



**Bridges to Progress
90 Day Community Meeting
October 24, 2019**

The meeting kicked off with a terrific presentation by Jeremy White and Lydia Turnier from the Virginia Legal Aid Society on the new **Virginia State landlord tenant laws**. If you would like to see his PowerPoint presentation, please click on the link below:

http://www.lynchburgva.gov/sites/default/files/COLFILES/City-Council-Manager/bridges_to_progress/Virginia%20State%20Landlord%20Tenant%20Law%2010-23-19.pdf (***Statutory Section Numbers were changed as of October 1st and have not been updated on this document***)

Next, John Hughes reviewed the grant process for the Bridges to Progress taskforces to apply for poverty initiative funding from City Council. The deadline for grant proposals was November 1, 2019.

The following are the updates for the taskforces:

Community: Lindsey Cawood reported the Community Taskforce aims to coordinate a pipeline of service providers that offers Getting Ahead participants supportive resources throughout the duration of the class as well as the years beyond. By providing a holistic system of support, the taskforce recognizes the mental, emotional, social, and employment-based resources that must be built for Getting Ahead graduates to experience sustained progress.

Early Childhood Care and Education: MaryJane Dolan reports the taskforce has an identified goal to improve kindergarten readiness by increasing access to quality Pre-K programs and promoting preschool literacy. They are applying for a grant in the amount of \$4,400 for the Zumbini project which is a whole-child music and movement education

program designed for children from birth to four years old to include a caregiver to be held in City Neighborhood Centers. The task force is working on determining which children are entering kindergarten with or without Pre-K experience and the level of that experience. They are also reviewing the study authored by Anthony Andrews on strategies and partnerships with business entities to be possible Pre-K providers such as the one that Centra had a number of years ago. The upcoming year priorities are; single point of entry, alignment of Head Start, Measurement of impact-entering kindergarteners, quality programs and awareness of Pre-K subsidies. Contact Terry Brennan (trzzmd@gmail.com) for next meeting date and time.

Education: Owen Cardwell reports that the taskforce has now combined its work with the newly commissioned Education Taskforce. They have met in September and October focusing on developing a collective impact model for after school programs that partner with the school district. They have also agreed to become a pilot site through the Center for Education and Leadership at University of Lynchburg for a relationship survey developed by The Search Institute. The survey is designed to assess relationships between youth and teachers and youth workers. **They meet the third Tuesdays at Extra Staffing Solutions (645 Oakley Avenue) at 6 PM.**

Faith: Bishop Keith Anderson reported the Faith task force has formally met four times since the last 90 day meeting in July. On August 1 the task force hosted 2 community dinners--one at Fairview community center and the other at College Hill community center. Approximately 125 people attended. On September 11 the task force hosted their triannual speaker series with Department of Human Services Director, Tamara Rosser, and Career Works Workforce Coordinator, Keith Cook, speaking about their programs. Approximately 25 people attended. The next speaker series program will be in January and will be the Know your Rights program by the Lynchburg Police Department. The faith taskforce will be partnering with Fairview Community Center piloting a program that focuses on strengthening families in the Fairview community. **The Faith taskforce meets the first Wednesday of every month at 2 PM in the Carriage House behind St Paul's Episcopal Church.**

Food: Ruth Talian reports the taskforce will be applying for a grant to purchase 100 transit carts for participants regularly accessing food at agencies to help transport more groceries home without having to pay for transportation. The recipients of the carts will be participating in an initial survey and a follow up survey to measure results. **The Food Taskforce will be meeting next on January 8, 2020 at 10 AM at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, 501 12th Street, Suite B, Lynchburg, VA, 24504.**

Health/Mental Health: Debra Jefferson reports that as of October 7, 2019, Lynchburg has had 4,327 people sign up for Medicaid. Seventy-five plus people attended the Trauma & Resilience Basics Course in September. One hundred people are registered for the Trauma-Sensitive Schools Expert Workshop the last week of October. In November, 25 professionals from across the region will qualify as trauma trainers and can spread training across the community (including to sectors beyond education). Many expressed interest following the September training to meet regularly across the region to continue learning from each other and growing skills. Several members of the taskforce have been participating in several coalitions that are working in our community such as CVAR, Suicide Prevention, and a Community Meeting at CANS. Horizon now has a medical doctor working in the admissions department and the same day access process is going well. Horizon continues to provide MH First Aid for adults and Youth. **Contact Debra Jefferson (debra.jefferson@horizonbh.org) for the next meeting date and time.**

