

# VOICE

# 2023

# Impact Report



Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement

# Who We Are

Founded in 2008, VOICE is a nonpartisan coalition of over 50 faith communities and civic organizations in Northern Virginia working together to build power in middle and low-income communities. We organize in Prince William, Fairfax, and Arlington counties as well as the City of Alexandria uniting people across lines of race, class, religion, political party and geography to take action on key issues in our community.



## Our Approach

Relational organizing, the core of our approach, involves building trust and commitment across diverse institutions through leadership development, relationship-building, issue research, and organized action. VOICE's work is founded out of the tradition of broad-based organizing developed over the past 75 years. This model engages leaders from our member institutions in a cyclical process, from identifying and nurturing leaders inside and around their institution to strategic action and continuous reflection.

The aim is to address injustices arising from isolation and racial and socio-economic inequity. By strengthening institutions and fostering public relationships, broad-based relational organizing serves as a calculated response, paving the way for effective collective action. Day to day this means staff focus on building and supporting teams within and across our member institutions through this cycle of relationship building, listening, researching, acting, and reflecting.



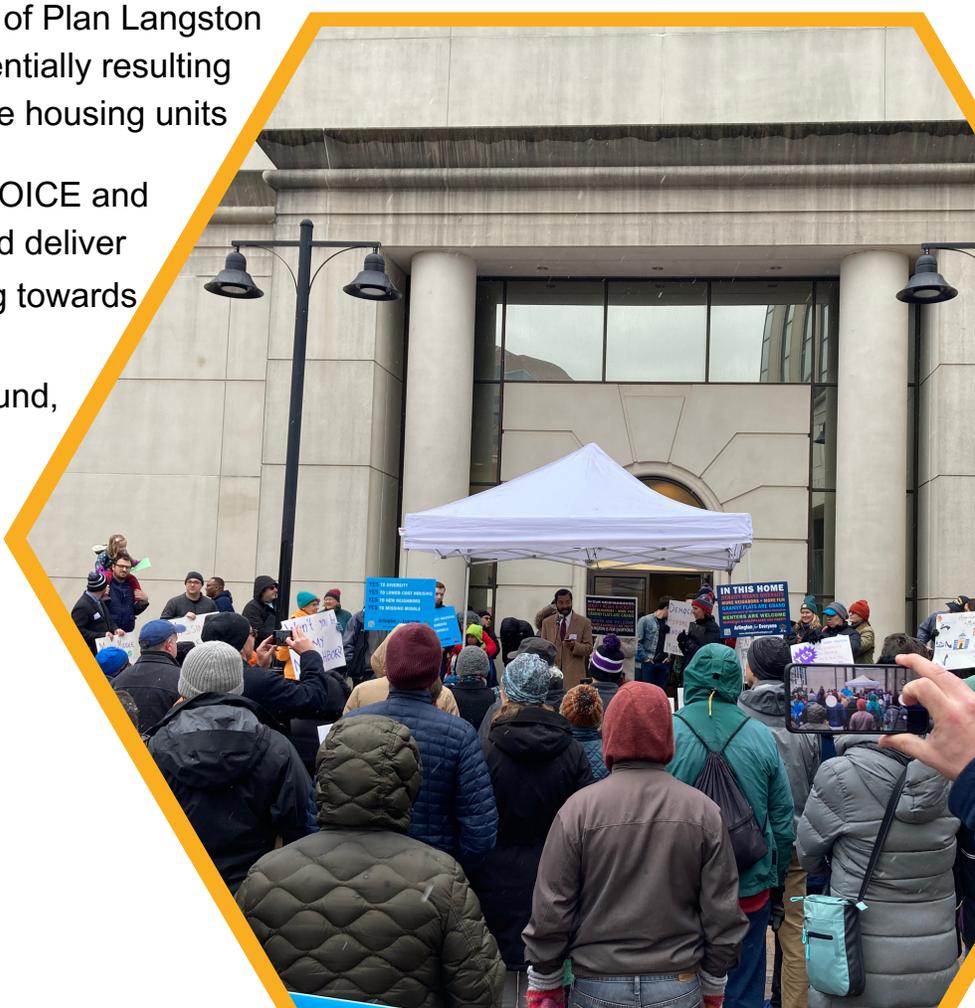
VOICE

# Victories

In 2023 VOICE leaders fought and won significant policy and budget changes that will positively impact millions of Virginians. Where VOICE fights and wins Virginians have access to more diverse and affordable housing options, alternatives to jail or the ER when confronted with a behavioral health crisis, and a Public Defender's Office where there was none. We know that this work for the good of all Virginians is an act of economic and racial justice - that to fight for a better Virginia for all requires addressing the long legacy of racial and economic discrimination, and to win changes that disproportionately benefit those most harmed by that legacy.

## Affordable Housing Campaign

- ✓ Collaborated with allies to achieve two major zoning reforms in Arlington and Alexandria, **ending exclusionary zoning and Jim Crow-era laws enforcing racial segregation, while addressing lack of housing in our region.**
- ✓ Successfully **reversed a planned \$10 million cut** to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund in Arlington.
- ✓ Contributed to the passage of Plan Langston Boulevard in Arlington, potentially resulting in over 2,500 new affordable housing units
- ✓ In Prince William County, VOICE and our coalition partners helped deliver the first \$5 million in funding towards the creation of the county's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which is in the process of being created.



