



Martinsville's Medicaid Expansion Celebration

Annual Report 2018

Strategy that Works

From **Del McWhorter, Chairperson:**

Virginia Organizing has always worked with real people for real change. Thanks to your generosity and the effectiveness of deep, grassroots work, we succeed.

In 2018 the Virginia General Assembly finally expanded Medicaid. This victory was the culmination of eight years of work by the Healthcare for All Virginians Coalition, of which Virginia Organizing was a vital part. Our leaders demonstrated to their legislators how important this access to health care would be to their lives. Our rallies, TV news interviews, newspaper articles, and face-to-face meetings with legislators showed the urgency of the problem and of the common sense solution that was so readily available. After years of work, we won!

Your help was essential. The resources to bring organizers to directly affected people in our chapters came from you. You made this victory possible....



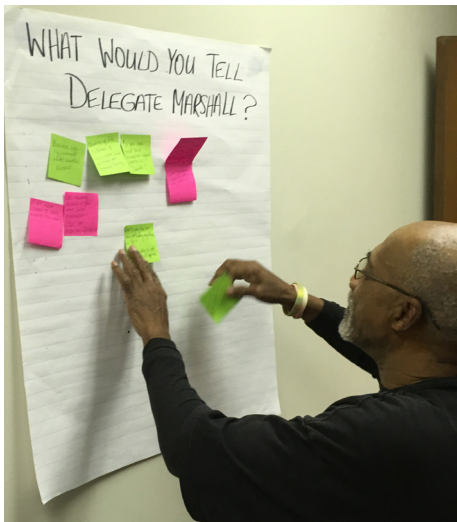
The New River Valley Chapter celebrated Medicaid expansion by canvassing neighborhoods to make sure people who needed health care knew about the program.

Throughout the second half of 2018, we worked to spread the word that low cost, quality health care was going to be available in 2019, holding forums in many cities in partnership with state agencies and local clinics. By January 1, more than 200,000 Virginians had signed up!

...Our other campaigns are also based in grassroots organizing and long term strategy.

Predatory lenders, for instance, have long been oppressing low-income people in Virginia and we have been working to regulate them for more than 20 years. In 2018 Charlottesville leader Valerie Washington wrote an op-ed for the *Roanoke Times* expressing her frustration that decision makers ignore the harm payday and car title lenders do to people who live only one emergency away from disaster.

By the end of the year, our Newport News group (right) visited Delegate David Yancey to thank him for legislation he wrote to cap interest rates for these loan sharks. Throughout the year we held many forums in partnership with the Virginia Poverty Law Center to generate letters about interest rates and help people get themselves out of debt.



Planning a meeting with a legislator at the Danville Predatory Lending Forum



Lawyers with the Virginia Poverty Law Center offered their advice to people trapped in debt at the Predatory Lending Forum in Portsmouth.

...We're deeply committed to **environmental justice** as well.

We support Friends of Buckingham (one of our 40 Joint Plans of Work) in their campaign to stop the Union Hill Compressor Station, an example of environmental racism at its worst.

All of our chapters have been discussing ways that they can do more work on environmental justice issues, from solar power advocacy in Southwest to air pollution in Newport News.



The Staunton/Augusta County/Waynesboro Chapter partnered with Chesapeake Climate Action Network in December to offer "From Pipelines to Progress; Virginia united for jobs, clean energy, and social justice."

...We continue to make progress in our work to disrupt the **school-to-prison pipeline**.

Chapters like Fredericksburg and Portsmouth that have succeeded in getting their school systems to develop policies to keep students in school have worked to make sure these practices are really being implemented.

Chapters in Danville, Lynchburg, New River Valley, Washington County, and the Eastern Shore are meeting with school officials to reduce suspensions and work towards restorative justice in their disciplinary procedures.

In November, leaders from several chapters met in Richmond with Education Secretary Atif Qarni and Deputy Secretary Holly Coy (right). They discussed ways to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline statewide.



In December, Washington County Chapter leaders met with their legislators. They asked them to vote to fund school infrastructure projects. They also spoke about unnecessary and costly work requirements for Medicaid expansion, the need to fight climate change through the Coastal Protection Act, and boosting employment in Southwest Virginia.

The chapter has been very active working on school inclusion issues with decision makers in Southwest. They are seeking genuine inclusion for LGBTQ students, students of color, and students with disabilities.

...Even when the situation looks very bleak, as it does for immigrants in Virginia, we don't give up.

The Harrisonburg Chapter has been passionately engaged in fighting for **immigrant rights** for many years, and they continue to partner with national and area groups to draw attention to these outrages.

Grassroots leaders rallied outside the Verona Juvenile Detention Center where youth had been abused. They joined organizers at a local poultry plant to stand with immigrant workers. They continue to protest ICE's illegal and cruel detentions and to organize against the removal of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Temporary Protected Status, as in the march and rally in November (right).

Several other chapters have held rallies to show solidarity with immigrants as well. We organize for change on the federal, state, and local levels.



