



Fredericksburg Chapter leaders held a vigil in support of comprehensive immigration reform and to stand in solidarity with the refugee children crossing the Southern border. A candlelight labyrinth was created by artist and Chapter leader Pat Smith.



Charlottesville area social workers helped Virginia Organizing during the "Day of Caring" by sprucing up the building and grounds.



The Charlottesville Chapter held a forum on Medicaid expansion to answer questions and provide accurate information on expansion to the community.

## News From the Grassroots

### Grassroots Gathering Brings Community Leaders from Across Virginia Together

Virginia Organizing leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered at the Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center in Blackstone, Virginia for the annual Grassroots Gathering. One hundred and forty leaders participated in the Grassroots Gathering this year in anticipation for the 20th year celebration that begins in 2015.

On Friday, leaders were welcomed with a recognition dinner that highlighted the accomplishments and dedication of Virginia Organizing Chapters and leaders.

Participants were provided with an opportunity to learn about issues that are important to them and their Chapters on Saturday. In addition, Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam spoke in the morning about the importance of Medicaid expansion and ensuring that Virginia's families are taken care of.

Lieutenant Governor Northam said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss a variety of issues with such an

engaged and informed group of grassroots community leaders. As a Commonwealth, we face some real challenges and it was great to discuss constructive solutions with folks who are passionate about social justice."

After the morning session with the Lieutenant Governor, leaders chose from a wide range of issue and skills workshops to attend.

Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney gave a presentation later in the afternoon about his office's commitment to restoration of civil rights for returning citizens. Secretary Stoney was encouraged by Virginia Organizing's work on this issue.

"It was great to be in the room with such enthusiastic leaders," said Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney. "Virginia Organizing has been instrumental in working for the restoration of civil rights for former felons and returning citizens in Virginia. I look forward to continuing to work with Virginia Organizing leaders to make sure that all individuals' rights are protected."

Time for renewal and relaxation were also built into the schedule to make this year's Grassroots Gathering a true retreat weekend.

On Sunday morning, leaders chose one of four topics to go more in depth about a particular issue and moving forward with planning.

"It is always great to see so many people who share similar views on our communities in one place working to get better at what each of us does," said Petersburg Chapter leader Nathan McDaniels. "It was a chance to learn about issues in other areas and work together to create positive solutions."



# Real people. Real change.

## Virginia Organizing Raised More Than \$5,000 During The Amazing Raise

Virginia Organizing raised \$5,215 during The Community Foundation's annual Amazing Raise. In addition, Virginia Organizing won a \$1,500 grant prize for being one of the first 10 organizations with 25 donations of \$50 or more at 8 a.m. on the second day of the event.

Virginia Organizing is supported primarily by grassroots donations. This year, each of our chapters are also responsible for fundraising to help us build to 20 organizers in Virginia by the end of 2016. The Amazing Raise donations and prize money put us closer to this goal! If you are interested in helping to raise money for Virginia Organizing, please contact Sally Bastian at [bastian@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org).

## Medicaid Expansion Update

On Thursday, September 18, the General Assembly held a special legislative session to debate Medicaid expansion and vote on a budget and judicial appointments. One Medicaid expansion bill was filed by Delegate Tom Rust and was debated and considered on the floor of the House of Delegates. The bill would have expanded Medicaid in a public-private partnership and was supported by Governor Terry McAuliffe as a bipartisan solution for Virginians who need health insurance but currently fall into the Medicaid gap.

After only one day of debate, the bill failed and the General Assembly left Richmond without a solution for the 400,000 Virginians who would qualify for Medicaid expansion, costing taxpayers billions of dollars in unclaimed federal dollars that Virginians

have already paid to make expansion a reality.

On Tuesday, September 16 in Richmond, Virginia Organizing helped two Southwest Virginia women share their personal stories of relying on free health care that is not always available and the importance of routine, reliable, quality care.

## Let's Get Registered!

Tuesday, September 23 was National Voter Registration Day. Are you registered to vote? Have you changed your address, turned 18, had your rights to vote restored, or know someone who has? Visit <http://www.sbc.virginia.gov> to become a registered voter, check your registration status, learn about absentee voting, see which forms of identification are needed at the polls (Virginia is now a photo ID state), and more.

You can also download printable flyers to share with your neighbors from Virginia Organizing at <http://bit.ly/vavoterID2014> that helps explain what you need to vote this year. The last day to register to vote is Tuesday, October 14, 2014 and Election Day is Tuesday, November 4, 2014.

## Immigration Reform Work Continues

President Barack Obama announced he will not make any executive changes to immigration enforcement until after the November 2014 election. Virginia Organizing leaders will continue to raise their voices in local events, like the monthly "Light the Way to Immigration Reform" gatherings in South Hampton Roads. For more information on how you can take action on immigration reform, contact Joe Szakos at [szakos@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:szakos@virginia-organizing.org) or 434-984-4655 ext. 222.

## Leader of the Month Jan Reeves



Jan Reeves is a Virginia Organizing leader in her hometown of Abingdon, Virginia. She lived in northern Virginia for a time and when she

moved back to the mountains about a year ago, she was appalled that the county was considering hydrofracking in this area she loves.

"I saw Virginia Organizing was fighting against fracking, so I joined them," said Jan.

Jan attended Board of Supervisor meetings and spoke out against hydrofracking at those meetings and in the media. She will be working with Virginia Organizing on water testing to help residents have a baseline in the event their water becomes contaminated if fracking occurs near their property.

In addition to working on hydrofracking, Jan also works to register voters and provide information to people in her community regarding the new photo ID laws.

"We've been canvassing in communities that might not have IDs, mailing information out, and providing information for churches to put in their bulletins," said Jan.

Jan believes it is important for everyone to be involved in their local communities and participate by voting.

"Freedom is one of those things we have to keep fighting for if we want to keep it."

Thank you, Jan, for your great work!

## 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  
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,  
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC



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## News in Brief

- Washington County Chapter held a large protest to oppose fracking in the area. Unfortunately, the Board of Supervisors chose to move forward and allow fracking. Virginia Organizing will work with local residents to make sure water quality testing is done and companies are held accountable for their practices.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter helped organize a Medicaid expansion forum hosted by Virginia Senator Lynwood Lewis and Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources William Hazel.
- The Richmond Chapter supported the fast food workers strike at the end of August. Fast food workers are organizing to demand a living wage.
- Virginia Organizing members in Pittsylvania County hosted a Restoration of Rights Clinic at the Gretna Public Library. Three residents completed contact forms, and two others began the long-form applications.
- Virginia Organizing met with the Louisa County registrar to discuss community outreach concerning the voter photo ID and informing people about how to get a photo ID at the registrar's office. The registrar also shared that more people are coming to the office seeking help with restoration of voting rights.

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