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Groups host block party to encourage turnout in low-voter participation neighborhood

"Block Party for Social Change" was the theme for a community event held on October 19. It was hosted by Virginia Organizing and the African American Pastors Alliance and held at the Lake Edward community basketball court.

The Lake Edward Community had the lowest voter participation in the most recent election. The event was designed to encourage civic engagement and voter participation by those directly affected by policy decisions of elected officials.

Virginia Organizing shared information on important issues that affect local people and also provided information on where, how, and what is needed to vote.

The block party was nonpartisan and open to the public. "This was a good opportunity to educate people about lifting their voices at the polls," said Debra Grant, Virginia Organizing State Governing Board member and South Hampton Roads Chapter leader.

Guests and members of organizing groups also enjoyed light refreshments and zumba at the block party.

*Photos by Laura Castro,
Virginia Organizing*



Tuesday, November 5th

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Celebrating National Day of Dignity and Respect in support of immigration reform

On October 5, Virginia Organizing celebrated the National Day of Dignity and Respect to support comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship.

The five events across the state were part of 183 events across the nation to show solidarity among immigrants and allies for citizenship.

In Harrisonburg, more than 150 people journeyed from Simms School to Court Square in honor and memory of those deported and those who died trying to cross the border.

In Richmond, organization leaders attended Congressman Eric Cantor's community event to pass out information on the economic effects of immigration reform with a path to citizenship. Immigrant-owned businesses comprise 17.5 percent of Virginia's businesses and in 2010 generated \$3 billion in tax revenue.

In Fredericksburg, volunteers and chapter leaders went door to door to give people information about immigration reform and what it would mean to their community. They also registered voters.

In Virginia Beach, about 50 people gathered at Holy Family Church for the "Lifting Our Local Voices Storytelling Action." The event, pictured at right, began with a screening of "The Dream is Now" documentary, followed by story sharing.

Families from the Eastern Shore, DREAMers from Norfolk and Virginia Beach, and individuals from the Native American community participated. International journalists Eric Miller and Jo-Anne Smetherham documented their stories.

"This was an opportunity for immigrants in the community to share our stories and put a human face on the need for comprehensive immigration reform," said Ana Ibarra, a South Hampton Roads Chapter leader.

Virginia Organizing will continue to ask Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill with a path to citizenship, through phone calls, legislative visits, and monthly vigils in solidarity with the millions of undocumented immigrants seeking legalization that leads to citizenship and other important protections for the immigrant community.



Photos courtesy
of Virginia
Organizing



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1) Indalecio Arellano shares his story with international photographer Eric Miller and journalist Jo-Ann Smetherham.

2) "The Dream is Now" documentary screening begins the day long story sharing of those experiencing the painful effects of the broken immigration system.

3) Dreamers share their stories with the filmmakers.

4) Sharing hopeful messages during the Solidarity T-shirt Signing Session

5) The youngest story teller!

6) Chippewa tribal member, First Nation Native American, Michael Cloud Butler encourages the group to keep dreaming and working for change.