

Grassroots Alexandria Monthly Newsletter

April 24, 2017

From the Steering Committee - Jonathan Krall

The steering committee (Zeina Azzam, Sarah Stott, Kate Watters, Jonathan Krall, and Glenn Klaus met on April 12, with all present except Kate, who was on travel. The teams are all operating well, except for the Communication Team, which Jonathan will re-boot. The decision was made to change the format of the monthly meetings to be more informational. They will no longer include a time for team breakout groups. Under this new format, there will be less need for Team Leaders to attend; instead a team representative can report for their group. Plans were made to arrange for a reliable venue for the monthly meetings going forward.

Healthcare Team - Sarah Stott

The Healthcare Team is concerned about possible changes to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid and their impact on Alexandria. On March 21st, we coordinated an event to thank Mayor Silberberg for signing a letter opposing the American Health Care Act. Members of the City's Public Health Advisory Commission (PHAC) and Del Ray Indivisible attended the event, and it was covered by the Gazette Packet.

The team has drafted a City Council resolution in support of the ACA with improvements, Medicare and Medicaid Expansion in Virginia. The resolution also asks PHAC to draft reports explaining public health in Alexandria and the breakdown of types of our residents' insurances or lack of insurance. We took the resolution to PHAC and The Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria for their input and are now integrating their comments into a revised version.

Sarah Stott met twice in April with health care activists from other Northern Virginia jurisdictions. They hope to form a statewide group that mobilizes to save the federal laws we have in place and to work together on Medicaid expansion in Virginia.

Upcoming: *Some members of our team have also expressed interest in lobbying for single-payer national health insurance.*

Vulnerable Communities Team - Zeina Azzam

Members of the Vulnerable Communities Team are involved in several initiatives:

- (1) Hate-Free Virginia: project volunteers are meeting with business owners in the Del Ray area to recruit them to agree to the principles of Hate-Free Virginia and display signs in their establishments; the community event to announce and honor these businesses is 4/25/2017;
- (2) Volunteers for rapid response to ICE agents' arrests attended a training;
- (3) Team members attended an informational meeting about efforts to get the Alexandria police department to provide data on stops, arrests, and detentions; the coalition to advocate for police data transparency is led by NAACP and Tenants and Workers United. It includes other community organizations such as Grassroots Alexandria, churches, school organizations, etc.; the team sent out an action alert on this issue;

(4) the team acquired the ACLU's *Know Your Rights* fliers in multiple languages and is identifying appropriate community locations to distribute them;
(5) members of the team are attending and participating in the monthly Human Rights Commission meetings.

Upcoming: *Hate-Free Virginia Community Walk in Del Ray is Tuesday, April 25th from 6:00 – 7:30. Also the team is reaching out to NAACP and local Muslim organizations to explore ways to support them and collaborate on projects*

Anti-Fascist Team - Glenn Klaus

The anti-fascist team has continued to hold rallies on every 2nd and 4th Sunday at the intersection of King and Patrick Streets. This past Sunday we had new flyers and a clipboard to add new contacts to our mailing list. We also added a letter writing component to last week's event where we wrote letters to the editors about Richard Spencer and what we are doing about him.

Upcoming: *This Thursday we will be meeting to discuss a long-term strategy for dealing with Spencer's presence. All are welcome to attend on Thursday, April 27 at 6:30 at Christ Church.*

LGBTQ Team - Danny Clark

The LGBTQ team held its second meeting this month. We discussed various events that are going to happen over the next few months. The LGBTQ team is helping PFLAG Alexandria and other local groups host a screening of "Gender Revolution," a documentary by National Geographic featuring Katie Couric. The screening will take place on May 13th and we will be reaching out to our networks to attract attendance to this screening. We will also be present at Trans Pride on May 20th.

Upcoming: *We plan to continue to reach out to local organizations and elected officials to better understand how we can support transgender students in Alexandria.*

Environmental Stewardship Team - Kate Watters

The Environmental Stewardship team met with Vice Mayor Justin Wilson to learn about the key environmental issues in the city from his perspective. These include the sewage issue, green building updates for the city, and livability issues. We held a meeting in late March during which we discussed this meeting and our next steps. Members are reaching out to other city officials to learn from them as well.

Upcoming: *We are planning to march in the Climate Change March on the 29th of April.*

Communications Team - Jonathan Krall

This team is being restructured under Jonathan. Volunteers are needed for a variety of projects including taking on:

1. Newsletter – Janet Murphy has volunteered to be editor of this product.

Upcoming:

2. *Our Twitter account*

3. *Good News Project. We need reporters/editors: it would be great to gather brief "good news" reports from the teams.*
4. *Web page: We need to build a relatively simple web page.*
5. *Real News Project: We need a news curator. We will seek out relevant news from reliable sources. These can be posted to Facebook or twitter.*

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