

May 2016



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY
Earthbound: 1716 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23223
Virtual: www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org

Another way to help us...

As part of increased efforts of the Virginia Interfaith Center and its healthcare advocacy program — Virginia Consumer Voices for Healthcare — to get Virginia to accept the \$4.4 million daily of federal Medicaid funding to close its health insurance coverage gap, one of the important ways you can assist is by getting your local government and/or organization to endorse a resolution supporting the provision of coverage for Virginia's working poor and their families. These will be delivered to state legislators to show the support statewide for this important economic and humanitarian initiative.

If you would like to help with this, contact VCV Director Karen Cameron at Karen@vaconsumervoices.org 804-658-3956 (office) or 804-514-8692 (cell). VCV can give you sample resolution language and answer any questions you may have.

As always, thanks for making a difference in the lives of our families, friends and neighbors.

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VCV's Cassandra Shaw leads a panel discussion on #HealthcareMatters at a recent NAACP event held in Richmond.



VCV team busy participating in legislative town hall events

The Virginia Consumer Voices for Healthcare staff has busy in the past few weeks attending community events and town halls, listening to fellow citizens and activists talk about healthcare access in Virginia, and hearing some Virginia legislators talk about why they oppose expanding coverage in the Commonwealth by taking the federal dollars allocated under the Affordable Care Act to pay for expansion. Sen. Amanda Chase (R-VA11) thinks that a concierge-medicine approach is preferable to coverage expansion under the Affordable Coverage Act (ACA) — VCV has a video up on our YouTube channel of some of the conversation on coverage and healthcare access at that Town hall. VCV was also invited to participate in an NAACP Richmond event, #HealthcareMatters. The panel

discussion was moderated by our Community Outreach Coordinator Cassandra Shaw (above), with the Rev. Marlon Haskell of Chicago Avenue Baptist Church, NAACP Richmond Health Committee Chair Marilyn Campbell, motivational speaker and MSW clinical social worker Germika Pegram, and community activist Christopher Green joining Karen Cameron on the panel. The panel, and attendees, were in agreement that community action was the only way to shift thinking in the General Assembly on the importance of closing the coverage gap to improve the lives, and the economy, of Virginia via access to quality, affordable healthcare for all Virginians. VCV will be sharing a community outreach and organizing activities via email to supporters, and need

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Out and about

VICPP staff also participating in community events

The Center was invited to participate in a poverty summit in Norfolk on May 3 (top right).

VICPP organized and led a panel on engaging interfaith voices in poverty issues. VICPP was represented by Executive Director Kim Bobo and some leading Hampton Roads religious figures, including Rabbi Jeffrey Arnowitz of Congregation Beth El, Imam Rachid Khold from the Crescent Center, Frank McKinney, a Roman Catholic social justice activist and Board Chair of the Virginia Interfaith Center, and Dr. Keith Jones, Pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church.

The summit was sponsored by the

Center for American Progress and the Virginia Civic Engagement Table. The First Lady of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Dorothy McAuliffe was the keynote speaker at the



McAuliffe

morning session.

Topics included solutions for issues such as wage theft, environmental justice and raising the minimum wage, and advocacy strategies such as social media, storytelling and working with the media.



Three Virginia Interfaith Center board members signed on to a letter endorsing an appeal from the Williamsburg NAACP to the Williamsburg-James City County School Board requesting a name change for Rawls Byrd Elementary School. The school is named for a former school board superintendent who was also an avowed segregationist who commonly made comments demeaning to black people. Byrd also threatened the jobs of whites who supported desegregation. Signing the letter were VICPP Board members the Rev. Charles Swadley, Dr.



John Whitley and the Rev. Anthony Fludd.



Rev. Swadley spoke briefly during the reception following the Interfaith Voices Against Violence service on April 8 at Asbury United Methodist Church in Christiansburg (photo above).

Service speakers included Dr. Rebecca Scheckler of the Blacksburg Jewish Community Center, the Rev. Robert Berghuis of Asbury UMC, the Rev. Dara Olandt of the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Blacksburg, Dr. Hesham Rakha of the Islamic Society of the New River Valley, and the Rev. Catherine Taylor of Blacksburg Presbyterian Church. The Unitarian Universalist choir also sang.

Just under 100 people attended the multi-faith event for the New River Valley, sponsored by the Virginia Interfaith Center. The service remembered victims of the shootings at Virginia Tech, the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Church in Knoxville, Sandy Hook Elementary school, Emanuel African Episcopal Church in Charleston, the shootings of Muslim students in Chapel Hill, N.C., along with the



violence inherent in deportations of immigrants, and ongoing systemic violence against black men and women across the U.S.



On May 5, the National Day of Action, VICPP Board member Dr. John Whitley joined several members of the Communications Workers of America (pictured above), who are currently on strike against Verizon, walking the picket line in Williamsburg.

