

To make a special donation for Virginia Organizing's 20th anniversary, please visit <http://bit.ly/vaorganizingdonate>.

# Real people. Real change.

## CVC Campaign Contributors and Monthly Sustainers Needed!

The annual Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC) has begun. Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe has challenged state employees with an ambitious CVC goal of \$4.1 million. If you are a state employee, you can donate to Virginia Organizing through your payroll deduction and be a part of this great fundraising effort! Virginia Organizing's code is 3168. These donations help us expand our grassroots organizing capacity. If you have friends or family members who work for the state (or any entity of the state, such as a public university), please pass along our information to them! Please contact Sally Bastian at 434-984-4655 ext. 229 or [bastian@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org) with any questions about how to donate to Virginia Organizing through the CVC.

Virginia Organizing is also recruiting monthly sustainers! Monthly sustainers are donors who make a monthly contribution through an electronic funds transfer (EFT). Once a month, Virginia Organizing will draft your account, which means 100 percent of your donation will support grassroots organizing! 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](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org) or 703 Concord Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

## Martinsville/Henry County Chapter Met with Local Sheriffs

The Martinsville/Henry County Chapter met with the Sheriffs of Martinsville and Henry County to discuss immigration issues on the local level, particularly

unconstitutional Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) holds. ICE holds were being used across Virginia as a way for local law enforcement to detain individuals that were flagged by ICE after the person would normally be released. In January 2015, Attorney General Mark Herring issued an opinion stating that ICE holds amounted to detaining someone without cause.

This is the first time that Virginia Organizing leaders met with these local sheriffs. Community members and those directly affected by law enforcement issues were able to speak up about what is important to them in this meeting.

## Children for Change: A Collaboration of the South Hampton Roads and Petersburg Chapters

The South Hampton Roads and Petersburg Chapters have been working to help children and youth understand the historical Civil Rights Movement, their role in organizing for social justice, and getting involved in community organizing on issues that affect them. At the 2014 Grassroots Gathering, leaders had an interest in breaking down barriers in order to engage children and youth in organizing. Since that time, leaders have continued to show interest in getting more youth active in Virginia Organizing and started having discussions about how to make this a reality. Out of these discussions came "children for change," a program designed for youth to create social change in their community. The program is modeled after the freedom schools that existed in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. So far, children have met and learned more about how they can raise their voices and use their power to create change. The youth will continue to meet and put this new learning into action over the next year and beyond.

## Leader of the Month LaKisha Mahone



LaKisha (Kisha) Mahone has been a volunteer leader with the Fredericksburg Chapter since February 2015. Kisha and her classmates were doing a research project and chose to study the school-to-prison-pipeline in

Spotsylvania County when they came across Virginia Organizing's work. Kisha became more interested in this topic when it affected two of her children, and this inspired her to stay involved with Virginia Organizing. After she got involved with the Chapter, Kisha said, "I felt like I was at home."

Most of her work is focused on the pipeline, but she also helps people register to vote and helps restore the rights of returning citizens. This summer, Kisha attended a five-day conference in Albany, New York, to learn about organizing, an experience she called exhausting, but very worthwhile.

Kisha loves the Fredericksburg Chapter and its "environment of excitement." She loves that the Chapter is able to maintain its volunteer base and that leaders are so involved in their community. Kisha says that the question on everyone's mind is typically "What's next?"

To Kisha, empowerment is built into the culture of Virginia Organizing, and she loves the effect she has on her community. "Community members run the organization," Kisha says. "It is so purposeful and genuine."

Thank you, Kisha, for all your great organizing!

## 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



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## News in Brief

- The Richmond Chapter is spending time gathering petition signatures from local bus riders about extending the bus operating hours in the city.
- Virginia Organizing leaders attended the 6th district women's conference hosted by U.S. Representative Bob Goodlatte at James Madison University. Shenandoah Valley Chapter leaders Ramona Sanders and Trish Philon urged him to support immigration reform!
- Chapters in Southwest Virginia teamed up for eight community meetings with other organizations to discuss sustainable economies in the area with local leaders.
- The Petersburg Chapter is moving forward with their food desert campaign. Leaders are meeting with area decision-makers and educating the community about food scarcity.
- The Fredericksburg Chapter is actively engaging the community about their school-to-prison-pipeline work to address the disproportionate punishments in schools that send kids to juvenile detention instead of working on solutions to problems.

[www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org)