# Housing Justice Campaign

Together with allies we delivered two major zoning reforms, one in Arlington and one in Alexandria, that ended exclusionary zoning and Jim Crow-era laws designed to enforce racial segregation while increasing the overall housing stock in our region.

## Arlington

After a major organizing campaign by VOICE and our allies Arlington County Board unanimously passed one of the most progressive zoning reforms in the nation. This historic decision by the Board will legalize “Missing Middle” homes across the county, such as duplexes, townhomes, quads, and sixplexes.

We thank our amazing coalition partners, the NAACP of Arlington, YIMBY’s of Northern Virginia, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, Alliance for Housing Solutions, and several others, for their tireless work over the past year.

## Alexandria

Following Organizing efforts in Arlington, VOICE and our allies secured a major victory in Alexandria: the unanimous passage of the Zoning for Housing Initiative by the City Council. Zoning for Housing, like the Missing Middle policy in Arlington, does away with exclusionary zoning in single-family home neighborhoods, instead allowing a broader diversity of housing types such as duplexes, townhomes, quads, and sixplexes on the same site. It also clarified and simplified zoning rules around multifamily housing and other zoning areas that could generate thousands of new affordable housing units in the coming years!



VOICE Leaders, March 22nd at the Arlington County Board Meeting



VOICE Leaders at 1am after the Alexandria City Council Meeting



# Victories



## Behavioral Health Campaign

- ✓ Secured **\$45 million** in combined funding to establish two new Crisis Receiving Centers in Prince William County and Fairfax.
- ✓ Organized an **800-person assembly with Gov. Youngkin**, leading to the allocation of **\$58 million** in the state budget for Crisis Receiving Centers statewide and **\$10 million** allocated for hospital-based psychiatric emergency programs in rural areas.
- ✓ Addressing the youth overdose crisis in Arlington:
  - Secured \$750,000 in county funding for new after-school programs.
  - Working to train community members, especially Spanish-speaking parents, to administer the life-saving nasal spray, Narcan, to reverse overdoses.
- ✓ In Fairfax County VOICE Leaders helped to secure \$15 Million for a Youth Wing of the Crisis Receiving Center.



# Behavioral Health Campaign

Hand in hand with many key allies, VOICE delivered **\$45 million** in combined funding to launch the creation of two new Crisis Receiving Centers, one in Prince William County, the other in Fairfax, so that people experiencing a mental health crisis have a place to go instead of being warehoused in hospital emergency departments or locked up in jail. Together with our coalition partners, VOICE held an 800-person assembly with Gov. Youngkin this summer, which helped lead to the allocation of **\$58 million** in the state budget to fund the building of Crisis Receiving Centers across the state, which are now being built in places like Lynchburg and Loudoun County, and **\$10 million** to stand up hospital-based psychiatric emergency programs in more rural areas.