The Lynchburg Chapter held a rally to defend recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) when the Trump administration began its attempt to deny them protection.

The Fredericksburg Chapter (right) has worked steadily all year on their **affordable housing** campaign.

They have made presentations to area boards, commissions, and councils, as well as many individual decision makers. Support for a housing trust fund is growing.



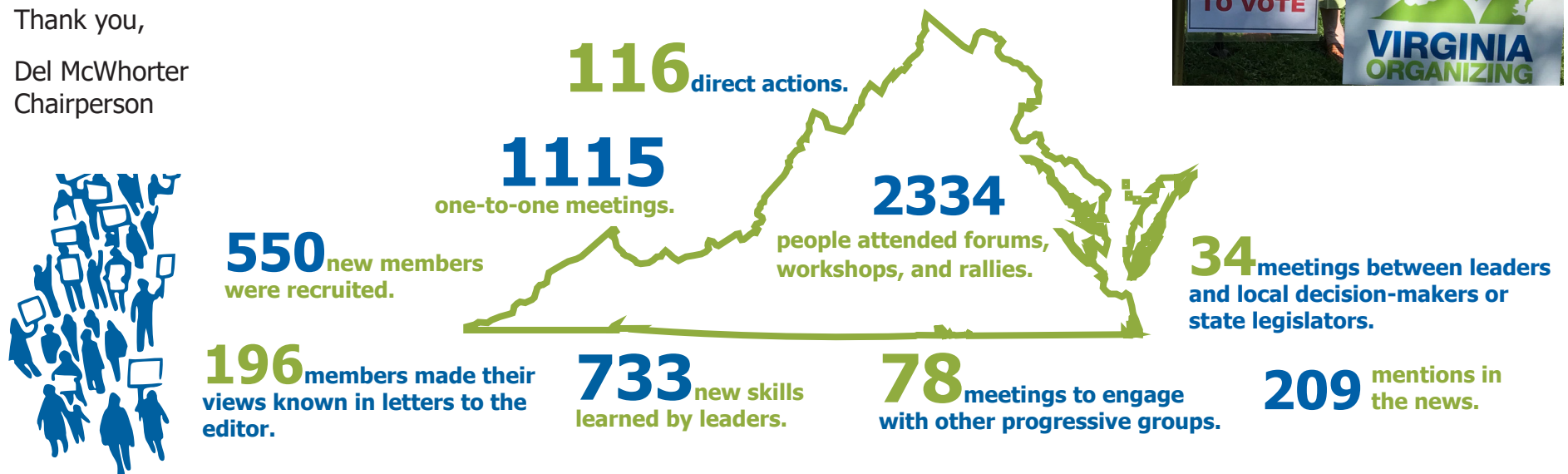
Members in Martinsville, Suffolk, and other areas **registered voters** and helped returning citizens get their rights restored in 2018, but no chapter worked harder at it than Charlottesville (below)! They staffed voter registration tables for many weeks before the election.

This letter hardly begins to describe the work of all of the brave leaders and supporters who make Virginia Organizing the powerful force we are in the Commonwealth.

Please join me in supporting this ongoing struggle for a brighter future for all of us.

Thank you,

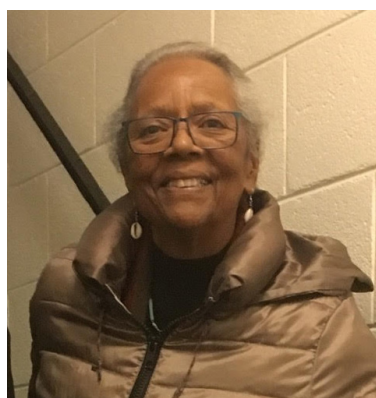
Del McWhorter
Chairperson



Board Members in Action!

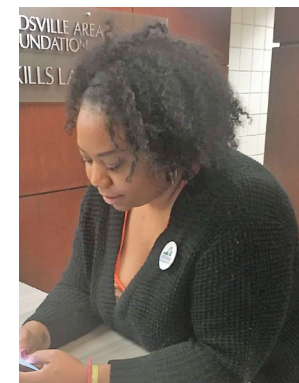


Denise Smith has been a founding board member since 1995.



Jay Johnson has been helping guide the formation of the Newport News Chapter this year.

Sandra Cook (below left) and Debra Grant (below right) helped lead celebrations at the Grassroots Gathering.



Ebony Guy of Danville (above) helped organize the Danville Chapter's predatory lending forum.

Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Staunton/Augusta County/Waynesboro, Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Hampton, Newport News, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Washington County

On Campus: UMW, UVA, E&H, EMU, U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU



Emma Hale (left) and Lily Hungarland (right) spoke at Charlottesville's Medicaid expansion rallies.

Duane Edwards (right) helped develop strategy for the Fredericksburg affordable housing campaign.



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Marty Jackson from Danville (left) and Natasha D'Souza from Harrisonburg (right) both joined the board in 2018.

