



# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING PROJECT 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

Shifting power in a conservative state is a gigantic task, especially if you care about including marginalized constituencies in the change work itself. Any social change approach has to take into account the history of its location, as well as what other organizations exist there and what they are doing. When a state like Virginia has little history of full citizen participation, when many sectors are not organized, and when some statewide constituencies choose a very narrow single-issue approach, shifting power is even harder.

In 2006, VOP continued with our long-term strategy — building relationships and making change. We do this hard work because it delivers results. In 2006 we celebrated many victories, but the real victory is the steady shift we see as people claim their power in a more connected and deliberate way.

More and more Virginians are becoming a part of our web of relationships. While other statewide groups are trying a tight approach, VOP is pushing for a broader one: we are making the connections between people and issues to bring about grassroots social change. If we provide an overall framework (multi-issue, multi-constituency, long-term change, moving people to action) and make sure that we pay attention to all the elements of organizational development (power analysis, strategic thinking, continual expansion, fundraising/resources, leadership development, political education, evaluation), then our relationship building approach is done in a way that we are agitating, nurturing, challenging, supporting and promoting social change in a variety of ways that are enriching, rather than limiting.

We have built relationships with marginalized constituencies throughout the state, with staff and leaders of other statewide groups, as well as with politicians and other important actors in the political arena. Throughout this report, you will see just how this translates into tangible pieces of change.

Thanks to the hard work of a growing, dedicated and diverse group of people, VOP is thriving!

## Our long-term goals are:

- (1) **To create new local community organizations throughout the state that are diverse, multi-issue and working for long-term social change.**
- (2) **To assist in making existing community organizations stronger and connected with other groups throughout Virginia.**
- (3) **To enhance the skill levels of local community leaders.**
- (4) **To change public policies — local and state — regarding affordable housing, economic securities, racism, lesbian and gay rights, poverty, criminal justice, tax reform, health care, education, the environment and other social and economic justice issues.**

## VOP State Governing Board

Sandra Cook, Petersburg  
Kimberly Davis, Petersburg  
Jason Guard, Richmond  
Janice “Jay” Johnson, Newport News  
Ladelle McWhorter, Richmond  
Jodi Mincemoyer, Williamsburg  
Denise Smith, Rocky Gap  
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## INCREASED VISIBILITY

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One of VOP's main goals for 2006 was to increase our visibility throughout the state. It is vital that more people hear about what we are doing and get involved.

In 2006 VOP members held at least 400 one-to-one conversations with community leaders throughout the state to expand our web of relationships and discuss the nature of power in Virginia.

VOP spokespeople also presented information on statewide organizing issues to college classes, with the understanding that young people bring a crucial energy to organizing on their campuses, and can take what they learn back to their local communities.

We published three issues of *virginia.organizing*, a 32-page news magazine with a circulation of 8,500 that provides news of VOP, its chapters and other groups in the state. It also has sections on organizing skills (in English and Spanish) and on understanding the economy — materials that can also be used by groups throughout the country. In 2006 we developed more of a theme concept for each issue and sent a survey to readers to see if we can make more changes in this important communications tool. We believe that sharing information and skills is particularly necessary for long-term social change to keep groups from feeling alone and trying to reinvent the wheel.

In Virginia, there is no one newspaper that is read statewide, so VOP has looked for effective ways to get out our message to news media all over the state. We encourage members of marginalized groups, particularly those who are not usually given a public voice, to interact with the media and empower themselves to make changes in their



communities. This year we have had dozens of media hits in articles from the *Washington Post* to local independent media, many involving people who were interviewed for the first time.

We have been distributing opinion columns and letters to the editor to 125 newspapers in Virginia, and we hope to continually increase the pace. More newspapers are using these materials, in part due to the phone calls and visits we have been making to lobby these editors, and explain that our distribution system includes pieces by VOP and other groups. This strategy has proven very effective. In addition, all op-eds and letters to the editor are sent to the VOP State Governing Board and VOP staff (which means they are generally passed on to many others) and to all Virginia Delegates and Senators, and they all are put on the VOP website.

In 2006 VOP dramatically increased the number of opinion columns, letters to the editor and press releases we send to every newspaper in the state. We have also deliberately recruited other groups to use our media distribution system.

In 2006 we sent out:

- 58 Letters to the Editor: Proposed Virginia Marriage Amendment, Immigration, Wealth Gap, Minimum Wage, Native American Rights, Tax Reform, Racial Profiling, Government Appointments, Living Wage Campaign, Poverty and more.
- 45 Op-Eds: Payday Lending, Transportation, Sweatfree Labor, Death Penalty, Minimum Wage, Unionization for State Employees, Sales Tax, Racial Profiling, Discrimination against GSAs, Estate Tax, Living Wage Campaign (including one Op-Ed by acclaimed author Barbara Ehrenreich), National Forests, Immigration and Media Coverage.
- 13 Press Releases: Tax Policy, Racial Profiling, Living Wage Campaign, Scholarship Program, Public Housing and Independent Media.

Because VOP recognizes that only a limited amount of the population turns to papers for their news, we have also engaged other tactics for in-

creasing visibility, including TV, radio and the Internet. For example, *Richmond Indymedia* partnered with VOP to provide three radio programs on rail alternatives, minimum wage and racial profiling.

On June 20 VOP was able to connect WVTF Radio in Roanoke with two low-wage workers to be interviewed, continuing our mission of connecting those whose voices are rarely heard with outlets to tell their stories.

VOP has also maintained a strong presence online. Various groups tell us how important the “Organizing Toolbox” on the VOP website is. In addition, in 2006 we sent out 61 statewide Action Alerts on: Education, Legislative Mobilization, Minimum Wage, Discrimination, Living Wage, Home Care Workers, Immigration, Estate Tax, Biofuel, Tenants Rights, Rail Transportation, Gay Rights, Death Penalty, Poverty and more. From this effort, many Virginians around the state were energized to contact their representatives and local media outlets and to pass on information to their communities, spreading the VOP web of relationships. We also sent out several regional alerts on living wage, immigration and local fundraisers.

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### MINIMUM WAGE

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During the 2006 General Assembly, legislation was introduced to raise the minimum wage in Virginia. VOP met with members of Senate and House Commerce and Labor Committees and asked that legislation supporting raising the minimum wage be passed in committee. Low-wage workers who participated in a public forum on the minimum wage attended the House Commerce and Labor subcommittee and full committee meetings to speak in support increasing the minimum wage in Virginia. Delegate Vince Callahan, a senior Republican, sponsored a bill to raise the minimum wage in the Virginia General Assembly. Unfortunately, the bill lost on a 4-4 vote in subcommittee.

At \$5.15 an hour, the minimum wage in Virginia is far too low for many workers to support themselves and their families. We see raising the minimum wage as crucial to the well-being of families throughout the state who rely on low-wage jobs to pay their bills, put food on the table, and pay for educational opportunities. Because of

this, VOP has joined with the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness, Social Action Linking Together (SALT), the Virginia AFL-CIO, the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations in organizing the Virginia Fair Wage Alliance to support legislation that would raise Virginia’s minimum wage. We have produced campaign handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, a website, pens, and templates for bumper stickers and yard signs. VOP distributed petitions and collected signatures at numerous public events around the state, gathering more than 35,000 signatures in 2006. The response we are receiving from Virginians tells us that this issue is one that people from many walks of life rally behind in the interest of fairness. VOP will continue work to raise the minimum wage in the 2007 legislature. Information and petitions are available at the campaign’s website, [www.vafairwage.org](http://www.vafairwage.org).

