



News from the Grassroots

April 2022 Issue 113

It's official! Wythe County is our newest chapter!

On Sunday, April 24, the State Governing Board unanimously accepted the Wythe County petition to become a chapter of Virginia Organizing.

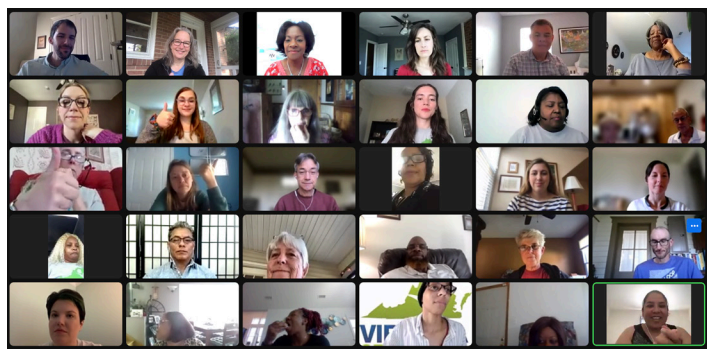
The group has held five meetings as a chapter, met with Senator Tim Kaine and other legislators to lobby for our legislative priorities, and held a health care rally in Wytheville.

This is a passionate, hard-working group of people who have already worked for justice in Southwest Virginia and statewide. Welcome!



Power Analysis

On Saturday, April 23 we held our yearly power analysis. 47 board members, staff, and chapter leaders analyzed wins and losses for our legislative priorities in Virginia and how we can build power to get more done next year. One takeaway was we will stand up against the attack on public education coming from the Governor's administration for the next four years.



Happening all over Virginia!

Chapters are busy working on local campaigns on housing, mental health, criminal justice reform, and education.

The Newport News/Hampton Chapter held a housing resources community event to discuss housing resources on the peninsula and how to deal with difficult housing issues, including getting the repairs needed in a rental and what to do when dealing with eviction or homelessness. (Picture below: chapter leaders speaking to city council on the issue.)

In Pulaski, the New River Valley Chapter held a "Know your Rights" workshop for parents of students with disabilities to learn about Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The workshop was facilitated by Kim Lemburg of Lynchburg.

Lastly, the Tri-Cities area will hold their first interest meeting soon. If you live in Petersburg, Hopewell, or Colonial Heights, contact Erika Holliday, the Tri-Cities organizer, to get involved.



We're hiring a Climate Equity Policy Fellow!

Virginia Organizing is hiring for a three-year fellowship to provide policy support and research for our work to create equitable, just, and transformative climate solutions in Virginia. The Fellow will receive training and mentoring and will develop expertise in equitable climate and clean energy policy and strategy.

We are looking for someone who is interested in working with our directly-affected chapter members from across Virginia to research, strategize, analyze, and draft local and state policy proposals. Our ideal candidate shares our vision of energy and climate policy solutions that are community-centered and equitable.

The ideal candidate will have a balance of organizing principles, research and writing skills, lived experience, and experience developing successful policy solutions.

Fellowship Program Dates: June 13, 2022 to June 16, 2025

Read more on our website: <https://virginia-organizing.org/were-hiring-climate-equity-policy-fellow/>

Featured Community Partner: On the Level

The climate crisis is an “all hands on deck” kind of thing. We are in a historical moment that requires the political will for a massive collective response that will fundamentally change our economic behavior.

For Lucy Hochschartner, co-founder of On the Level, it is a “quit your job, find a good team, and do the work full-time” kind of crisis.

One might say that Lucy had the gig of a lifetime, something that so many dream of but very few have the ability or opportunity to attain: that of a professional athlete.

Barely out of college, Lucy competed at the elite level in biathlon – an endurance sport that combines cross-country skiing and target shooting. Her athletic resume includes representing team USA on the international stage. But on April 19 she walked away, officially announcing her retirement from professional sports so that she can put all of her energy into organizing around climate issues.

A major factor in her decision was the connectedness to the land that she has felt all her life, having grown up on a farm in the Adirondacks, and then spending so much of her life in a sport that depends on snowy winters. She has seen first-hand the ways a changing climate is threatening the landscapes we all rely on for sustenance.

Even as a child Lucy felt a disconnect between what she was learning about the scale of the impending crisis and what she was being told she could do about it. In sum: “We have a massive world-ending problem...but you can turn off the lights!”

“When I was in school it was like, ‘I’ll deal with it later,’ she says. “I was focused on elite athletics and academics, but then my college experience ended with lockdown.” That was in 2020. At that point she woke up and realized that the right things weren’t going to just happen on their own. It was going to take intentional organizing to make the public receptive to the kinds of measures necessary to make an impact on the climate.

Lucy was inspired by the ways the Movement for Black Lives saturated public conversations so that anyone anywhere in the world knew what was happening and could find a way to get involved in their local community. That has often not been the case with climate activism, leading many to feel helpless and hopeless. She and several of her friends launched On the Level in 2021 to combat this sense of isolation by creating a platform that will help get people connected to climate action activities in their communities.

On the Level is essentially a technological tool for building community around climate action. They have developed software that automatically searches and compiles information on every climate action activity in the US, making it accessible to anyone trying to find a way to plug in. They already have the largest known database on climate actions in the US.

While most people come to climate organizing and activism because they care about the issues, it is the relationships found in community that provide the impetus to commit for the long haul. “Teams are what give me energy! I love doing this work with my best friends,” Lucy says. Team On the



Level has cross-country skiing as its common denominator, but its members bring diverse skills: a software engineer, a conservation biologist, a mathematician, a statistician, two field conservationists, and a political organizer (Lucy). Everyone has a part to play.

In addition to the data technology work, they also publish a newsletter and are about to launch a monthly podcast. Lucy says that her mission will be accomplished when each person has found their team and knows the critical contribution they can make for a better future. On the Level’s mission will be complete when people no longer need a website to find their way to the movement.

Take action!

On May 9, Virginia Organizing members will participate in a national “Day without Childcare” to draw attention to the crisis of low pay and poor working conditions childcare providers face. These issues lead to a lack of affordable childcare for families who need it. If you are directly affected by the childcare crisis, we want to hear from you!



It Takes a Village:

Child Care Justice is Racial Justice.

#DayWithoutChildCare

Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond Area, Suffolk, Tri-Cities Area, Washington County, Waynesboro, Wytheville

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