

# Grassroots Alexandria June 2017 Newsletter

*Editor: Janet Murphy – June 27, 2017*

## **Steering Committee – Jonathan Krall**

We met this month to share ideas for the monthly meeting and to review procedures for posting to our website site and our Instagram feed. Our Facebook group, email lists, web site, and Instagram are tools the team leaders use to find volunteers and to inform the public. We also shared ideas for team management, delegating tasks, and looking for opportunities to give team members advocacy experience. We feel like we are working effectively, but are open to feedback.

*Upcoming: To make sure we have space for our monthly meeting, we now have a volunteer meeting planner position, which is part of the Communications Team. Glenn Klaus is doing this job for now, **but we are seeking a volunteer to take on this job.***

## **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 and Medicaid Expansion in Virginia and in opposition to the proposed AHCA. It also identifies the City's Public Health Advisory Commission (PHAC) for being responsible for outreach to the residents regarding the impacts of federal and state legislation on their healthcare. Team members met with City Dept of Health staff to confirm the number of residents with each type, or lack of, health insurance coverage. Sarah and Katya Wanzer (PHAC chair) met with Mayor Silberberg and received positive feedback on the resolution. Team members also met with Senator George Barker about State healthcare policy. Sarah also met with the local ACA "navigator" who trains residents on purchasing insurance through the ACA.

Our team is also part of the Northern Virginia Healthcare Coalition, which includes representatives from 8 activist organizations. We are hosting a healthcare forum in Loudoun County in September to present "What's Going on in Healthcare." It will focus on presenting information to those that are uninsured and underinsured.

*Upcoming: With our encouragement, hopefully the City Council will vote on our resolution in September. We will continue to demonstrate against any federal legislation that will result in Alexandria residents being less able to afford and attain quality health care. A health care rally in Loudoun is scheduled in September.*

*Also this group has arranged for the timely speaker at our June meeting of Grassroots Alexandria, Dave Wallace, Director of United Way's Health Policy.*

## **Vulnerable Communities Team – Zeina Azzam**

The police data transparency initiative is still high on our agenda. We were invited to serve on the steering committee that is organizing around this issue with Tenants and Workers United, NAACP-Alexandria, and representatives of other organizations; we attended a meeting of this committee and wrote a letter about the issue to the Alexandria City Council urging them to adopt an ordinance for police data collection and transparency. One of our team members met—as part of a group of activists—City Council member Tim Lovain to discuss this issue and prepared a handout for the meeting. The VC team also published op-eds in local papers about police data transparency and about resisting white supremacy in Alexandria, in the wake of the racist fliers that were found in Del Ray over Memorial Day weekend. Several team members attended the monthly Alexandria Human Rights Commission meeting. Some will be attending the Alfred Street Baptist Church community policing program on Saturday, June 24. On the same day, a number of

team members will join the monthly Alexandria City Council Public Hearing, which will be addressing—again—the police data transparency issue and proposed ordinance. Information about community and interfaith iftars (Ramadan meals to break the daily fast) was gathered and sent to all team members.

At the June 26<sup>th</sup> team meeting, Jonathan reported on the Alexandria City Council Meeting which 6 G.A. members attended. He also reported on a Community Forum on Policing at the Alfred St. Baptist Church. Sharon reported on her contact with Mia Taylor of TWU; they will be scheduling future ICE-response trainings. She also discussed other groups that she's made contact with who have similar goals to ours, such as NOVA Friends of Refugees. Zeina had attended a jointly sponsored showing of "The Return", a documentary about the incredible difficulties of inmates once they've been released and are trying to reenter society.

*Upcoming: It was decided that we would each bring 3 or more names of other organizations with similar goals to our next meeting to consider plans to reach out to them. Also, we agreed to scan local news media for relevant articles to share with our team; a) to educate ourselves on the topics and b) to consider writing op-eds to raise awareness among the public. Our next team meeting will be Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>.*

### **LGBTQ Team – Danny**

This month we attended DC Pride events downtown. We marched in the March for Unity and Equality which had over 250,000 participants. We also watched the Pride Parade and tabled at Pride's festival to assist FCPS Pride. We researched and found model policies for implementing non-discrimination rules in education. Finally, we contacted Alexandria's School Board to let them know our interest in providing input to the superintendent selection.

*Upcoming: With assistance from two new members, our team is launching a new project to encourage local businesses to change their gendered single-use restrooms to gender neutral restrooms. First, we are creating a list of local businesses with gendered bathrooms. Then, we plan to follow up with those businesses through small group visits and letters encouraging the businesses to make their facilities more inclusive. We're excited to have one of our new members, Lisa Friday, as the featured speaker for the next all-team Grassroots Alexandria meeting on July 26th to talk more about this project and her experience as a trans woman in Alexandria.*

### **Communications Team – Jonathan Krall**

Since the last team meeting we've improved the web site, improved the flow of people onto our announcement email list, gotten started with Instagram, and added a job to our workload: that of meeting planner. The Meeting Planner reserves meeting space for the monthly meeting.

We also now have approved procedures that Team Leaders can use to put out Instagram and blog postings. I've drafted a Team Handbook to keep track of all this.

We are advertising for volunteers. Following are jobs we'd like to fill. Please let me know within the next two weeks if you are interested in them. After that, we'll advertise the positions on our email lists and Facebook.

1) **Web guru.** We have a Wordpress web site. We'd like someone to maintain this site and add some functionality. The main change to the site that we are contemplating is the addition of an "archive" page where we put public documents, such as general meeting minutes and our monthly newsletter. Other minor improvements might also be considered, but we are aiming to keep things simple.

2) **Meeting planner.** We need a point person to make sure we have a meeting space on the 4th Wednesday of each month for our general meeting. If that same person helped the steering committee keep track of who is on the schedule to speak at each meeting (we usually have one speaker at each

meeting), that would be helpful.

3) **Reporter.** We need an individual who would like to visit some of the various team meetings and events, with the aim of writing one informative blog posting per month about a team, event, or issue.

### **Environmental Team – Kate Watters**

Members of the environmental stewardship team attended the Climate Change movie showing, "The Anthropologist," at Lee Center on June 22nd in order to learn more about the impact of climate change, and also to meet with the Alexandria [350.org](http://350.org) folks. We also have been in contact with the environmental services offices of Alexandria City and learned that in July a new sustainability coordinator will be joining the city staff. We asked if this new person, or perhaps the mayor, would be willing to speak to GA in the fall about what the city's new Climate Change Commitment actually means in reality for citizens.

*Upcoming: We will keep you posted as we get a date confirmed. We are also planning a meeting with environmental policy commission members. Anyone interested in joining, please let us know.*

### **Anti-Fascist Team – Glenn Klaus**

The Anti-Fascist team continues to rally for inclusion and diversity every 2nd and 4th Sunday at King and Patrick Streets. Rallies are well attended, attracting about 40 people each time. We have been getting a lot of interest from pedestrians recently. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, Glenn and three members of the team met with Rep. Beyer's legislative assistant and voiced our concern about Spencer's presence in Alexandria. They also mentioned a very preliminary idea about organizing a March for Tolerance which the aide showed interest in.

*Upcoming: The team also continues the long term work of reaching out to other communities to expand our voice.*

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