TOWN HALLS, continued from Page 1

you to participate by spreading the word, attending events, and raising your voice in support of healthcare access and coverage expansion in the Commonwealth. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Volunteer Coordinator Demetria Garden (demetria@vaconsumervoices.org) — if we work together, we can make great things happen.



Upcoming Town Halls

Below is the current list of Town Halls and Public Forums being held by and with legislators across Virginia. This is part of an effort to encourage community support for expanding access to quality, affordable healthcare to all Virginians, and to ensure that support is heard and seen by Virginia's legislators. If you plan to attend a Town Hall, contact karen@vaconsumervoices.org for some talking points. Let's raise our voices as one on this issue!

Sen. Rosalyn Dance, Sen. Glen Sturtevant, Del. Riley Ingram (Chesterfield County) — May 17, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Chesterfield Council on Aging Public Forum, LaPrade Library, 9000 Hull St. Rd., North Chesterfield VA



Top: Demetria takes information. Bottom: Cassandra with Richmond City Council member Parker Agelasto.

May 25: Virginia State Corporation Commission Public Hearing on the Anthem-Cigna Merger

There will be a public hearing on Wednesday, May 25, at 10 a.m. in the Virginia State Corporation Commission's second floor courtroom, located in the Tyler Building at 1300 E. Main St. in downtown Richmond.

Anyone wishing to comment at the hearing should arrive early and sign in with the SCC bailiff. Written comments on the proposal must be submitted by May 11. All correspondence should be sent to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118, and refer to case number INS-2015-00154. Persons desiring to submit comments electronically may do so at the SCC's website: www.scc.virginia.gov/case.

[Click on the PUBLIC COMMENTS/NOTICES link and then the SUBMIT COMMENTS button for case number INS-2015-00154.]

VCV has been working with several other organizations to request this opportunity for public input and transparency relative to the impact of these and other national health insurance mergers on consumer's access to affordable, available healthcare coverage. Contact Karen at: karen@vaconsumervoices.org if you have a personal story relative to being insured and having difficulty accessing or affording needed services.

VCV at Metro Richmond Senior Day



Mapping out strategy for the rest of 2016

The staff of VICPP and VCV has been meeting to plan out its strategy for the remainder of the year leading to the next General Assembly session in January. The overarching goal is to get Virginia to expand Medicaid to address the coverage gap for 400,000 Virginians by drawing down federal dollars.

To help reach that end, the goals include to:

- Become a knowledgeable resource and leader on consumer health insurance and healthcare provider issues, particularly as they relate to access.
- Monitor changes in Virginia's health insurance market, such as rate reviews, insurer consolidation/availability and network adequacy.
- Monitor Certificate of Public Need and other healthcare provider issues

that impact the availability and cost of health care in Virginia.

- Develop relationships with the Office of Health & Human Services, Department of Health, Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Insurance and other regulatory entities to increase awareness of and our effectiveness relative to consumer health issues.
- Ensure that constituents are kept informed about critical consumer health issues and facilitate action appropriate to maintaining healthcare access for all Virginians.
- Actively participate in hearings and other opportunities to provide a consumer focus on healthcare access related issues.

Other goals — raising funds to support the effort and expanding our database of supporters, are especially important. VICPP and VCV will ask cities

and counties, hospitals and other organizations across the Commonwealth to pass resolutions supporting the growing need to cover those residents who fall within the coverage gap (see story, page 1).

We will also compile a resource on what faith groups say about Medicaid Expansion (see story, page 5), continue to urge clergy to sign onto the religious officials letter, and ask members to tell their stories to Virginia's lawmakers. Staff will create congregational resources and materials that people can download and use.

We plan to make our chapters stronger and recruit 1,000 volunteers, especially in several "swing" legislative districts.

We will also implement a modest civic engagement project that can support the campaign and set us up for future civic engagement work.

Twitter feed gets first celebrity follower!



Diggs

If you're not on Twitter you might not understand. Twitter is a micro-blog which gives you 140 characters to present your message. You create a profile to get started and you "follow" others to see what they post. And then others follow you to be exposed to the whatever you post.

Diggs grew up in Rochester, N.Y., but does have a Virginia connection: he began his career as a performer at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg. After that he worked at Tokyo Disneyland before going to New York to try his luck as a serious actor and getting his big break: being cast as Benny the landlord in the Tony Award-winning stage production of the musical "Rent." (He repeated that role in the 2005 movie version.) He was cast in the role of Winston Shakespeare in "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" (1998), and was part of the ensemble cast of "The Best Man," and "The Best Man Holiday." (He's currently filming another sequel, "The Best Man Wedding.") On television he's been in the cast of "Grey's Anatomy," "The Good Wife," "Will & Grace," "Ally McBeal" and "The West Wing." Most recently he was back on Broadway in "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

His met wife, Idina Menzel (a fellow actor and the "Let it Go" singer), while both actors were performing in "Rent."