Housing: The Central VA Collaborative and The Collaborative for a Livable Lynchburg discussed the following recommendations to present to council

- Adopt a well-articulated vision clarifying how housing is a holistic community issue that impacts, and is impacted by, income concerns, strength of families, and the sustainability of the community.
- Expand the housing collaborative to include representatives from lending institutions, private developers, and anchor institutions.
- Create a Housing Trust Fund to assist with the reservation and development of housing options in the community.
- Identify and analyze existing affordable housing options and determine if they should be slated for preservation.

- Identify areas with missing standard infrastructure and develop a plan to install it over time.
- Develop and implement precise evaluation tools to determine specific housing needs, particularly considering preventing and reducing poverty clusters.
- Develop a communication plan for attainable housing to improve the use of our existing tools and incentives.
- Enlist the help of developers, builders, and design professionals to remove barriers for attainable housing products that support homeownership.
- Enhance existing wrap-around support programs, providing both financial and personal/life support to stem high eviction rates and assist potential homeowners.

Lyn-CAG has 40 Homebuyers in the First Time Home Buyers Club which is a yearlong process to get individuals into housing. Also have created a rental housing counseling program. Partnerships with Lighthouse and other agencies to provide Housing Counseling is in the works. They are the only agency in the region who is Certified HUD Housing Counseling.

Legal: The Legal Systems Task Force has a two-pronged approach: researching the myriad ways in which the legal system contributes to the high poverty rate in Lynchburg and working on small projects that address specific needs of returning citizens. Research projects include an overview of how restorative justice practices could benefit individuals with limited resources and a study of how mental health issues affect the arrest, sentencing, incarceration and ongoing care of inmates. Pilot projects are the development of a First Steps Re-entry Guide brochure that provides information on services available to returning citizens upon their release from jail approximately of which 1,000 have been distributed. The WelcomeBack Pack—100 backpacks, filled with various supplies such as socks, underwear, personal hygiene items that are to be given to persons leaving jail with no resources. A future project is a Legal Info Clinic held in Rec Centers or Low Income Apartment Complexes to inform citizens of basic legal rights and responsibilities. **They meet the second Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:30 PM.** Presently, they are meeting at the Salvation Army. If you would like to attend, please contact Josh Quintero

(joshjq@gmail.com) or Jane Henderson (henderson.sarahjane@gmail.com) as they sometimes meet elsewhere.

Transportation: Joan Foster reports the taskforce has been reinvigorated over the past 90 days in pulling together a core group with representation from, GLTC, LACIL (Lynchburg Area Center for Independent Living), CVACL (Central Virginia Alliance for Community Living), Beacon of Hope, Ways to Work/HumanKind, Ride Solutions, Central Virginia PDC (Planning District Commission), Parkview Community Missions. During our meetings we have discussed what gaps in transportation needs that these organization see from individuals they work with. Through this discussion, we have identified gaps that we are planning to submit a grant through the city to assist with bridging that gap in transportation needs. **Contact Joan Foster (jfitz.foster@gmail.com) for the next meeting date and time.**

Workforce: Keith Cook reports that Lynchburg's current unemployment rate is at 3.2%. Employers are consistently looking for individuals who don't necessarily have all of the technical skills but the soft skills required to be successful in any job. There are still over 500 jobs listed in the Virginia Workforce Connection site. They are working hard and will soon be able to offer a regional work readiness program called Career Essentials for individuals looking to better develop the employability skills that local employers are looking for. Please visit the Virginia Career Works Center at 3125 Odd Fellows Road. People needing more individualized services can go to our website, vcwcentralregion.com, and view the online orientation and complete the short initial assessment form.

The next 90 day Community Meeting will be January 23, 2019 at 9:00 AM at the Miller Center in Lynchburg.