

## **Grassroots Alexandria July 2017 Newsletter**

*Janet Murphy – July 28, 2017*

### **Steering Committee Meeting – by Jonathan Krall**

At the July 12 steering committee meeting, we discussed supporting each other going forward. We want to keep things moving forward, but at a more realistic pace.

We discussed the updated web site and how to deal with the media. On the Anti-Fascist team we've had success in getting messages out, but have some concerns about backlash. That has been minimal, but we do need to choose our spokespeople carefully and make sure they have support.

We discussed the status of various teams – all are active. We do need new leadership for the Anti-Fascist Team. People who have been working on the protests are supportive of moving forward with that team. The problem is that Jonathan is now Communications Team Leader and interim Anti-Fascist Team Leader and we need new leadership for one of these teams. This could be a single leader or a pair of co-leaders.

*Upcoming: At upcoming Communications and Steering Committee Meetings, we want to take everyone through the workings of the web site. It's very user friendly and team leaders should have the freedom to update team pages.*

### **Healthcare Team – by Sarah Stott**

The Healthcare Team is concerned about possible changes to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid and their impact on Alexandria and the rest of the Commonwealth. The team drafted a resolution for the Alexandria City Council in support of the ACA with improvements, Medicare and Medicaid Expansion in Virginia. The City's Public Health Advisory Commission (PHAC) has discussed the resolution twice, and at their July meeting made edits that will be voted on at their August meeting. PHAC plans to present it to the City Council for adoption at the Council's September meeting. We will try to get the media outlets to cover the event. If the resolution passes the City Council, we plan to distribute this resolution nationally so other communities can use it as a model.

Our team is also part of the Northern Virginia Healthcare Coalition, which includes representatives from 10 activist organizations. This group is focused 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. The Coalition will be putting on a Healthcare Forum in Vienna on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

*Upcoming: Next Northern Virginia Healthcare Coalition rally planning meeting Aug 9. Alexandria PHAC meeting Aug 17 to vote on resolution.*

## **Vulnerable Communities** – by Zeina Azzam

The Vulnerable Communities team continues to hold monthly team meetings. Members are involved in the following projects: learning about and supporting a school initiative to adopt a restorative justice program in Alexandria City Public Schools; participating in ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) rapid response training for Grassroots Alexandria members, and others, to support immigrants who are detained; exploring a lengthy academic document on mass incarceration and writing a summary of it to hand out during discussions with City Council members (and others) about police arrests and stops; monitoring local Alexandria papers on issues relevant to vulnerable communities in order to stay abreast of developments and hold media and public officials accountable/provide our opinions; researching organizations in Alexandria with which the team could work on collaborative projects; and continuing work on the police data transparency initiative with Tenants and Workers United, NAACP-Alexandria, and other interested parties.

*Upcoming: We've determined a permanent monthly meeting date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. Next month's meeting, then is **August 21**.*

## **LGBTQ Team** – by Danny Clark

This month the LGBTQ Team began the OUR Restroom project[1]. The goal is to get local businesses to convert their single-user bathrooms to be gender-neutral so everyone is comfortable using the restroom. We canvassed businesses in Shirlington to find which have designated Men's and Women's single-user restrooms. In the coming weeks we will return to these businesses with a formal letter to ask them to change their signage to be gender neutral. We also contacted the school board about the upcoming selection of the new superintendent. In addition, we are continuing to research and develop model policies and regulations for the school system's non-discrimination policy.

[1] <https://ourrestroom.com/>

## **Environmental Stewardship Team** - Kate Watters

News from the Environmental Stewardship team is that we applied to be the grassroots environmental activist member of the city's ad hoc sewage committee, which will begin meeting in September. We should know in August if we were selected.

## **Anti Fascist Team** - by Jonathan Krall

The Anti Fascist Team is going through re-organization. The point of the protests is to educate the public, so we get attention, hand out fliers, and talk to the media. We have a volunteer to create fliers and do advertising and a volunteer to handle media inquiries, but we need leadership to keep this work sustainable.

After 6 months of hard work, Glenn Klaus is taking a break from leading the Anti Fascist Team and the protest series. We first reacted by suspending the protests, but our volunteers weren't having it. We thank Glenn for his dedication and look forward to our next opportunity to work

with him. We thank our supporters for their dedication as well. The photo shows the canceled protest.



*Volunteer opportunities: We are seeking leaders or co-leaders. to keep our twice-monthly protests on track.*

**Communications Team** - by Jonathan Krall

The Communications Team is in good shape. The web page leads new volunteers to our announcements Google group (email list). The blog (on the web page), Instagram, and this newsletter are informing the public about our work. The Facebook group remains lively. Anyone can post to the Facebook group, and they do. We have volunteers who manage the Google groups, web page, Instagram, newsletter and blog.

*Volunteer opportunity: We have an opening for new leadership (a team leader or co-leaders) to keep things on track.*

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