Now you can add "successful children's author" to his resume. Diggs has written two books for kids, "Chocolate Me!" (2009) and "Mixed Me!" (2015).

You might wonder, who else follows VICPP on Twitter? We currently have more than 1,600 followers on the social media site, and there are some familiar names. As you can imagine, a lot of them are political. The "official" General Assembly profile follows us, as do about 20 legislators. U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, as are members of Congress Bobby Scott, Rob Whitman and Randy Forbes. Former governors Bob McDonnell and George Allen are on the list, as is former Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling and former AG and losing gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli. Current Attorney General Mark Herring, is a follower, as is former McAuliffe aide and current Richmond mayoral candidate Levar Stoney. The media is also well represented, including Dan Burke of CNN, Rachel Zoll, Larry O'Dell and Steve Szkotak of the Associated Press, Laurie Goodstein of The New York Times, Heidi Thompson, CEO of Religion News Service, Barton Hinkle, Jeff Shapiro and Michael Paul Williams of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, and Craig Carper of the local public radio station, WCVE. There are some organizations that you would think would be interested in our work, such as the United Church of Christ, the Sisters of Mercy, Virginia United Methodists and the World Council of Churches. Among Richmond-area businesses, Diversity Thrift, Lamp-lighter Coffee and the Boka food truck keep pace with VICPP on Twitter. there are some head-scratchers as well, including the D.C.-area Ikea Furniture Assemblers group.

Join the 'God Squad' at the Capitol in 2017

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is recruiting volunteers who will serve as faithful advocates/lobbyists for VICPP during the 2017 legislative session, which will run from Jan. 11 to Feb. 28. These advocates will be the hands-on lobbyists for VICPP's priority issues.

First, you will be trained by several of the best social justice lobbyists in the state. Next, you will be thoroughly briefed on VICPP's priority issues. Then, you will represent VICPP by:

- Attending and reporting on hearings, markups and legislative events.
- Meeting with legislators and their staff members.
- Communicating the legislators' position to the VICPP members in the districts.

- Drafting background pieces and alerts for engaging the membership in the issues.

Volunteers should be active in the faith community and comfortable talking about the faith dimensions of the issues. Retired clergy, deacons, and lay leaders are being sought. The work is in Richmond, at the historic State Capitol.

If you do not live in Richmond, you should be prepared to be in Richmond at least four days a week during the 45 day legislative session. Free housing will be provided in homes of VICPP supporters for those from out of town.

If you are interested in this intense, short-term volunteer opportunity at the General Assembly, contact Kim at Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.

Volunteer is working on project

Hilary Piland is currently volunteering at the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy office one day a week. She is compiling the statements relating to healthcare of all the various faith traditions. She has a passion for social justice issues and appreciates the topics that VICPP takes on. Hilary wants to eventually get back to work in this area of advocacy and public policy. A native of the N.C. Outer Banks, he graduated from East Carolina

University in 2001 with a degree in Public Relations and a minor in Sociology. After graduation, she worked in public relations and fundraising for a mental health services nonprofit, and then worked for Capitol One as a Technical Editor and Process Manager.

Once she started having children, Hilary stayed at home to be with her son and daughter. When the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary happened in 2012, Hilary

started volunteering with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a gun violence prevention advocacy organization. Hilary volunteered as the membership coordinator for the Virginia Chapter, while also attending many legislative meetings and hearings at the Virginia General Assembly. In September of 2015 she became the Richmond Lead for The BeSMART Public Awareness Campaign to reduce child gun deaths.



Piland

VCV has built up quite the YouTube list



In recent months the staff of Virginia Consumer Voices for Healthcare, VICPP's advocacy arm for healthcare issues, has recorded several videos, mainly of people who fall in the insurance coverage gap telling their own powerful stories.

Here are some of the most recently added videos:

- Virginia Sen. Amanda Chase had a Town Hall recently, and this video includes an exchange with VCV Director Karen Cameron on healthcare access.
- Christopher Green is a community activist working on helping formerly incarcerated Virginians successfully re-enter society. He shares his story on being in the coverage gap.
- Angela Ward will soon graduate from VCU, and has her

own story of what it's like to live in the coverage gap.

- Labor and community activist Thomasine Wilson gives an advocate's advice on what to say to Virginia legislators about closing the coverage gap.

■ Working mom Rolandah McMillan talks about the realities of living in the healthcare coverage gap.

- A highlight of the NAACP Richmond Branch #HealthcareMatters event on April 26, featuring comments by Cameron and Cassandra Shaw.

You can find these and more by going to the VCV YouTube homepage at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTM_zPEAKt5snWkqKf5-mw or going to YouTube and searching for "VAConsumerVoices."