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### LIVING WAGE

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VOP continues to be committed to the idea that all full-time workers should not live in poverty. In 2006, VOP continued to provide strategy support to Living Wage campaigns already underway in Richmond, Blacksburg, and at the University of Mary Washington, the University of Virginia, and Emory and Henry College. We also encouraged our contacts in Northern Virginia to support the Living Wage Campaign in Fairfax.

In addition, VOP has provided basic organizing assistance to classified workers in Sussex in pushing for a living wage with their local school board and with students at Washington and Lee University and Lynchburg College to form Living Wage exploration committees.



We also held a workshop in conjunction with the Living Wage Action Coalition, bringing together students from seven different campuses, community groups and labor organizations, for many small group sessions on strategies and tactics, plus a presentation by author Barbara Ehrenreich.

In April, 17 students were arrested at the University of Virginia during a peaceful sit-in organized for workers' rights to a living wage. Several VOP interns co-lead this effort, which galvanized the community around the disparity between the prosperity of the University and the relative poverty of the workers upon which the University depends.

*“What you are doing — organizing for the dignity of all workers — is very, very important.”*  
— Barbara Ehrenreich

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### RACIAL PROFILING

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In January, Delegate Jeion Ward, with support from VOP, introduced House Bill 157, calling for data collection on all traffic stops. Although the legislation did not pass, definite progress was made in understanding the issue. The deciding vote was cast by Delegate Todd Gilbert. As a former Assistant Commonwealth Attorney, Gilbert is a strong supporter of law enforcement. But when he met with VOP members, he said, “As a prosecutor, I am aware that sometimes officers are overly aggressive.” Brothers for Change, a student group from Randolph-Macon University, spoke to the subcommittee to express their opinions and experiences with racial profiling.

One positive outcome in this campaign has been in our communications with law enforcement officers. Gary Jenkins, a member of the VOP Racial Profiling Strategy Committee, said, “This issue is a way to build partnerships with law enforcement and help them move to a more community-oriented form of law enforcement.”

VOP leaders took up that challenge, and they had productive conversations with key law enforcement officials in Waynesboro, Staunton, Frederick County, Roanoke County, Charlottesville, Williamsburg, Winchester, Virginia Beach, Northumberland County, Washington County and other communities as well as with the staff of the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Chair of the Virginia Crime Commis-

sion. In the process of developing ideas and building support during 2006, VOP leaders also met with representatives of the Virginia Sheriffs Association and the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, and participated in a workshop at the annual conference of the Virginia State Convention of the NAACP. VOP also met with more than 60 Virginia state legislators, with racial profiling as one of the items on the agenda.

While it became clear that data collection was not going to move forward in the legislature, VOP members in Virginia Beach had established a good working relationship with their state Senator, Ken Stolle. Senator Stolle is chair of the Courts of Justice Committee, and also of the Virginia Crime Commission, and speaks with a powerful voice on criminal justice issues. Members of the VOP Racial Profiling Strategy Committee found him willing to take actions that the Committee felt would advance the principles it had come up with around improved training on biased policing in Virginia. VOP will pursue this approach in 2007.

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### MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

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On November 7, the so-called Marriage Amendment passed, though only by 57 percent of those voting, the lowest margin for such an amendment in a southern state.

On the way to this painful defeat, the organization created to fight the amendment, the Commonwealth Coalition (of which VOP was a member), won many small victories. For example, in James City County, a local alliance including the Williamsburg VOP Chapter worked hard on turnout and changing voters' minds. They lost the county's vote by only one percent, this in a district which typically would not vote this way.

Claire Guthrie Gastañaga managed the campaign of the Coalition. After the election, she said, “We had two objectives: One was to win, the other was to leave Equality Virginia and the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community stronger. We didn't accomplish the first, but we did accomplish the second.”

VOP will join Equality Virginia and other opponents of discrimination in tracking the 2007 General Assembly's actions affecting sexual orientation, especially in two areas — employment discrimination and Gay-Straight Alliances in the schools.

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## PREDATORY LENDING

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VOP decided to take on the issue of predatory lending by working with the Virginia Partnership to Encourage Responsible Lending. The goal is to end the practice of cash assistance companies that attempt to keep their clients perpetually in debt by charging interest rates as high as 391 percent APR, often without proper disclosure. VOP distributed op-eds and letters to the editor statewide for coalition members and brought the issue up during constituent meetings with legislators. Since VOP targets key legislators who are in power positions, we are often called upon in coalitions to organize in difficult, but very strategic, areas. This work will continue in the 2007 legislative session.

In the summer, VOP representatives protested outside predatory lending establishments and provided information about alternatives to those who came to these establishments.

VOP joined with ACORN to get Liberty Tax Service to agree on a policy patterned on ACORN's agreements with H & R Block and Jackson Hewitt: they will drop their application fee and greatly modify their disclosure forms.

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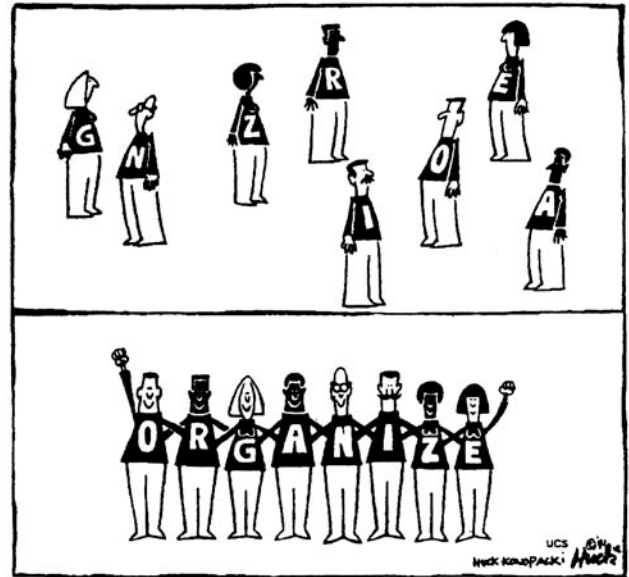
## TAX REFORM

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The 2006 Virginia General Assembly made it clear it intended to repeal the state's estate tax, with several bills being submitted in both the House and Senate. VOP sent out multiple e-mail action alerts in an attempt to slow the steamroller and bring public pressure to bear on the legislators in charge. Letters-to-the-editor and opinion columns were distributed statewide. The sponsor of the Senate bill withdrew his repeal bill, but then the issue re-appeared in the budget negotiations as a bargaining chip between the two Republican factions. Disappointingly, Governor Tim Kaine supported the repeal of the inheritance tax instead

of reforming it. His amendments to the part of the bill concerning land conservation were upheld, so he signed the bill sent to him by the legislature.

VOP has long made the case that the sales tax is a regressive revenue tool and should be limited in favor of a progressive income tax. Realizing that the revenue lost would be minimal, the VOP Tax Reform Strategy Committee wrote an opinion editorial supporting a sales tax holiday targeting back-to-school purchases and distributed it statewide. The Sales Tax Holiday bill passed and was implemented for the first time in August 2006.



