



AFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT

OFFICE OF EQUITY & INCLUSION
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



ALBEMARLE
COUNTY | VIRGINIA

“Albemarle County, VA is one of 15 cities/counties represented in ICMA’s first Equity Officer Cohort.

This cohort was created to advance equity and inclusion in local government leadership by sharing insights and to build a learning community for ICMA members on equity, inclusion, and social justice. Because of the Office of Equity and Inclusion’s contributions, local government professionals nationwide have gained invaluable knowledge through webinar presentations, content for ICMA’s award winning PM magazine, and as a panelist during ICMA’s annual UNITE virtual conference. OEI’s vast knowledge and experience is exactly what ICMA members are thirsting for, and we are thankful to have Albemarle as part of the cohort, assisting us with the creation of resources, tools, and a network for chief equity officers and those filling similar roles and programs.”

Lynne Scott,
ICMA director of equity and social justice

DIRECTOR MESSAGE:

A year ago, we ended our first annual report to the Board of Supervisors with a resolution reaffirming our county’s commitment to supporting through our actions and our partnerships the promotion of an equitable and inclusive Albemarle County. Throughout the year, we have worked to broaden that commitment in multiple areas, and despite the challenges of the covid-19 pandemic we’ve experienced some success, many of which are shared in this document and all of which were made possible by the continued partnership and support of our internal and external partners.

Local government has an opportunity to make promoting equity in our communities more than a moment. We can make it the new normal. To do that we will have to enter 2021 with an even stronger commitment to reevaluating our systems, questioning our processes, and constantly assessing our progress in creating equitable outcomes. We look forward to growing as a team and community over the next year.



Siri Russell,
OEI Director



Dr. Irtefa Binte-Farid,
Coordinator for Equity
and Accountability



Edward Brooks,
Yancy School Program
Coordinator

Project Associates:

Ginny Brooks
Annie Ross
My’Kal Lofton
Archer Willauer
Lina Hong
Erzhen Hu
Sarah Winstein-Hibbs

2020

BY THE
NUMBERS

69 hrs



OEI sponsored training

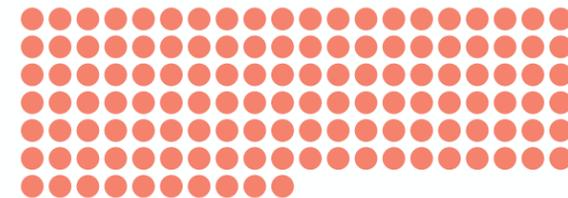


**2
Markers**

Historic Highway Markers approved by VA Department of Historic Resources

130 hrs

On-call for COVID Wrap-around services, team worked with over 90 households representing 316 individuals (163 children)



147 hrs

Interpretation and translation services supporting language accessibility



\$1.6 Million

In Community Lift funds supporting 35 Nonprofit



\$1.2 Million

In emergency relief to households



60,000

Masks distributed

128,000 People

Reached across all platforms for Court Square Confederate Monument Removal engagement





COMMITTED TO GROWTH

Achieving our organizational mission requires a local government staff equipped with the tools to achieve equity and inclusion at all levels, whether they influence people, structures, policies, programs, and/or practices. In 2020, staff across the organization went above and beyond in dedicating time to participating in discussions and trainings aimed at building our capacity to serve our community equitably. While OEI is proud to have had a hand in professional development activities, we are even prouder of our colleagues who took steps to transform their participation into action.

New Organizational Core Value

Community:

We expect diversity, equity, and inclusion to be integrated into the way we live our mission.

Our core values serve as the organization's cultural cornerstones; they are the principles that guide our actions every day. Community is the first new core value added in over 20 years and represents the continued growth of our commitment to prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion as an inherent part of our work as a local government.

The new core value was drafted by the Organizational Leadership Team in January of 2020 and introduced broadly at a pre-covid town hall, followed by robust discussion at a virtual meeting of close to 100 Key Designated Leaders this summer. Over the fall and winter, OEI staff has been conducting "Core Value Conversations" introducing the new value to departments.