Brief bios of 2016 VICPP Board members

A 31-year veteran of the United States Navy, **Frank A. McKinney III** is the current president of the VICPP Board. He lives in Virginia Beach and works as a Realtor in the Tidewater area, with an office in Newport News.



The Rev. Dr. **John Copenhaver** is Professor Emeritus of Religion and Philosophy at Shenandoah University and is ordained in the United Methodist Church. He earned a Ph.D. in religion and culture at The Catholic University. He is the author of *Prayerful AA: The Relation of Prayer and Social Responsibility in the Religious Thought of Douglas Steere*.



In 2005 **Julie Swanson** became president and chief executive officer of Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, which employs more than 440 people in 23 locations. She chairs the Virginia Nonprofit Leadership Council and the LSA Disabilities Network. Before Virginia Julie worked at LFS in Denver, Tampa and the Virgin Islands, and coordinated the response efforts of the island of St. Croix after Hurricane Hugo in 1989.



Davis Balderston joined the VICPP Board in 2011, and is currently serving as the Board's Secretary. He is a retired government official who lives in Arlington and attends Alexandria Friends Meeting.



Sarah Cochrane is a foreign affairs specialist and mediator with expertise in international and inter-group conflict management and transformation. She serves as director for Virginia at Emerge USA and as Business Development Director at GCB Services. Sarah speaks Urdu, Hindi and Arabic. Her board memberships also include The Women's Center in Washington.



Farhanahz Ellis was born and raised in Panama in an interracial and interfaith family. She holds Law and Political Science degrees and years of experience in the corporate world. A convert to Islam, for ten years she has been the Interfaith & Outreach Director at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) and a chaplain for the Muslim Campus Ministry at George Mason University.



Ali Faruk brings experience in civic engagement, non-profit management, and public policy to the Board. After graduating from VCU, Ali was a Policy Analyst on staff at the Center, working on immigration and healthcare. For several years he was Policy Director at Housing Opportunities Made Equal of VA, Inc. He is currently at the state's Department for Medical Assistance Services.



The Rev. **Jenee' Gilchrist** is the Youth and Young Adult minister at Pilgrim Journey Baptist Church. She earned her Master of Divinity degree from the School of Theology at Virginia Union University, received a B.A. from Bennett College and an M.A. from East Carolina University. She is also Vice President of the Virginia Council of Churches.



The Rev. **Scott D. Hopkins** serves Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church in Vienna. A native of the Atlanta area, Scott graduated from Mars Hill College and Southern Seminary. He is a on the Virginia Conference Board of Church and Society, the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Reconciling Ministries Network, and is the conference's Peace With Justice Coordinator.



Dr. Warren Hottle is a United Methodist clergy spouse who along with Lucy lives in the Fan neighborhood of Richmond and on the Rappahannock River in Lancaster. Warren is a retired consultant and a pilot. He is also serving as immediate Past Commodore of the Yankee Point Racing and Cruising Club and on the United Methodist Committee of the Episcopacy.



Debra Gold Linick served as director for Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington from 2004-2014 and continues to organize the JCRC's Holocaust programming. In 2014 she founded Pictures with Prose. Debra lives in Annandale with her husband, retired Army Col. Michael Linick. She was recognized as VICPP's Citizen of the Year in 2014.



Attorney **Richard Samet** graduated from Wake Forest University, and the University of Richmond and is now working for Goodman, Allen & Filetti, in Glen Allen. He was also a clerk to 13th Judicial Circuit of Virginia. His practice areas include Immigration, Intellectual Property and Medical Malpractice.



Dr. **Alok Srivastava** is a 30-year resident of Virginia. He is former president and current secretary of Rajdhani (Capital Area) Mandir (Hindu/Jain Temple) in Chantilly, and past president of Association of Hindu Jain Temples. He has a Ph.D. and two masters in engineering fields, last graduated from the George Washington University. Dr. Srivastava is married with two children, one of whom is special needs.



Irvin Varkonyi is an independent consultant and educator working in supply chain management. He volunteers with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. He is a former member of the Congregation Olam Tikvah Executive Board, a conservative synagogue in Fairfax. Irvin's career was in global transportation and logistics after earning an MBA.



Dr. **John Whitley** is president for Organization and Leadership Development, Consulting Services Group. John has degrees from Wake Forest, William & Mary, Southeastern Theological Seminary and Virginia Tech. He is a self-described "Feminist, Left-winged Radical, Socialist, Democrat, Unitarian Universalist, Civil and Human Rights Activist."



The Rev. **Anthony Fludd** is a Administrative Assistant of the St. John's Church of God in Christ in Newport News. He is an experienced hospital and nursing home administrator, and past chair Chairman of the Virginia State Board of Nursing Home Administrators. He graduated from Ithaca College, and Long Island University, and is currently working on a doctorate.