We were able to educate the general public regarding the dangers of relying on a sales tax and also strengthen our alliance with key policymakers. VOP believes that the more people begin to notice the sales taxes they pay, the less the General Assembly will be able to rely on them to slip through regressive tax hikes.

The VOP Tax Reform Strategy Committee is working on tax reform strategies for the 2007 General Assembly session to: (a) update the income tax rates and brackets to make the tax burden easier on low-income families; (b) further raise the personal exemptions and standard deductions; and, (3) create a sales tax credit that will make the tax system both fairer to all taxpayers and generate stable revenue for years to come.

If VOP's tax reform proposal is fully implemented, the bottom 95 percent of Virginia's state



taxpayers will benefit from a tax cut. The top 5 percent would pay a modest increase in state income taxes that would be partially offset by an increase in their itemized deductions on their federal income tax returns.

In the lead-up to the 2007 General Assembly session, Governor Tim Kaine proposed raising the filing threshold for low-income Virginians, potentially taking more than 300,000 low-income tax filers off the Commonwealth's tax rolls. VOP publicly supported Governor Kaine's proposal because it was in line with VOP's Tax Reform agenda for increasing filing thresholds for low-income tax filers and would bring meaningful tax relief and reform to those who need it the most.

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## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

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This year, VOP supported the formation and growth of Youthink, a new independent coalition of youth and adults in the Hampton area. As part of this initiative, VOP organized a trip for youth representatives to the General Assembly in Richmond so that they could get an idea of how the state government makes decisions. The members talked with legislators about youth employment and youth serving on boards and commissions, locally and statewide. Youthink began planning a local campaign by looking at the issues identified in a two-year study of community concerns. The group chose a campaign focus of youth discrimination in employment, an experience shared by many members. Youthink then held a speak-out co-facilitated by VOP for young people to discuss youth job discrimination with the community in Hampton.

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## INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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Community organizing at VOP emphasizes both the need to address current problems and also the long-term need to build leadership across Virginia. As part of this process, we are working with young people to help them learn skills to build healthier communities and to understand the impact of good government and good policies on the quality of life for all Virginians.

The goal of VOP's Internship Program is to provide youth with the opportunity to develop de-

mocratic and leadership skills while engaging in a hands-on, multi-generational community organizing effort. Interns contribute to the strategic work of social change aimed at a variety of issues, including education, economic security, anti-racism initiatives, sexual orientation issues, the environment and more. High school and college interns meet regularly, identifying issues and using analytical and strategic planning activities to coordinate their own organizing efforts.

In 2006, we expanded the internship program to more areas of the state, with each VOP organizer working with interns in their respective areas. During the summer, we had five full-time interns working in Fredericksburg, Richmond, Lynchburg and Charlottesville. We had a total of 24 interns this year (ranging from four to 40 hours per month) and we are actively recruiting more full-time interns through social work programs.



In addition, we hired two apprentices of color, one to start in January 2007 and another in May 2007. These apprentice positions allow potential organizers to get a better feel for what organizing is all about, while providing staff support in expansion areas.

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## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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VOP intentionally strengthens leadership in the organization in many ways:

- *Individuals dramatically increase their campaign strategy skills through organization and coordination of strategy teams.* Each statewide issue campaign and each local issue campaign has a strategy team, which deliberately includes individuals who have never

served in such a capacity, along with those with more experience.

- *Thousands of people have learned more about how power works in their communities.* Our organizing staff and leaders are constantly doing one-to-one conversations in various communities throughout the state. These conversations center on what needs to be changed in a community and, inevitably, include discussions of power dynamics. The organizing staff also has done numerous trainings with new and emerging leaders in the chapters on how to build public relationships and how to work with legislators.

We hold local and regional workshops on diversity (race and sexual orientation), leadership skills and understanding the economy. These workshops help individuals learn critical concepts and skills and also help us strengthen relationships within the statewide structure.

To date, VOP has involved more than 11,000 participants in workshops on community organizing, leadership skills and dismantling racism. We held Dismantling Racism workshops in seven different locations throughout the year.

- *We assist other organizations in development and planning.* VOP provided an average of two consultations per week with community groups on organizational development concerns because we believe the stronger we all are the more likely powerful social change can happen. VOP has staff people, consultants and volunteer policy analysts with many years of experience, and we see a key element of our work to be that of assisting in the strengthening of other groups. This support ranges from advice on organizational development, legal concerns, administration (e.g., filing for tax-exempt status), fundraising and strategy questions. We are also asked to facilitate major meetings and strategic planning sessions for other organizations. For example, VOP staff facilitated planning meetings with the Virginia Forest Watch and at least a dozen other environmental and conservation organizations, developing a long-term plan for more effective organizing on forestry issues.

We continue to recruit more highly qualified professionals who help to provide this advice, mostly on a volunteer basis. In addition, we are just “one phone call away” from being able to get sound advice on any public policy concern from a national expert.

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## VOP LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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This year VOP began the VOP Leadership Institute, with a dozen participants from Hampton Roads, the Peninsula, Richmond/Petersburg region, Shenandoah Valley and southwest Virginia.

Program goals were to build:

- a common framework and a better understanding of organizing around the state;
- a core of VOP leadership trained in community organizing, organizational development, and issue analysis.
- VOP as a strong grassroots political force that is effective at the state and local levels.

The program format included participatory exercises, guest speakers, presentations, assignments and other activities. VOP utilizes a popular education methodology. Sessions included:

VOP Mission, History, Statement of Beliefs — History of Social Change in Virginia — Building Public Relationships Using the 1:1 Model — Methods and Models — Social Change, Power, Oppression and Social Movements — Community Organizing, Advocacy, and Coalitions — What VOP has Learned — Understanding Oppressions (Race, Class, Sexual Orientation) — Campaign Strategy Development — VOP Leadership Opportunities — Recruiting Others as VOP Leaders.

The VOP leadership participants described the program as innovative and an opportunity to meet diverse and passionate people who developed a vested interest in connecting people to work together on statewide campaigns and local issues.

The Institute built a strong foundation of skills and created leaders with different frameworks, viewpoints and the skills and drive to work in the community. It provided opportunities to build confidence, develop a better understanding of

power and the concept of “borrowing and sharing” power. It built a framework of how to benefit from relationships, moved people out of their comfort zones and became a support system for learning new techniques. Life-long relationships have developed that will continue to motivate and inspire the participants in social justice work.

A few Leadership Institute participant comments:

*“The program is refreshing and a meaningful experience that is not just a ‘resume builder’.”*

*“Being required to practice the learned skills during the program (homework assignments) and talk about what worked and what was challenging was very helpful.”*

*“The program helps us find our strengths and enhance the skills of leadership.”*

The participants have exciting work plans for 2007. They are working with statewide campaigns, developing and facilitating a one-day classism workshop, facilitating dismantling racism workshops, creating a diverse ethnicities group at a community college, meeting with legislators, helping set up town hall meetings, developing deliberate and intentional partnerships with local organizations, applying to serve on the VOP State Governing Board and helping to recruit 2007 Leadership Institute participants.

