

Grassroots Alexandria

May Newsletter

Steering Committee – Jonathan Krall

At last month's general meeting, Evelin Urrutia of Tenants and Workers United (TWU) spoke about the work they do and the work they are doing together with Grassroots Alexandria. Evelin talked about community responses to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the need to reform policing in Alexandria. In other news, the steering committee approved a letter from the Grassroots Alexandria Team Leaders to the City Council, expressing support for a police data transparency ordinance. We are supporting TWU and NAACP Alexandria in this effort.

Upcoming: Because the meeting format worked well, we will repeat it in May. School Board Member Chris Lewis will address our group on May 24. In response to feedback, we are seeking a more accessible meeting space. Please stay tuned.

Healthcare Team – Sarah Stott

The Healthcare Team is concerned about the healthcare of all Virginians and Alexandrians in particular. The team drafted a resolution for the Alexandria City Council in support of the ACA with improvements, Medicare and Medicaid Expansion in Virginia. We took the resolution to the City's Public Health Advisory Commission (PHAC). PHAC supports the resolution and added a section requesting that PHAC develop an outreach program to explain to Alexandria residents how the health care system works in our City. We are working with a new PHAC working group on final edits to the resolution.

Our team is also part of the Northern Virginia Healthcare Coalition, which includes representatives from 10 activist organizations. This group is focusing on getting expanded Medicaid to Virginia. The group wants to educate residents throughout the Commonwealth so that they in turn will convince their delegates to vote for Medicaid expansion.

Upcoming: With our encouragement, hopefully the City Council will vote on our resolution in the summer and PHAC will host a health care rally in the Fall. We will work with the Northern Virginia Healthcare Coalition to put on healthcare rallies in other parts of the State.

Vulnerable Communities Team – Zeina Azzam

The Vulnerable Communities Team has been involved in the police data transparency initiative led by Tenants and Workers United (TWU) and NAACP-Alexandria. The goal is to get Alexandria police to collect and provide demographic data (such as race, ethnicity, and other "minority" indicators) on the people they stop and arrest so the community can discern whether particular (and vulnerable) groups are being stopped and arrested more than others. This would make the police department more accountable to Alexandria citizens. Three individuals from our team testified at an Alexandria City Council hearing about this subject on May 13th, after which the two lead organizations asked us to join their steering committee. There was a large turnout at this meeting. Team members have also written letters to the City Council, and attended the Human Rights Commission meeting. *See picture.*

Some members received training for rapid response to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in the immigrant communities in Alexandria. (Trainees would show up at these arrests, observe, video-record and serve as a source of comfort to the families, but not intervene.)

Upcoming: We are in conversation with TWU about how to support them in future championing of restorative justice programs in ACPS middle schools, where suspensions of many minority students are far too high. Also we will announce future training dates for those interested in being involved in supporting families during ICE raids/arrests.

Also, upcoming local events that may be of interest to Grassroots members:

6/2: Moms Demand Action, [NoVA Wear Orange Rally](#) (end gun violence)
6/4: Interfaith Communities for Dialogue, [“Refugee Resettlement: Putting a Human Face on Refugees in Our Midst”](#)
6/15: Agudas Achim Social Action Committee, [“The Return”](#) (film) 6/24: Alfred Street Baptist Church, [“Make a Covenant: A Convening on Community Policing”](#)



LGBTQ Team – Megan Chaplin

This month we had our movie screening of Gender Revolution, in partnership with PFLAG, FCPS Pride, and TGEA. Despite bad weather, it was a huge success, with around 70 attendees and a great panel discussion of activists following the film. As a team, we are preparing for the summer rush of different Pride festivals and parades. This month we also met with ACPS Superintendent Crawley and learned where ACPS currently stands in regards to transgender students' rights, anti-bullying measures, and staff diversity trainings. At our last monthly team meeting, we designed stickers with that support trans students and include the Grassroots Alexandria's Facebook page link to hand out at the various festivals, which we'll be attending as a team.

Upcoming: We would love for other Grassroots members to join us. Since there isn't much direct action to take on supporting trans students while school is out and the superintendent is in flux, we are looking for opportunities to enlist more student members during the summer months.

Communications Team – Jonathan Krall

We presently have two excellent volunteers. Janet Murphy produces this monthly newsletter. Barbara Wilmer is answering our email and managing our email lists. Team leaders should be hearing from Barbara, who wants to make sure active volunteers find it easy to get involved on the team of their choice.

Upcoming: To bring in new volunteers, we are considering holding outreach events, such as meet-and-greets. Getting a working web site remains a challenge. We have an sample Wordpress site, but need a volunteer to get it in good shape.

Environmental Team – Kate Watters

Due to travel schedules of team members, there was no meeting this month.

Upcoming: We expect to get back on track this coming month with meetings planned with city officials and other outreach possibilities.