In the wake of two overdose deaths (and two additional near-deaths) by teens at Wakefield High School, VOICE took aim at the youth overdose crisis and in Arlington we recently secured \$750,000 in county funding to stand up new after-school programs so that the most vulnerable students in our community have safe and supportive places to go during after-school, and potentially summer, hours. We are also working to get members of our community, especially Spanish-speaking parents, trained to administer the life-saving nasal spray, Narcan, which can reverse an overdose.



Arlington Narcan Training.



Working with our allies in the Hospital Association and community members to provide behavioral health policy recommendations to Gov. Youngkin's office.



Meeting with the governor to deliver our behavior health policy recommendations



# Additional Community Impact Campaigns



## Get Out The Vote 2023

This year Virginia held important elections that determined the control of the State House and Senate. VOICE organized leaders to make sure underrepresented communities had their voices heard in these critical elections through our nonpartisan GOTV Campaign.

We knocked over 1,400 doors, talked to 1,800 people, and made over 500 vote plans to make sure every voice was heard in this critical election.



## Public Defenders Office

In 2020, VOICE played a pivotal role in establishing the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) in Prince William County, replacing the county's inadequate system of court-appointed representation.

This year, VOICE focused on increasing the county's contribution to support the OPD. After meetings, letters, and public testimony, the county board voted to raise the local supplement from 15% to 25%, a \$350,000 increase. This funding has strengthened the OPD and allowed them to hire and retain attorneys.



# 2023 VOICE Gala



To help celebrate 15 years of organizing for justice 300 VOICE leaders and allies came together at the Wolf Trap Center for Education for our 2023 Gala. We spent time honoring not only our collective journey and achievements since VOICE was founded but also the legacies of three remarkable individuals who played pivotal roles in shaping VOICE: Rev. Clyde Ellis, Rev. Linda Olson-Peebles and Robert Buckman.

We were inspired and reminded of the importance of our work by keynote speaker and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eugene Robinson, followed by a panel discussion on the state of American democracy.

As we reflected on where we have been, the world as it is now, and the future we are working together to create we also turned our attention to organizing money to support the work we have ahead of us. Through the generous support of the Gala sponsors and individual leader's donations, we raised an incredible \$40,000!



Washington Post columnist  
**Eugene Robinson**



**of organized money raised to support our work!**

# Structure of VOICE



## Action Team

VOICE is governed by a team of leaders from the member institutions that discuss, ratify, and implement all VOICE's major campaigns and actions.

## Strategy Team

Serving as VOICE's Board of Directors, clergy and lay leaders from our member organizations are elected to serve three-year terms on the Strategy Team. The Strategy Team further develops decisions made by the Action Team and sets the strategic direction for the organization. For 2023, the Strategy Team consists of:

Jacomina de Regt, Secretary: Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington

Paul Douthit, Treasurer: St. Mary's Episcopal, Arlington

Rev. Dr. George Farmer: Olive Branch Baptist Church, PWC

Kevin Harris: ARHA Resident Association, Alexandria

Hilary Horn: Temple Rodef Shalom, Arlington/Fairfax

Rev. Kristen McBrayer: Co-Chair: Emmaus United Church of Christ, Fairfax

Rev. Mandy North: Manassas Church of the Brethren, PWC

Saif Rahman: Dar Al-Hijrah, Fairfax

Rev. Dr. Keith Savage: Co-Chair: First Baptist Church Manassas, PWC

Rev. Michael Sessoms: Little Union Baptist Church, PWC

Rev. Alice Tewell: Clarendon Presbyterian Church, Arlington

## Executive Team

Four members of the Strategy Team make up the Executive Committee, which meets often with VOICE staff and represents VOICE formally: The two co-chairs (Rev. Dr. Keith Savage and Rev. Kristen McBrayer), treasurer (Paul Douthit) and secretary (Jacomina de Regt).



Rev. Dr. Keith Savage  
VOICE Co-Chair

Senior Servant at First Baptist Church Manassas



Rev. Kristen McBrayer  
VOICE Co-Chair

Pastor at Emmaus United Church of Christ

# VOICE Staff

## **James Pearlstein** **Co-Lead Organizer**

James Pearlstein serves as the Co-Lead Organizer at VOICE, working primarily in the Prince William County area.