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## VOTER REGISTRATION AND MOBILIZATION

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Following up on VOP’s successful distribution of voter guides in 2004 and 2005, VOP encouraged non-partisan voter registration and participation in targeted low-voter turnout precincts for door-to-door contact and special events. We learned that VOP’s “Each One Takes Ten” approach, where an individual agrees to make sure ten people are registered to vote, are fully informed about what is on the ballot, and actually get to the polls, was most effective.

In addition, VOP recorded four public service announcements by Julian Bond, national chair of the NAACP, and distributed them to 276 radio stations statewide.

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## POWER ANALYSIS

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On April 8, we gathered VOP State Governing Board members, VOP staff, leaders of VOP chapters and statewide issue campaign strategy teams, as well as staff and leaders from other organizations, to do a serious power analysis of Virginia. This helped VOP’s collective thinking, but it also greatly enhanced the thinking of many other groups. We were also able to re-frame the discussion from one in which groups felt stretched too thin to one where groups now see how working together will actually cost them less time and energy because it is more focused and more strategic. We all emerged with renewed energy and vision as to how we will accomplish our goals of building a grassroots power base for long-term change.

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## VOP CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

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The VOP chapters have been very active in their regions this year. The VOP District Four Chapter voted to form a citizens’ advisory group that will work with the local school system to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Washington County and the City of Bristol, and to get a comprehensive anti-bullying program implemented. This chapter has also been lobbying I-81 corridor legislators, VDOT, and Governor Tim Kaine to reject Star Solutions’ proposal for a no-bid contract to turn I-81 into a six- to 12-lane truck artery in favor of a plan that would incorporate multi-state intermodal rail service improvements with spot fixes on the Interstate.

The Williamsburg VOP Chapter is involved in an affordable housing campaign to make their community a place where those working in the area can afford to live. On March 30 they organized a





housing forum that outlined the strengths of inclusionary zoning to about 40 people to raise public awareness and recruit new participants. At their second public housing forum, there were 50 attendees, suggesting that interest in affordable housing is growing in Williamsburg and James City County. They also compiled a draft research report on inclusive housing in June.

The Roanoke Valley VOP Chapter joined with the Roanoke NAACP and the Delta Sigma Theta Alumnae Sorority to sponsor a City Council Candidates' Forum on April 3 at William Fleming High School. Annie Krochalis, a Roanoke Valley VOP Chapter member, was interviewed on WVTB Public Radio about the forum as part of the process of getting the word out beforehand.

The Petersburg VOP Chapter participated in the first Juneteenth celebration held in the city. Chapter members set up an information table, talked with citizens about VOP, passed out written information, collected signatures on petitions to increase Virginia's minimum wage, and invited people to join the chapter.

In April the VOP State Governing Board approved two new chapters of VOP, the Northern Shenandoah Valley Chapter and the Central Shenandoah Valley Chapter.

VOP worked with the Independence Resource Center to do a survey of each school in Charlottesville in terms of accessibility. As a result of the surveys, the city maintenance department has made many improvements to the schools, while longer-term projects were worked into the capital improvements budget. This project now serves as a model for how other school districts can deal with accessibility issues. The Charlottesville City Schools plans to fully meet all ADA requirements within the next six years; we will continue to work for a shorter timeline.

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### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

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As our organization grows, we want to ensure that its growth is healthy and as smooth as possible.

This year we made progress towards building the organizational support necessary to achieve our

goals. We hired a Legislative Director and another organizer to join the staff in February 2007. This year all five organizers extended their contracts for five years. In light of recent national events, the board voluntarily adopted policies on conflict of interest, whistleblowers, donors' rights and destruction of records. We also updated our insurance policies. We developed new VOP banners, display boards, handbills and podium signs as part of increasing our visibility.

We accomplished several major administrative upgrades this year, too. Our shift to an Internet-based database increases VOP's capacity by allowing remote access by all the staff, and allows subscribers to maintain their own records, which saves VOP staff a tremendous amount of time. Subscribers are also able to check their issue interests, which allows us to do targeted e-mail action alerts and mailings. In addition, the new database allows us to integrate our e-mail action alert system with our web site, giving us the capacity to know how many people respond to the action alerts. Collectively, we will have more data about the number of people who are interested in a particular issue, as well as how to most effectively engage them as active citizens.

Other technological improvements include a renovated website, testing "auto dialing," getting laptops for all the organizers, and upgrading computer hardware.

VOP received five donated vehicles this year, which allow organizers and volunteers to attend events, gather petitions, and develop chapters. Some were sold to pay for repairs and upkeep of others.

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### **FUNDRAISING**

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The capacity for fundraising at VOP surged forward in 2006. We are very pleased to have added to our staff a Major Gifts Coordinator and a Grassroots Fundraising Coordinator. With the additional staff we are able to dramatically increase the number of contacts we have with major donors and prospective donors.

We have an increasingly diverse funding stream. Besides grants, we raise funds through planned

gifts, endowment donations, contracted services, registrations, recycling cell phones and printer cartridges, Kroger and Benevolink programs, book and t-shirt sales, interest income, ads, and rental income from groups in the Charlottesville office.

The new database is a much more powerful tool for helping everyone on our staff to be more effective fundraisers and to help our donors be more involved with the issue campaigns.

In addition, we continue to get donated office furniture, cars, office supplies and computer equipment. And we save a lot by bartering for repairs to our technology systems.

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## EVALUATION

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VOP uses a process evaluation approach. We work together to define specific goals and objectives and maintain an on-going analysis of possible outcomes. Using this method, we are able to evaluate our progress on a continuing basis and make modifications to our plans to facilitate successful outcomes.

VOP's evaluation process includes the State Governing Board, the Executive Committee and VOP staff. VOP holds an annual retreat for all Board members and key personnel. Our organizational planning includes: fiscal needs, technological improvements, communication standards, leadership and staff development, power analyses, representation in governance, and on-going evaluation of the organization. In addition, each staff person does a monthly workplan and the organizing staff has weekly conference calls. Local chapters and statewide campaign committees develop written strategy plans and revise them as needed.

Responsibility for overall program evaluation rests with the VOP State Governing Board which sets evaluation criteria and expectations for program results. Final program reports document program outcomes. In addition, VOP has a system for tracking (weekly) the activities and accomplishments of organizing and administrative work to provide measurable reports. We keep detailed records of media coverage, workshops, consultations, action alerts and other activities.

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## AFFILIATED GROUPS AND OTHER ISSUES

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As we work to create a stronger grassroots power base in Virginia, we also respond to the needs of local communities by supporting organizing however we can — consultations, strategic phone calling, letters to the editor and op-eds — thus expanding and making use of our web of relationships. This year, VOP was able to:

- get eight people to testify (four mental health consumers) about affordable housing at Virginia Housing Development Authority's public hearing
- work with other groups to release a report on the achievement gap in Charlottesville City Schools
- support a coalition working on verifiable elections
- co-sponsor a forum with Public Policy Virginia and other groups called "Biofuels: For Our Environment, Economy and Security"
- help organize and sponsor a rally to support immigrant rights on April 9 in Richmond's Monroe Park, which more than 3,000 people attended.



VOP also helped to coordinate the town hall meeting on March 30 in Norfolk on the future of the media with more than 300 people attending and 77 speaking.

Other examples of events that groups have organized with VOP support are:

- On February 1, the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations lobbied at the Capitol in

Richmond. Due in large part to their work, no new anti-immigrant bills were passed.

