

# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

## News from the Grassroots

January 2023 Issue 122



### Vigils for Housing in Waynesboro and Wythe County

In partnership with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) and local faith communities, the Waynesboro and Wythe County Chapters held vigils and community forums this week to call for better funding for housing in Virginia and new protections for tenants.

Three out of ten households in Virginia pay too much for housing, and the costs for both rent and homeownership have gone up exponentially in recent years. Speakers asked state legislators to allocate critical funding to affordable housing projects like Virginia's Housing Trust Fund, Housing Stability Fund, and Eviction Reduction Program.



The Waynesboro Chapter's vigil was covered by local newspapers and TV before and after. From the WHSV article:

"A.J. Young created the LifeWorks project with his wife to provide practical support for everyday people. Like many others, he knows finding housing can be difficult.

"Some of the apartments in the area that were previously going for \$650, \$700 a month payment are now up to \$1100-1200-a-month payments."

### Wise County's First Meeting

A new chapter is developing in Wise County in Southwest. Eleven members met for their first interest meeting on January 19.

The chapter took action immediately by holding a march for women's reproductive rights on the 50th anniversary of Roe v Wade on January 22.

Leader Scottie Middleton was quoted in the Coalfield Progress before the march, "Abortion is healthcare and that's a message that must be made perfectly clear, especially during these times."



### Chapter Updates

**The Portsmouth Chapter** celebrated another step forward in their mindfulness campaign this month when the Portsmouth Public Schools announced that they would provide mindfulness training in two city elementary schools and hire Coach Jensen Baker to run the program.

**The Richmond Chapter** began to see movement in their campaign for tenant rights in the Forestbrooke Apartments when Amurcon Realty upgraded one of the playgrounds and agreed to meet with tenants to discuss their complaints.

**The Suffolk Chapter** has been working on their campaign to bring the Marcus Alert program to Suffolk. They have surveyed the community, met with their Community Service Board, and plan to bring their findings to the Suffolk City Council soon. They hope the program will help to eradicate violence in the city and make more services available to people with mental health issues.

**The Wythe County Chapter** held a celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunday, January 15. The program included music and an inspiring speech by Rev. Mia Sloan.

## FUND OUR SCHOOLS

Fund Our Schools is a statewide coalition of parents, students, teachers, and organizations calling on lawmakers to fully and fairly fund public schools across the Commonwealth.

### Call to Action for Education!

One of our highest priorities for this year's General Assembly session is to increase school funding, especially for teacher compensation.

Please call or email your legislators and tell them you support HB 1566, which would require Virginia to raise pay for teachers and other staff to at least the national average.



## Join us for CLASS

Community Learning and Strategy Sessions

Once a month, join us to learn and strategize about building power in Virginia! Spanish and ASL interpretation will be provided.

First CLASS: Tuesday, February 7 at 7 p.m. on Zoom

[Read More](#) →

### Join us for CLASS

This year we will be offering workshops once a month on the first Tuesday at 7 p.m. on Zoom. These Community Learning and Strategy Sessions (CLASS) will help us build power and polish our organizing skills.

The first CLASS on February 7 will be "General Assembly 101." Come find out what's happening in Richmond and appreciate (or not) the strange and challenging ways our state legislature does its business.

In March, the topic will be Fundraising. Future topics will be added to the calendar soon. Look for the link to sign up in your inbox or on our website!

"THERE IS ALWAYS  
LIGHT.  
IF ONLY WE'RE  
BRAVE ENOUGH TO  
SEE IT.  
IF ONLY WE'RE  
BRAVE ENOUGH TO  
BE IT."

*Amanda Gorman*

## Resiliency & Self-Care Newsletter, Winter 2023, Issue 14

Leader Ronna Wertman creates a beautiful quarterly newsletter about how activists can take care of themselves while they work to change the world. This issue begins:

"If I am being honest, this winter has been a particular struggle. Resiliency and self-care meant continuing to hold both grief and hope in my mind, body, and heart. It meant wrestling with anger, sadness, and shame while not blocking out kindness and assistance from those who want to give it.

"Three and a half years of curating this newsletter as a beacon for each other as we organize, I still have to remind myself that when the light feels dim, in time, it returns. When hope feels distant, in time, it returns.

"Included in this newsletter are rich conversations from organizers and activists wrestling with these questions: How did we get to this moment? What dreams can we carry forward as we build a world where all can thrive? What does radical care look like and what does it ask of us?

"In the words of author John Green, "There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't." So in that spirit, let's dive in.

"Two recent podcasts from Truthout's Movement Memos hosted by Kelly Hayes unpack these themes:

"In this year-end episode of Movement Memos, Tanuja Jagernauth and host Kelly Hayes discuss the cultivation of hope, how activists can practice reciprocal care, the importance of celebrating big and small victories, and how to process painful feelings without being consumed by them."

Read more in the newsletters section of our website. You can find it under "Learn" on the home page.

## Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg Area, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Newport News/Hampton, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond Area, Suffolk, Washington County, Waynesboro, Wise County, Wythe County

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