James previously organized with VOICE's sister organizations in the Washington, DC area and in Cleveland, Ohio



## **Jessica Sarriot** **Co-Lead Organizer**

Jessica Sarriot serves as the Co-Lead Organizer at VOICE, working primarily in the Alexandria area.

Jessica organized with VOICE back in 2013 and has over ten years of experience managing campaigns and programs within the nonprofit and government sectors.



## **Rev. Kenneth Nixon** **Associate Organizer**

Rev. Kenneth Nixon serves as an Associate Organizer at VOICE, working primarily in Fairfax County. He also serves as the Social Justice & Outreach Pastor at First Baptist Church of Manassas.



## **Loren DePina** **Associate Organizer**

Loren DePina serves as an Associate Organizer at VOICE, working primarily in Arlington.

Outside of VOICE, Loren is extremely active in her own community, advocating for better treatment and resources in marginalized communities.



## **Edward Layman** **Operations Manager**

Edward Layman serves as an Operations Manager at VOICE, working on our administration team and logistical support for events.

Previously Edward worked in the political campaign world and supported union voter outreach efforts in the 2020 election.



# 2023 Member Organizations

VOICE is a coalition of dues-paying member institutions which participate actively in the Action Team to set and implement strategies. Any organization can become a member, including congregations, temples, mosques, union locals, business groups, schools, PTA's, health centers, etc.

## Alexandria City

- Beverley Hills United Methodist Church
- Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
- Grace Episcopal Church
- Old Presbyterian Meeting House
- St. Joseph Catholic Church
- Third Baptist Church

## Fairfax County

- Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church
- Bethlehem Baptist Church
- Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center
- Emmaus United Church of Christ
- Falls Church Presbyterian
- Floris United Methodist Church
- Good Shepherd Catholic Church
- Hope United Church of Christ
- Mount Pleasant Baptist Church
- NOVA Hebrew Congregation
- Rising Hope United Methodist Church
- Shiloh Baptist Church
- St. John Neumann Catholic Church
- Temple Rodef Shalom
- Trinity Presbyterian Church
- Unitarian Universalist Church Reston
- Vienna Baptist Church
- VOICE of Mt. Vernon

## Arlington County

- Arlington Presbyterian Church
- Clarendon Presbyterian Church
- NOVA Catholic Community
- Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church
- St. George's Episcopal Church
- St. Mary's Episcopal Church
- Trinity Presbyterian Church
- Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington



# 2023 Member Organizations



Trinity Presbyterian Church  
(Arlington) – Joined 2021



All Dulles Area Muslim Society



Mt. Olive Baptist Church  
a founding member

## Prince William County Area

- Bull Run Unitarian Universalists
- Dar Alnoor Islamic Center
- Faith AME Mission at Woodbridge
- First AME Church of Manassas
- First Baptist Church of Manassas
- Little Union Baptist Church
- Manassas Church of the Brethren
- Mt. Olive Baptist Church
- Olive Branch Baptist Church
- St. Francis Assisi Catholic Church
- St. Paul United Methodist Church

## At-Large

- All Dulles Area Muslim Society
- Northern Virginia Baptist Association



# 2023 Grants

Organized money is a key part of our work. VOICE Staff work throughout the year secure grant funders. These are the organizations and cooperations who support our work.

## Foundations

Meyer Foundation  
Potomac Health Foundation  
Progressive Multiplier Fund  
Southern Partners Fund