"The adoption of the new core value has been an important step. As an organization, we need to continue to educate ourselves and have conversations with each other about how we can integrate diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace and in our service delivery. We need to continue to talk about how this country's legacy of systemic racism has affected our work and workplace and relationships with each other. "

Phyllis Savides

Director of Social Services



COMMUNITY

New Organizational Trainings

During 2020 OEI embraced that age-old adage: You can't act on what you don't acknowledge. We committed to increasing opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful conversations around equity, diversity, and inclusion. Approximately 69 hours of OEI sponsored educational/ empathy building opportunities were offered in 2020.

Factuality, a facilitated dialogue, crash course, and interactive experience, that simulates structural inequality, in America. Participants assume the identities of the characters above, encountering a series of fact based advantages & limitations based on the intersection of their race, class, gender, faith, sexual orientation, age, and ability. Jointly hosted with the City of Charlottesville's Department of Human Services and the Blue Ridge Health District, approximately 80 County employees participated.

Project Implicit Bias training: a non-profit organization and international collaboration between researchers who are interested in understanding thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control. 120 County employees attended a 90-minute training facilitated by Dr. Jordan Axt, Director of Data and Methodology at Project Implicit. Dr. Axt's presentation borrowed from his research exploring how people form and express intergroup bias in attitudes and behavior (which has been covered in media outlets such as National Public Radio, The Los Angeles Times, and CBS News). Approximately 40% of training attendees participated in the multiple debriefing conversations offered in the following week(s).

OEI 21 Day Challenge

Modeled after other habit building challenges, this customized 21 Day Challenge offered an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of broad perspectives related to diversity, equity and inclusion over a 21-day period. Our fourth offering of this series this spring featured participation from approximately 40 staff from the County and partner agencies including Jefferson-Madison Regional Library System and the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau.

We Are Going To Talk About Race

This dialogue explores the socially constructed reality called 'race' over 10 months. The course includes a mix of readings, documentaries, video shorts, expert panels, and group discussions to explore racial identity, structural and institutional racism, the legacy of racially discriminatory laws and policies, local history, representation, and other topics related to racial equity in our social lives. We have had the privilege of several community partners lending their time and resource to support us in this journey, including representatives of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, Monacan Indian Nation, and the University of Virginia. Approximately 130 local government and schools staff signed up for the course, 6 months later a little over 40% of those signed up are still consistently engaged, while a larger number participate as their time allows.

"Siri and her team have done a phenomenal job putting together the curriculum for the Talking about Race series. **This project is ambitious, in-depth and progressive in a way that I have found few other professional trainings. I'm not able to fully describe what this experience has meant to me as an individual, a manager, and a community leader, but my ability to recognize racial inequity and injustice has grown immensely.** This training has also proved to be a solid foundation for conversations within the CACVB as we work on outreach to visitors and residents."

Courtney Cacatian

Executive Director, Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau

"Participating in the **Talking About Race Series has given me the confidence I've always felt I lacked to have the tough conversations necessary to create change and equality.** This workshop's ability to bring together so many different types of people and to create so many honest conversations has been both a humbling and illuminating experience. I need more of this in my life!"

Erin Buchanan

Adult Benefits Specialist
Albemarle County DSS

LGBTQIA + INCLUSION

The Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) Municipal Equality Index (MEI) evaluates the extent to which the local content, structure, and culture of the law creates an inclusive and safe space for LGBTQIA individuals. Scores can be between 0 and 100 with higher scores indicating a more inclusive municipality. In 2019 the HRC MEI scored 11 Virginia municipalities: Alexandria, Arlington County, Charlottesville, Chesapeake, Fairfax County, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach. Municipalities were chosen to be scored based on the size of their populations, the number of same-sex couples in a municipality, or their proximity to a large public university. Roanoke scored the lowest with 22 points and Richmond scored the highest with 97 points. The mean and median scores were both 60 points. An assessment of Albemarle County revealed a score of 49 points. Over the course of 2020, OEI worked closely with several partners to create opportunities to increase the safety and inclusivity of our organization and community.

