



“Thank Taxes” Charlottesville Tax Day Event



MoveOn, Virginia Organizing and others came out for a “Tax Day-- Make Them Pay” action in front of Bank of America in Norfolk.



Campus leader Addie Alexander and other William and Mary students were arrested fighting for a living wage.

News From the Grassroots

A Different Take On Tax Day By: Becky Thomas

Making people smile by talking about taxes on Tax Day might sound counterintuitive, but that’s exactly what we did during Virginia Organizing’s Charlottesville Tax Day event. Armed with large boxes of homemade and donated baked goods, we marched through town stopping to deliver baked goods at Parks and Recreation, the police department, the library, social services, the tourism bureau, mass transit and more.

The purpose of the event was to thank people who put our tax dollars to work, to highlight the essential services they provide and to stress the need to balance our state and federal tax system so that everyone pays their fair share. All those we spoke to were grateful, genuinely touched, and pleasantly surprised.

Indeed, in making the arrangements for the visits, we found our purpose so different—and unexpected—that it sometimes took them a moment to grasp it.

At each stop, we also asked recipients about their agencies’ work. At Charlottesville Social Services, Diane Kuknyo described for us the mind-boggling array of federal, state, and local programs her staff administers. Downstairs at the Department of Parks and Recreation, a smiling Michelle Christian told us about upcoming classes as she accepted our gift. Our visit pleased not only the Monday employees at the tourism office across the plaza, but also a couple receiving advice. At the transit office, the employee enthusiastically described the improvements in our public transit system. Lt. Ronnie Roberts stressed the cooperation between the three local police forces

and how much they depend on us, the public, and at the Central Library, director John Halliday greeted us warmly on the front steps and gave us surprising stats on the library’s large readership. All were thankful for our expression of gratitude.

As for us, we felt relief at being able to express a positive and obvious message that is so rarely articulated. It just felt right, and people we told about our plans ahead of time were also relieved that someone was finally saying what they felt. On Tax Day, the warmth and good vibe built from site to site. We were moved by the gratitude of our public servants, by their appreciation at being valued, and by what we learned. We got at least as much as we gave, and we ended the “march” more convinced than ever that our tax dollars work for us in essential ways.



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William and Mary Students Arrested While Fighting for a Living Wage

Five student members of the Living Wage Coalition were arrested in the middle of the night on charges of trespassing after staging a 16-hour sit-in at the College of William and Mary. The students, including Virginia Organizing campus leader Addie Alexander, began sitting-in President Reveley's office on April 20, refusing to leave until the administration implements a living wage. Workers have been speaking out against poverty-level wages for over 10 years, and students have tried numerous legal means to make their voices heard.

Despite letter-writing, rallies, a community forum, over 15 meetings, and overwhelming support for living wages in the community, the administration has taken no steps to increase wages of the lowest-paid workers. Because the administration has failed to take any action toward implementing living wages, students staged a sit-in to show President Reveley that this is an issue he can no longer ignore.

Rep. Ryan's "Roadmap" Would Drive Us Off a Cliff

Virginia Organizing joined a host of other organizations in calling on the

Virginia delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives to oppose Rep. Paul Ryan's (R-WI) highly controversial budget proposal.

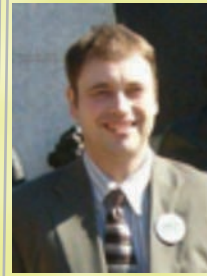
Rep. Paul Ryan's budget proposal contains \$6.2 trillion worth of cuts over the next ten years, radically changes Medicare by raising the eligibility age to 67 and privatizing the program. The Ryan proposal cuts Medicaid by more than 20 percent and would result in a loss of \$10 billion in federal funding over the next ten years for Virginia's already-lean Medicaid program.

While two-thirds of the cuts proposed in the Ryan budget adversely impact the poor and the middle class, the proposal still provides additional tax cuts for corporations and the super wealthy. The proposal would reduce the tax obligations for the wealthiest individuals and companies by \$1.5 trillion.

"There are right ways and wrong ways to reduce the deficit. Rep. Paul Ryan's budget ends Medicare as we know it and will actually make it harder to balance the budget by eliminating the job creation and cost savings under the health care law," said **Sandra Cook, Chairperson of Virginia Organizing**. "Rep. Ryan's 'Road Map for America's Future' would drive us off a cliff."

Leader of the Month:

David Harrison



David Harrison from Ringgold, in Pittsylvania County, first came to a Community Jobs Program campaign meeting last summer and has been an active member since. David is passionate about issues involving economic inequality

and reforming the tax code. Last December, he helped organize a protest outside of Sen. Jim Webb's office on extending unemployment benefits and ending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. He also woke up at 4 a.m. to travel to Richmond during the legislative session to lobby on a variety of issues.

Although, David is active on many issues, he is most concerned about health care and has been an advocate for universal health care. Recently, he helped celebrate the one-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act by helping with a celebratory event at Danville Community College.

David regularly participates in organizing workshops and chapter meetings. He feels that grassroots organizing is a good way to build strength in numbers. "It is easy to ignore one person, but if you get a lot of people together, it is harder to ignore. Once we get a lot of people together we can make our elected leaders more accountable."

He is also working to expand Virginia Organizing's reach in the county, where he has been a long-time community activist. David will be bringing his experience and enthusiasm to the Virginia Organizing Power Analysis weekend on April 30 in Harrisonburg.

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters (call or visit the website for more information)

Charlottesville

Danville

Martinsville

Fredericksburg

Northern Virginia

Newport News/Hampton Roads

South Hampton Roads

Williamsburg

Shenandoah Valley

Washington County & Lee County

Petersburg

Richmond

On Campus: W&M, UMW, VSU,

CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R

News in Brief

- **Shop at Kroger? Help Virginia Organizing for free!** Virginia Organizing gets 5% of all Kroger purchases (including gas) paid for with our Kroger gift cards. All you do is go to the customer service desk and load the card with money. You can use cash, your credit card, or a check. All discounts still apply. If you would like to support grassroots organizing while shopping for groceries and gas, please contact: **Sally at bastian@virginia-organizing.org or 434-984-4655 x 229.**
- **From Charlottesville to Budapest!** Joe Szakos, executive director of Virginia Organizing, did trainings on community organizing for emerging grassroots groups in Hungary last month. In conjunction with the European Community Organizing Network, Joe did workshops for a dozen different organizations that deal with environmental and community development issues.
- Virginia Organizing joined the **Virginia AFL-CIO** and partners at **We Are One Rallies** across the state on April 4, the anniversary of Rev. Martin Luther King's death, to show solidarity with workers and oppose the attacks on the middle class. There were over 35 events across the state and 1,200 nationwide.