## Faith Organizations

Arlington Presbyterian Church  
National Capital Presbytery  
Rock Spring UCC

## Corporate Funders

Virginia Housing  
Wells Fargo Foundation

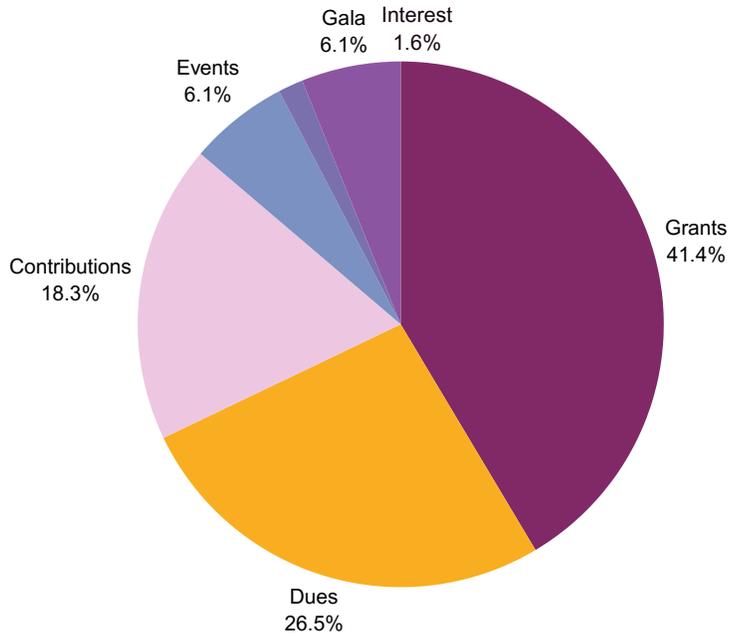


# 2023 Finances



## Revenue

Contributions	\$126,000
Dues	\$173,000
Grants	\$271,000
Interest	\$10,000
Gala	\$40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$614,000</b>



## 2024 Fundraising Goals

We are working to engage more individual donors, both small-dollar and large, and have more sustaining monthly donors.



Grow our capacity to deeply train and develop leaders.

Grow our capacity to organize and win around affordable housing and behavioral health issues, and engage more leaders in this life-changing work.



# VOICE Co-Chair & Co-Lead Organizer Letter



Dear VOICE leaders,

Look at all you did in 2023! It is because of VOICE leaders like you that we have made significant strides in bending the arc of the universe toward justice in Virginia this year. At our Gala in December, we celebrated fifteen years of VOICE organizing power for justice, rooted in love of neighbor and a vision of a Virginia where people of all incomes, races, religions, countries of origin or genders can live safe, healthy, and dignified lives. Our faith traditions call us to care particularly for the most vulnerable, and our organizing tradition teaches us that the key to delivering that care is building our relational power. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. best expressed why we are so focused on power-building, and what we mean by it: “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

We are seeking to correct the broken housing and healthcare systems that leave too many of our neighbors caught in cycles of neglect or incarceration instead of care, living in overcrowded conditions, or exhausted by hours of commuting to work rather than spending time with their loved ones. We celebrate that in 2023 we collectively shifted over \$83 million in public funding towards affordable housing and Crisis Receiving Centers.

We have continued the good work we have been doing since our founding. And we have been growing and changing. In 2023 VOICE’s Strategy Team (our Board of Directors) voted for a new network affiliation as we explore building The Just Power Alliance with organizations across the country committed to a similar vision of justice. We’ve begun to leverage the power we’ve cultivated in each jurisdiction, connecting efforts to expand our statewide influence and amplify our impact.

As we head into 2024 we are again at a moment of enormous political tension, fear, and opportunity. More than ever our values of care, love, and belonging for all in our communities must be woven into our day-to-day relationships and embodied through faithful public collective action. VOICE is committed to following through on our local campaigns and pairing them increasingly with supporting state-wide campaigns.

We are looking forward to ensuring successful implementation of the Crisis Receiving Centers we have fought so hard for. We hope to join the push for Virginia to allow more faith communities in the Commonwealth to easily follow the steps of some of our members who have built affordable housing on-site. We are also committed to investing in our members, and processing this time of transition intentionally as we invest in a Strategic Planning process, rebuild Core Teams, and engage our members around what it means for us to grow and change at a time of enormous political stakes.

We are so proud of what we’ve done, and so eager to build and use our power in ways that corrects everything that stands against love in Virginia.

See you out there.

VOICE Co-Chairs, Dr. Savage and Rev. McBrayer  
VOICE Co-Lead Organizers, James Pearlstein and Jessica Sarriot