GENDER NEUTRAL BATHROOMS

This summer OEI worked with the Facilities and Environmental Services Department (FES) to convert the first-floor single stall bathrooms in the County Office Building @ McIntire, from male and female gendered stalls to two gender neutral bathrooms. Updating our physical infrastructure was an important step in the organization's communication of its values to employees and the public, and building an organizational culture that promotes safety and inclusivity for all.

INCLUSIVE PRONOUNS

October 21, 2020, marked International Pronouns Day which seeks to celebrate multiple, intersecting identities by making respecting, sharing, and educating about personal pronouns commonplace. Albemarle County joined in this celebration when our Board of Supervisors voted to amend the reference to gender in County Code § 1-102, Rules of Construction. The revision, the first of its kind in our region, allows for the use of any pronoun when specification of gender is necessary and intended. Prior to this revision the County Code considered masculine pronouns as inclusive of all.

This change was an important first step towards fulfilling our larger goal which is to write all code language going forward with gender-neutral terms. OEI and the County Attorney's Office have already been working to review each chapter of the code for gender-biased terminology and have drafted recommended revisions that we hope to begin rolling out in 2021.

VA VALUES ACT PANEL

In celebration of Pride Month the LGBTQIA Affinity Group (in collaboration with Equality Virginia and Charlottesville Pride Community Network) jointly hosted the Virginia Values Act Panel on June 23rd. This virtual event, attended by over 230 participants, featured a panel of experts educating the public on the historic legislation offering protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity for housing, public and private employment, public accommodations and access to credit.

**“When ‘I’ is replaced by
‘we’ even illness becomes
wellness”**

**Malcolm X,
(1925-1965)**



COMMITTED TO PARTNERSHIP

Partnership has been the cornerstone of OEI's work since it was formed in 2018. Everything that we have accomplished this year has been heavily supported through effective collaboration. The value brought by our partners (both new and long established) in 2020 meant more to our success than ever before as we worked to meet the challenges of this unique year.

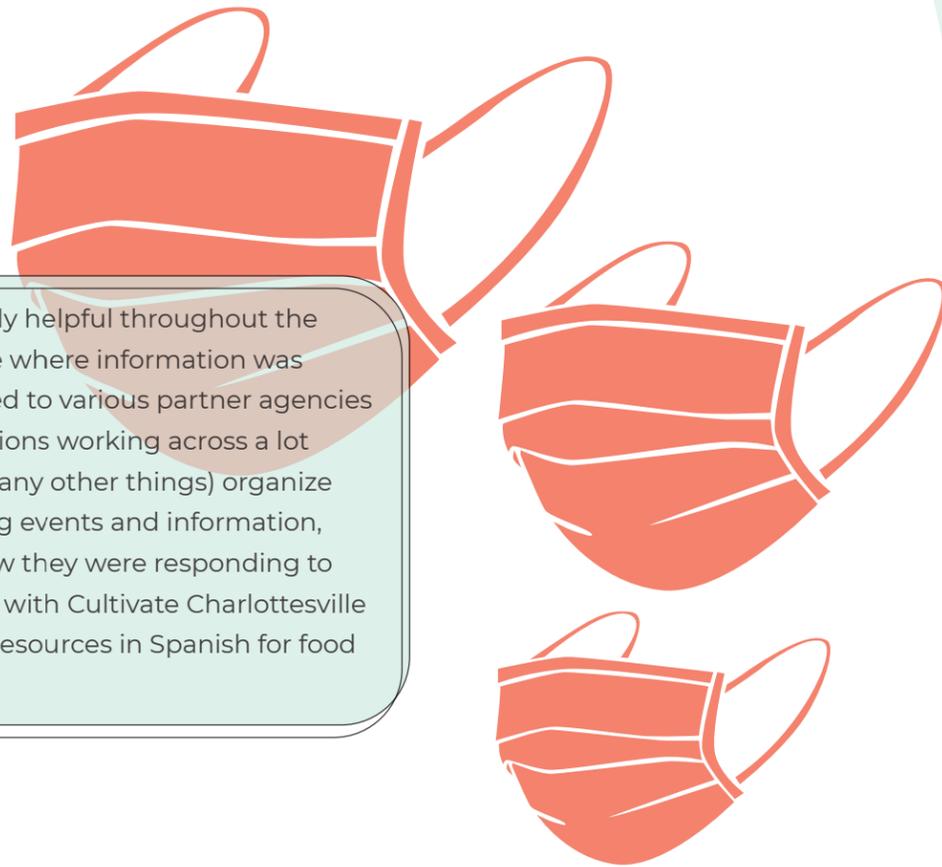
COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gaps in the health and wealth of our community members. Our partnerships were especially crucial as we worked to meet the additional challenge of the pandemic. Albemarle County staff across the organization, at every level, have gone above and beyond to serve.