- ForwardNORFOLK, a political action committee, held a series of focus groups and a public forum to identify residents' critical community concerns; they then graded their City Council on how effectively they had addressed these issues. ForwardNORFOLK plans to organize representatives from each ward to discuss how to bring up their grades.
- About 100 community activists streamed to St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Fairfax County on March 18 to listen to more than a dozen expert witnesses share their knowledge of living wage issues.

Also, during 2006 we continued the VOP Used Computer Project by distributing 55 computers, 26 printers, three fax machines, eight scanners and three copiers to non-profit groups and individuals who could otherwise not afford them.



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#### PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Over the years, VOP has accepted grants and donations on behalf of a wide range of new and emerging groups. This year, we brought these groups into a more formal working relationship by developing new program areas. The new approach means closer coordination of all of our efforts around the environment, education, transportation, affordable housing, human rights and supporting small community groups.

We met with the boards and leaders of the groups to make sure everyone understood the shift in the relationship. Believing that they were ready to move beyond VOP just handling their finances to developing ways that we can work together for long-term change, we completed a "Joint Plan of Work" format to make it clear what we would do

together. We also updated the personnel policies, financial policies and procedures, employment contracts and financial forms.

Some accomplishments for 2006 for these groups are listed below.

#### Environment

In 2006, **Virginia Forest Watch (VAFW)** launched the new statewide Forest Issues Work Group (FIWG) within the Virginia Conservation Network. Members of the group have interests in both forest-practices reform and slowing the loss of forestland in Virginia. Their work is part of a multi-year campaign for advancing grassroots forest policy reform in Virginia. The FIWG worked this year to develop a strategy for moving their policy goals forward, and this fall drafted their first white papers for the Virginia Conservation Network.

VAFW received funding in 2006 to begin this new private lands campaign, and hired a coordinator who will be taking outreach presentations to the Shenandoah Valley and west, engaging with forestland owners in this region.

VAFW learned that their staff's efforts to convince the Big Stone Gap City Council to protect its water quality in their municipal watershed has paid off. Big Stone Gap has hired two consulting foresters — frequent presenters at Virginia Forest Watch events — with a long-term interest in promoting sustainable forestry. They are working to see that others follow this example.

In November, VAFW hosted a successful Sustainable Forestry Seminar near Claytor Lake in southwestern Virginia. Participants learned about the work of two sustainable forestry cooperatives, restorative forestry through horse-logging, and how landowners can guide their forest management goals with forest plans and implement these goals with contracts.

VAFW is taking a leadership role as citizens unite to protect the George Washington National Forest (GWNF). The GWNF is one of the first forests in the nation to be revised under new rules and will set the tone for forest protection throughout the

U.S. They are identifying and encouraging citizen action among local citizens in counties across western Virginia, directing media outreach, compiling information, and leading other efforts to protect the GWNF as planning proceeds.

VAFW continued to monitor both of Virginia's national forests. 2006 successes included: (1) working with local citizens and groups to convince the Forest Service to permanently drop the Signal Corps Knob logging project near Ramseys Draft Wilderness, (2) joining other citizens in negotiations with the Forest Service in order to protect riparian forests at Sidling Hill, (3) furthering the debate and slowing plans to proceed with a bulldozed trail through Dolly Anne roadless area, and logging projects near Thunder Ridge wilderness, Wildcat Mountain, and a water gap near Iron Gate, (4) fighting the Bush Administration's proposed sell-off of public lands in the region, and (5) monitoring at the Bark Camp timber sale, and pre-sale organizing against the new Back Valley timber sale 1.5 miles from the Clinch River, a globally-significant biological river basin.

In 2006, VAFW sponsored concerts by John McCutcheon, Walking Jim Stoltz and local artists on Jim's Forever Wild 2006 tour, and Blue Highway. They were able to reach out to hundreds of people at these events thanks to displays, literature, and slide shows. They participated in several tabling events at Earth Day events and city festivals and sponsored the Tour de Cut, a day-long walking tour contrasting "the good, the bad, and the ugly," cut-over forests and pristine forests worth saving.



**Wild Virginia** achieved several important victories in 2006. Members pushed for reinstating the

2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule that will help protect 394,000 acres of unroaded forests on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Virginia. These roadless forests are some of the last sanctuaries for wildlife, for remote wilderness experiences, and for clean drinking water. Wild Virginia will continue to push for increased and permanent protection of these areas.

In May, Wild Virginia received word that the U.S. Forest Service dropped its plan to build roads and log the Signal Corps Knob area just south of Route 250 on Shenandoah Mountain. This area contains some old-growth forest, civil war historic sites and is fairly remote. After leading a hike to the area on March 12, several individuals started organizing their local contacts. This sale was dropped, according to the Forest Service, because of the potential impact to historic sites. Wild Virginia appealed the sale and this is a victory!

Wild Virginia has shifted its strategy and hired a full-time organizer to focus on building the base of support for further protections on the George Washington National Forest. In the past, Wild Virginia's work has focused on full-time forest watch, but without effective communications and organizing, these efforts are limited. While they will continue to monitor all projects on the George Washington National Forest, they will now focus on the more egregious timber sales or harmful projects.

Wild Virginia successfully contracted with Dr. John Bergstrom, an expert in determining the economic value of wilderness lands, to evaluate the economic benefits of the Shenandoah Mountain area, west of Staunton and Harrisonburg. Determining the impact on the local economy due to recreational visitation will assist in understanding the total benefits of the forest and in recommending management policies.

Wild Virginia advanced its proposal to create a new Special Biological Area on the National Forest to protect the state threatened wood turtle. They are working with state natural resource agencies, such as the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, to ensure these areas are included in the upcoming forest plan revision.



Wild Virginia led eight hikes in 2006 to areas throughout the George Washington National Forest and surrounding natural areas. The hikes were coordinated with local groups such as the Virginia Native Plant Society and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. The hikes served as a great outreach tool to meet new members and establish important contacts with other Virginia-based groups interested in forest protection on the George Washington.

**The Clinch Coalition** has continued monitoring activities on the National Forest and surrounding private forest. With input from the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project they proceeded with biological surveys on tracts that the Forest Service has planned for timber harvesting. Because of their surveillance of ongoing timber sales one logger withdrew from a job and a search for another logger has become necessary.

TCC continues their work in small local communities surrounding the National Forest. Last year they were successfully stopped 30 miles of ATV trails on the National Forest above the community of Mabe. Their most recent efforts were to get a public hearing in the small community of Dunganon, where residents living along Dry Creek learned through word of mouth of a proposed 400-acre timber cut by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). They were not informed of the sale by the USFS, as required, but only heard of it from TCC members and staff. At that hearing the people from Dunganon let the USFS know of the past flooding that had occurred in that watershed and their concerns that additional logging and the proposed burning of an additional 1,300 areas would only lead to more flooding. The Forest Service agreed to extend the citizen comment period for 30 days. Articles about their success in this action were on the front page of the local paper two weeks in a row.



In addition to their continued presentations and displays at community events, this year in conjunction with their third annual Blue Highway Concert, TCC offered a Forest Essay Contest in the schools in four local counties. Nearly 100 entries were received and awards were presented at the concert. Also, in conjunction with Southern Appalachian Mountains Stewards, a newly-formed local anti-strip mining organization, they arranged for flights over sections of Wise County by Southwings. Members of both organizations flew together to view the contrast of the devastation of strip mining practices and the beauty of the forest.

