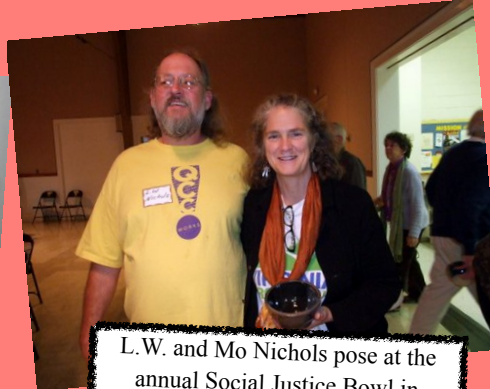




Members in Louisa County hosted a voter education forum to provide information on identification needed at the polls and to connect local people with registrars to answer questions.



L.W. and Mo Nichols pose at the annual Social Justice Bowl in Charlottesville. At the event, local potters donate hand-crafted bowls and businesses donate soup and bread to raise money for Virginia Organizing.



The South Hampton Roads Chapter hosted Social Justice University to prepare people to talk to legislators on issues of social and economic justice.

News From the Grassroots

Virginia Organizing is Working on Lots of Local Issues

Elections are just one piece of the work Virginia Organizing does. Regardless of the outcome of the election, we still have to organize to ensure a socially and economically just Virginia for all. Local efforts remain the focus of Virginia Organizing and our local Chapters have had some big wins in the last month and have put together some amazing programs!

The **Danville Chapter** has been meeting with elected officials, both local and state. Locally, the Danville Chapter has been fighting for months to make weatherization part of the city's priorities to be included in the budget. This past month, the Chapter received word that all their hard work has paid off! City Council officials have asked the Chapter to participate in the budget process next year by providing input into how funds will be used for weatherization.

Weatherization funding will provide an opportunity to make housing more affordable to people in the area because weatherized homes will not need as much energy for heating and cooling. Weatherization also has the potential to bring jobs to Danville.

Having input into a city budget means the voices of the people of Danville will be heard and considered in the decision-making process. Congratulations, Danville Chapter!

Our **Shenandoah Valley Chapters** also experienced a win this past month. The Valley Chapters have been working on immigration issues in the community for a long time. They began a listening project to document the voices of the people in the community who are struggling with immigration concerns. In particular, the Chapters have been working to end the partnership between local law enforcement in Rockingham County and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that allows local officers to be deputized as immigration officers.

This program, called 287(g), has been devastating to immigrant families and communities. What Virginia Organizing found was that 88 percent of those deported under this agreement were deported for low-level offenses such as traffic violations or other civil infractions. The project also found that 287(g) had created a culture of fear among immigrant communities with 70 percent of the participants expressing fear of the police.

At their last meeting, the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors decided to let the 287(g) agreement expire, a huge victory to the local Chapters and the immigrant community! One Harrisonburg Chapter leader, Maria Pena, said, "We are so happy about the decision. This is a victory for the entire community, not just the Latino community. We are looking forward to experiencing some peace in our families and not living in fear."

Virginia Organizing is so proud of all of the work our Chapter leaders are doing to make their communities better!

Real people. Real change.

Virginia Organizing is Participating in the Commonwealth Campaign

This year, Virginia Organizing will participate in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign. The program allows state employees to make donations using payroll deductions. If you are a state employee and you'd like to donate to help Virginia Organizing continue our social and economic justice work, please use code **3168**. Thanks in advance for your support!

Voter Registration Ends; Focus Shifts to Education and Get-Out-The-Vote

October 15 marked the deadline to register to vote in the November election. Virginia Organizing has now shifted focus to GOTV (get-out-the-vote) efforts through phone banking and other community education initiatives. Virginia Organizing has already made nearly 59,000 phone calls to potential voters and will call more than 100,000 voters by Election Day. We have distributed more than 10,000 flyers and palm cards about voter identification in the Commonwealth to ensure every vote counts! All 17 of our Chapters have pushed for

more involvement of low-income people, youth, women, and people of color in our electoral process. Virginia Organizing hired 14 people to register voters in the western, central, and southern parts of the state, focusing on small towns and rural areas. We also hired 25 part-time people to do phone banking, focusing on infrequent voters to increase turnout on Election Day and educate voters about identification requirements.

Lame Duck Session Preparation Begins

After the election, but before new Congresspeople are sworn into office, is a time called the "lame duck" session. This year, the lame duck session is incredibly important due to the automatic budget cuts to take place if Congress cannot agree on another solution. This is known as "sequestration." Virginia Organizing is preparing for the lame duck session by showing how the national budget will affect Virginians. There will be budget presentations coming to a Chapter near you soon! Visit our website at <http://www.virginia-organizing.org/chapters> to find a Chapter near you and to contact a local organizer.

Leader of the Month Maria Fornella-Oehninger



Maria Fornella-Oehninger began her work with Virginia Organizing two and a half years ago after the atmosphere for immigrants in

Virginia Beach became hostile. She currently serves on the Immigration Reform and Dismantling Racism issue team of the South Hampton Roads Chapter and organized a Dismantling Racism workshop last year.

Maria is an adjunct professor of political science at Old Dominion University and has found that her passion lies with getting youth involved in grassroots advocacy. "I found out that with youth, you have to take the fight to them, but when you do, you find they are passionate and enthusiastic and are hungry for participation," Maria said.

In addition to her work on the issue team, Maria also participated in the White House briefing for Virginia Organizing leaders. She brought several youth with her to engage in politics on a broader level and those youth became involved in Virginia Organizing as well. Maria loves that Virginia Organizing offers an opportunity for grassroots-level engagement in the political process.

Thanks for your service, Maria!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville
Danville
Harrisonburg
Fredericksburg
Lee County
Martinsville-Henry County
South Hampton Roads
Washington County
Tri-Cities/Petersburg
Richmond
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R



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@VAOrganizing

News in Brief

- We only have **\$76,000** to go to meet our grassroots fundraising goal of \$325,000! Will you consider helping us by making a tax-deductible donation? Donations can be made online by visiting our website and clicking on "Donate" or by mail to 703 Concord Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
- The **South Hampton Roads Chapter** concluded an educational series of events at Old Dominion University regarding voting, immigration, and other important issues in the community. The Chapter also hosted a Social Justice University in conjunction with other non-profit groups.
- The **Richmond Chapter** hosted a City Council forum for candidates to answer questions about important issues in the city, such as transportation and to hear the recommendations from the Anti-Poverty Commission.
- **Southwest Virginia Chapters** met with State Senator Phil Puckett about the health benefit exchange and Medicaid expansion in Virginia. Local Chapters across the state are meeting their elected officials to discuss these issues as well.

www.virginia-organizing.org