TCC conducted meetings with the Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to explore the possibility of receiving funds to repair, upgrade and expand trails in the forest. They received support for this effort from the local tourism council, chamber of commerce, Norton City Parks and the Town of Big Stone Gap.

**Earth Week Charlottesville's** first Earth Day Festival on April 22 pulled in 500 attendees with 45 exhibits, four workshops, three on-site eco-activities, five bands, and a very active Freecycle exchange. The first set of the annual Charlottesville-Albemarle Environmental Vision Awards were given out. This regional award was instituted to recognize the environmental stewardship efforts of business leaders, elected officials and private benefactors.

Earth Week events also included a clean-up of Meade Creek, the first Art 4 Bike Paths charity art show and benefit (which produced \$2,000 for a matching fund to help pay for new bike paths and trails), three days of riparian buffer plantings, a green home-building seminar and home tour, and a public (and publicly aired) political debate/town hall on regional sustainability issues.

In September they put on the Jade Gala fundraiser event, which featured five musical acts and raised money for Earth Week 2007. In October Earth Week hosted the Virginia premiere of *Nobility*, a movie by Turk Pipkin, in conjunction with the Virginia Film Festival.

**Environmental Health Sciences (EHS)** has helped environmental health science discoveries break through in the media, achieving unprece-

dented visibility in the mainstream press. In 2006 their collaboration with the Science Communication Network has led to major coverage of advances in environmental health science in *Time Magazine*, *National Geographic*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Independent of London*, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

EHS helped scientists anticipate press and industry reactions, and helped reporters understand how each new scientific result fit within a larger framework, one that underpins the growing revolution in environmental health sciences. This improved the quality and the quantity of coverage.

Once the mainstream press published articles about the new science, EHS used their web dissemination tools to spread them far and wide — to other reporters, to activists, scientists, lawyers, and to the public at large. Use of their dissemination products has grown steadily, especially through organizations using RSS feeds from their archives. All told, over 120 organizations now place EHS feeds on their websites. Combining that use with the daily e-letter, AbovetheFold, and visitors directly to the website, Environmental-HealthNews.org, EHS estimates that well over one million people a month see headlines from EHS.

EHS also works with the Collaborative on Health and Environment to engage with advocates and scientists focused on health conditions that the new science now links to environmental exposures. This past year's consuming activity involved a 10-month process leading to a scientific consensus statement on infertility and the environment. This statement (the "Vallombrosa Statement") has been used subsequently in multiple ways, including organizing Hill briefings involving people from across the political spectrum.

EHS worked with the Health and Environment Funders Network to introduce members and grantees to key concepts and key players working on green chemistry. Being able to offer safe materials as alternatives is an essential part of forging a new generation of public health standards. One specific outcome of this was publication of a special section of the April 2006 issue of *American Prospect* on "the carbohydrate economy." EHS contributed one essay

to this ("Good Genes Gone Bad"), helped shape the overall treatment, worked with a writer to develop an article on green chemistry, and provided the Associated Press with RSS feeds from EHS on its website in five of the articles.

EHS and VOP entered into a partnership with Finger Lakes Production to produce a five-day-per-week, one-minute-per-day radio show and podcast about environment and health: the *Environmentminute*. The show currently goes to over 100 stations plus Armed Forces Radio, and the podcast has received superb reviews in the media.

EHS' CEO/Chief Scientist has given 22 public lectures this year, in places as close as the UVA Darden School of Business and as far away as Stockholm, Brussels, London and Paris.

### **Human Rights**

**Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty's** year began with the completion of VADP's "Time Discovers Truth" Campaign when former Governor Mark Warner ordered the testing of existent DNA in the Wanda Fay McCoy rape and murder case from the early 1980s for which Roger Keith Coleman was executed by Virginia in 1992. The post-execution testing of DNA in an execution case where issues of guilt or innocence had gone unresolved for over a decade set a precedent for the retention of testable DNA in capital punishment cases. Unfortunately the test results confirmed the guilt of Mr. Coleman rather than proving him innocent and providing the first confirmed DNA case of a wrongful execution in the U.S.





VADP was the prime mover of bills restricting the death penalty for those 18 years or older and eliminating executions for minors that were passed during the 2006 General Assembly. The bills updated Virginia's legal code to reflect the abolition of the Juvenile Death Penalty by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005. When the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the killing of 15 year olds in the late 1980s, it took Virginia over 10 years to update the statutes to reflect the new ruling.

VADP led the fight to oppose the first two scheduled executions of the Kaine Administration. Dexter Lee Vinson was executed on April 27 but Percy Levar Walton received a six-month stay of execution to give the Governor time to evaluate his present mental condition. Op-eds by VADP Director Jack Payden-Travers were carried in the *Free Lance-Star*, the *Roanoke Times*, the *Danville Register & Bee* and the *Virginian-Pilot*. VADP initiated an execution day protest in front of the Governor's office from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the date of each execution. An AP photo of VADP's initial protest was carried on Yahoo.com.

On International Death Penalty Abolition Day, March 1, VADP launched a weblog, *Not One More*, available at <http://vadporg.blogspot.com>.

VADP provided logistical support for the legal defense team in Earl Washington Jr.'s successful civil suit. On May 5, a jury awarded Washington \$2.25 million after finding that he had been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death as a result of being framed by a Virginia State Police officer.

This year VADP completed the largest project of its 15-year history. The Virginia Journey of Hope

concluded in late October after two weeks of events across the Commonwealth. Thousands of new contacts were made through 122 programs held at churches, community forums, civic organizations, law schools, colleges, high schools and even an elementary school. The size of the VADP mailing list was doubled and over 1,500 persons signed the Virginia Moratorium Campaign petition to Governor Tim Kaine.

In the fall, after two years of work, *Equal Justice and Fair Play*, an assessment of the capital statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia in comparison to the 85 recommendations of the Illinois Blue Ribbon Capital Punishment Study Commission of 2002, was published. It points out that Virginia at present only completely complies with 12 of the recommendations to guard against the wrongful execution of the innocent and fails entirely to meet 47 of the recommendations.

The year ended with VADP member Ida Reid being prominently featured nationally in interviews about her story as the sister of James Reid who was executed by the Commonwealth of Virginia in December 2004. VADP has worked closely with Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights in their "No Silence, No Shame" project which led to their December 2006 publication of *Creating More Victims: How Executions Hurt The Families Left Behind*.

**The People United** came to terms with the fact that there is not a steady enough base of support to maintain paid staff throughout the year. The board of directors met in February to wrestle with this situation and adjust program plans for the year. As a result of this meeting, they decided to focus on prison issues for the remainder of 2006 as a vehicle for building more diverse connections among social change activists as well as maintaining a smaller level of involvement with the campaign to stop mountaintop removal mining.

During the first several months of the year, The People United focused on maintaining and strengthening contacts made during a Human Rights Day prisons and torture awareness event in December. Through conference calls and meetings, the group continued to build this network and mounted an ongoing program resulting in



dozens of people becoming educated about the issues by writing to prisoners in Virginia's super-max prisons.

In late June, The People United held the third annual activists gathering, again, with a focus on prison issues. About 60 activists from cities around Virginia gathered for a weekend of education, strategizing and networking. Activists left the gathering with plans for ongoing work for a media education campaign around prison issues, and a public event during the crime commission hearings at the Virginia General Assembly in October.

**Interfaith Gay/Straight Alliance** — On January 25, Equality Virginia's (EV) Lobby Day, the groups arranged a send-off for those affiliated with IGSA who were going to Richmond to talk to their representatives about pending legislation and the rights of LGBT people in the Commonwealth. A local television station covered the send-off, giving them the opportunity to show the diversity of the group as well as thoughts about why this work is important. *The Daily Progress* also interviewed members for a front-page article about Lobby Day.



IGSA initiated two separate yet related campaigns concerning the Marshall Newman Amendment. One was a letter-to-the-editor campaign for which they solicited letters from the congregations who have members in IGSA. A dozen letters were published in Charlottesville area newspapers. These twelve letters and others were then disseminated to other newspapers across the Commonwealth by VOP. The second endeavor was an ad campaign featuring photographs of various individuals, couples, and families with their personal statements as to why they intended to vote "No" on the amendment. IGSA ran these in a range of newspapers including dailies and weekly, an African-American newspaper, college paper and one pub-

lished in Spanish, primarily in the Central Virginia region, but also in the western part of the state. To run both of these campaigns they garnered wide support and participation by members of faith communities and beyond.

On behalf of the organization, different members joined with other groups working on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in several ways. They joined with area LGBT groups to staff tables at various venues including: the area's first Q-munity Fair, the Albemarle County Fair, Charlottesville City Market and Fridays after Five where they provided information about their organization and the Marshall Newman Amendment. They participated in a news conference as part of the group, People of Faith Against Amendment I. They also participated in the "No, No, a Million Votes No" day of action. IGSA members worked with others in canvassing for Equality Virginia and participated in EV's Annual Public Officials Reception. In addition, they became members of and contributed financially to the Commonwealth Coalition.

IGSA continued their outreach program by screening the documentary, *Barbara and Tibby: A Love Story in the Face of Hate* and facilitating discussions about it in a variety of religious settings. Members of the group showed the film at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville Friends, Wesley Memorial Methodist Church and Congregation Beth Israel. IGSA members made a presentation about their history and activities to Clergy and Laity United for Justice and Peace. One member gave a presentation about IGSA during Pride month at Sojourners United Church of Christ.

### Transportation

In 2006 **Community Yellow Bikes** provided bicycles to over 350 children and adults in the Charlottesville community. While they are ecstatic to provide so many bikes, they are equally as proud of the social service they provide in the community. Approximately 85 percent of their patrons are under 16 years of age, approximately 87 percent are minorities, and most come from the predominately low-income neighborhoods surrounding the shop. They provide a safe, positive and



productive environment for these patrons to spend their Friday and Saturday afternoons. This is especially meaningful since their hours, 3-5 p.m., are during a time of day that many children spend unsupervised.

In addition to regular shop activities, they offered several special programs this year. Community Yellow Bikes conducted a Bike Club at Walker Upper Elementary School, where they taught bike safety, basic repairs, and riding skills to 24 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. There was overwhelming interest in the club and they plan to offer it again in 2007. They provided a mentorship program for ten foster children through People Places of Charlottesville. Lastly, they provided a bike course for Girl Power, an afterschool program for at-risk students at Jackson Via Elementary School.

**RAIL Solution's** accomplishments in 2006 have been many. House Bill 1581, the I-81 Multi-state Rail Feasibility Plan, passed both houses of the General Assembly unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Tim Kaine in a year when virtually all transportation legislation was paralyzed. During the public comment period of the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) I-81 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), RAIL Solution distributed issue analyses targeted to specific groups. They produced professional-quality handbills, encouraging the public to comment in opposition to the DEIS's rejection of a real rail alternative. These were distributed to thousands of citizens in the Corridor and were used in greeting the 2,000 people arriving at the six public meetings VDOT held in April. Ninety percent who spoke publicly spoke negatively about all or part of the DEIS.

Four years ago, RAIL Solution proposed that Virginia should go into partnership with Norfolk Southern (NS) to build a railroad capable of carrying through-state truck freight on scheduled trains, time-competitive with trucks. Norfolk Southern always remained remote and unresponsive to these efforts. Now, NS is involved. This changed because RAIL Solution sought sponsorship and successfully promoted House Bill 1581 calling for a full-scale economic analysis of a greatly enhanced railroad from Knoxville to Harrisburg, capable of removing 60 percent of through-state trucking

from Virginia's I-81. VDOT sought to dismiss the House Bill 1581 study as an unfunded mandate, and a lot of behind-the-scenes promotion was needed to secure a funding mechanism and get the project moving. Eventually NS offered to cooperate and divide both the cost and scope of work for the House Bill 1581 study, and now the study of potential interstate diversion of trucks to rail in the I-81 Corridor is underway.

In early 2006, RAIL Solution members attended many of Governor Kaine's Transportation Town Meetings. They talked about their vision for balanced transportation planning with a real role for rail, working to help clarify transportation priorities for the new administration. Also on August 30, RAIL Solution leaders met with Governor Kaine and eight of his top transportation and policy officials. The rail supporters urged a short-term focus on fixing road safety issues and capacity chokepoints, with long-term maximizing of rail potential. The next month, when the administration's new transportation policy for I-81 was announced, it followed just such a model.

In late September VDOT rushed forward a resolution for the Commonwealth Transportation Board to approve the flawed I-81 DEIS before any new information from the House Bill 1581 rail study could be included. RAIL Solution organized a successful grassroots effort which modified the resolution, assuring consideration of the results of the rail study to be completed next summer.

The *Roanoke Times* gave RAIL Solution its strongest editorial endorsement yet, in which the *Times* requests VDOT wait until the Rail Feasibility Plan is completed before continuing with the EIS process.

In 2006, RAIL Solution hired their first paid staff person, a half time Executive Director. On May 13, RAIL Solution held a benefit fundraiser with author Barbara Kingsolver giving a reading from her book-in-progress at Hollins University.

### **Community Support**

**Adopt a Soldier** made more than 100 visits to wounded, injured and ill service members returning from the current war. The government has

failed to provide adequate health care for these wounded soldiers, so Adopt a Soldier, with the help of other organizations, has been able to assist young men and women throughout the country with everything from basic toiletries, clothing, computers and software to homes.

They worked with another organization to purchase a bus for use in transporting hospitalized wounded soldiers and veterans to recreational opportunities and to regular outreach services. Adopt a Soldier also provided set up for hospitalized soldiers transitioning to local apartments so they can continue their therapy.

This year the **Gulf Coast Bookmobile Project** raised over \$6,000 to purchase the used Bookmobile from the City of Charlottesville and received books donated by schools, individuals, churches, and the Friends of the Library. These filled the Bookmobile with a respectable, thorough collection of books suitable to serving Gulf Coast children and adults as a mobile library.

The group developed a search process to locate a future home for the Bookmobile in the Gulf Coast region, sending packets to dozens of libraries and community groups. After carefully evaluating the applications, they decided to give the Bookmobile to a grassroots community group, Community Aid and Development, whose members have been working in New Orleans organizing and rebuilding as part of the People's Hurricane Relief Fund.



***Working TOGETHER  
for Social Justice!!***

**COMPASS Day Haven** is getting ever closer to fulfilling our mission statement, which is to provide a low barrier daytime haven, with basic services, for homeless adults in the Charlottesville community.

Perhaps most impressive is the offer of a generous benefactor to purchase a building in downtown Charlottesville to house our operation. Through the efforts of COMPASS board members, the Project Coordinator and local support, they anticipate occupation of the site in 2007.

Their Board of Directors hired a Project Coordinator in April. Since then, volunteer sub-committees have been formed, whose tasks have ranged from grant writing to floor plan drafting. The Board has grown to include members of the police force, the therapeutic community, business advisors, city officials, experienced shelter workers and many other homeless advocates.

Other community gifts have included a \$25,000 grant from the city, a pledge from The Supply Room of on-going batches of consumables and an alliance with the local Raising Cane's restaurant staff, who are poised to offer volunteers, funds and food.

The **African American Teaching Fellows of Charlottesville/Albemarle's** mission is to increase the number of African-American teachers in the Charlottesville and Albemarle County school systems. AATF's most important 2006 accomplishment has been the graduation and placement of the first two Fellows as certified teachers in the local schools. They set the pace for the others who will follow in their footsteps through the AATF program.

The Board of Directors approved its first strategic plan, intended to guide AATF during the next three years, and improved its communication outreach efforts by establishing a website and publishing an updated brochure and newsletters.

The number of Fellows accepted into the program increased by 128 percent from the previous year.

In June, the **Richmond Tenants Organization** sent a number of their board members and tenants

to “Save Our Housing, Save Our Homes,” a statewide low-income housing conference held in Charlottesville (co-sponsored by VOP). RTO submitted official comments on the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority’s annual Agency Plan, focusing on critiquing RRHA’s plans (as outlined in that document) to demolish or dispose of three separate public housing sites. In early August, RTO held a rally at City Hall for public housing tenants to register to vote and to express their concerns about potential public housing redevelopment.

RTO obtained a new, bigger office, which will make it easier to hold community events. The executive board participated in leadership training in Williamsburg.

**Help Winneba Read** continues to raise funds and collect books and computers for a library to be built in Winneba, Ghana. This year’s major accomplishment was the news that the new District Chief Executive (Mayor) of Winneba agreed to head the project coordinating team there. The land has been cleared for the facility and architectural drawings have been completed.

**Westhaven Health Clinic Coalition** continues to address the health and resource disparities prevalent in the low-income Westhaven neighborhood of Charlottesville by providing residents with health assessment and referral services, outreach and wellness programs, individual support/counseling, advocacy, nutritional education, enrichment activities for seniors and youth, and more.

The purpose of the Westhaven Clinic is to reduce barriers and gaps in the standard health delivery system for public housing residents through the innovative application of the Parish Nurse model of care to a community setting.

Accomplishments in 2006 include a continued alliance with the University of Virginia. UVA physicians from the Orthopedic Department provided free sports physicals on Westhaven Community Day. UVA nursing students provided educational programs and outreach activities to Westhaven Residents as part of their Community Health Course as fourth year students. Students from the Global Public Health Society provided

after school activities, a creative dance class, arts and crafts, and a computer class at another public housing site, Crescent Halls. The students also participated in their own day of caring and cleaned an office in the Westhaven Community Center that will be the office space for the Westhaven Tenant Association. Two first year medical students volunteered at the Clinic and their experiences paved the way for the clinic to become a practicum site for the Medical School.

The UVA Cancer Center continues to support the Clinic and in addition to staffing, a vital part of the clinic’s outreach, provides semi-annual Women’s Health Days. This service provides mammograms and pap smears for some women who otherwise would go without these important health screenings in a setting that is accessible and trusted by the community.

The Clinic also engaged its first grassroots fundraising effort with a solicitation letter. It is clear that the Clinic has a supportive donor base and next year the effort will be expanded to include fundraising events and activities.

This year the Clinic was more involved with advocating for families that were homeless or facing eviction. What was usually presented as a non-health issue really had health ramifications for many of the families that were in crisis. The clinic was involved with coordinating services and networking with other community agencies to assure that services were rendered with a spirit of compassion and in a timely manner.

**Westhaven Afterschool Program** serves all of the school age children in the Westhaven Com-



munity of Charlottesville as well as some children in the neighboring community (about 20-30 children). They offer academic and enrichment programs two days a week from 3:30-5:30 p.m. during the school year.

Homework help is provided by volunteers from Westminster Presbyterian Church and others. The children also work with the B.U.C.S., a group of University of Virginia students who volunteer their time with the children in the computer lab, doing homework, projects, and playing games.

The afterschool program provides the children with a nutritious snack, usually donated by community members and volunteers, teaching them about healthy options. The program is also enrolled with Kid's Cafe through the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, where they can obtain healthy snacks and beverages.

The group took the children on local field trips to the library, an apple orchard, museums and the circus!

They rewarded children with good report cards with gift certificates to the movies, local shops and deli's. The children received these awards during a Thanksgiving dinner held for them and their families.

In 2006 the **Foothills Child Advocacy Center** provided direct services, including case management, counseling, family support, and forensic interviews to 102 child victims, and reviewed cases of 385 child victims, to assure continuity of investigation and intervention services.

The Foothills CAC provided over 300 hours of advanced professional skills development in working with child victims for the staffs of police and social services departments.

They conducted five community education forums, reaching over 200 individuals on topics including Cultural Proficiency in Working with Child Victims, Child Victimization Through a Child's Eyes, and Stewards of Children (prevention training for adults charged with protecting children from victimization).

*The Virginia Organizing Project (VOP) is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. As a non-partisan organization, VOP especially encourages the participation of those who have traditionally had little or no voice in our society. By building relationships with diverse individuals and groups throughout the state, VOP strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change.*

#### **Virginia Organizing Project Statement of Beliefs**

- *We believe that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity in all aspects of life, regardless of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability or country of origin.*
- *We believe that every person in the Commonwealth is entitled to a living wage and benefit package that is sufficient to provide the basic necessities of life, including adequate housing, a nutritious diet, proper child care, sound mental and physical health care, and a secure retirement.*
- *We believe that every person is entitled to an equal educational opportunity.*
- *We believe that community, economic, social and environmental policy should be developed with the greatest input from the people it is meant to serve, and that the policies should promote, celebrate and sustain the human and natural resources of Virginia.*
- *We believe in the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, in a progressive tax system based on the ability to pay, and in making the nation's financial systems, including the Federal Reserve Bank, more responsive to the average citizen's needs.*
- *We believe that we should enhance and celebrate diversity in our community and in our state.*
- *We believe that those who have positions of authority in our governmental bodies, law enforcement agencies and institutions of learning should reflect the diversity of our communities.*
- *We believe that our public officials should be held accountable for their actions and decisions.*
- *We believe in the rights of workers, consumers, shareholders and taxpayers to democratic self-organization.*
- *We believe in the elimination of the death penalty in all cases because it is fundamentally inhumane, ineffective as a deterrent to crime, and disproportionately and unjustly applied against people of color and those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.*
- *We believe that physical and mental health are parts of personal and community well-being; we believe that Virginians have a broad public health and economic interest in ensuring that adequate care is available to low- and moderate-income residents.*