OEI has maintained a focus on initiatives that support the critical needs (financial relief, food security, childcare, and housing) of our most vulnerable community members.

Community Lift Grants

One of our most productive partnerships has been a collaborative effort to support local non-profits that have been affected by COVID-19 that provide services to our community related to food, shelter, financial security, and childcare. Working through a program format initially developed by the Economic Development Office, OEI was able to partner with the departments of Social Services (DSS), Finance and Budget and the Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) to distribute \$1.6 million dollars of grant funding received through the CARES Coronavirus Relief Fund.



“The Office of Equity and Inclusion was really helpful throughout the pandemic, for getting information in a time where information was changing fast, and helping us get connected to various partner agencies. This included connecting us with organizations working across a lot of different areas, and helped us (among many other things) organize health materials in Spanish, promote testing events and information, and learn about the county schools and how they were responding to schools shutting down. Also, connecting us with Cultivate Charlottesville has been great in helping us get access to resources in Spanish for food access in the City and the County.”

Victoria McCullough,
Sin Barreras / Without Barriers

Emergency Financial Assistance

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in the County more than doubled in the spring of 2020, leading to a significant number of Albemarle households experiencing financial hardship. In a close partnership with DSS, OEI was able to collaborate with the City of Charlottesville Department of Human Services and the United Way of Greater Charlottesville to provide emergency financial assistance to Albemarle County residents. Beginning in September, and with many thanks to our partners at the City and United Way, over \$700,000 in CARES funding has been distributed directly to County residents in need. This successful partnership will continue into 2021.

Mask + Hand Sanitizer Distribution

Early on in the pandemic OEI partnered with the City of Charlottesville’s Department of Human Services and the Blue Ridge Health District to purchase and distribute masks regionally to several community partners representing rural and vulnerable populations, who in turn made direct distributions to clients.

OEI also partnered with Albemarle County DSS whose staff members made additional distributions at school meal sites and local government staff from across multiple departments participated in pop up mask distributions across the County.

Almost 60,000 masks have been distributed to date. The efforts of County staff were recognized as above and beyond in the local government category of the United Way’s 1st annual Caring for Community Awards.

“Our partnership with Albemarle County’s Office of Equity and Inclusion and the City of Charlottesville’s Department of Human Services on distributing masks and information to community members **ensured that we could provide masks to both rural and urban communities in all 6 of the localities we serve.** It also allowed us to be **more responsive to community needs** and mutual aid initiatives by sharing inventory and quickly deciding who would respond to each request and how we could reach different communities.”

Rebecca Schmidt, MPA, Director of Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives,
Blue Ridge Health District, Virginia Department of Health



Yancey School Community Center

After having been awarded a three-year Strengthening Systems Grant from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, and subsequently hiring our first Yancey School Community Center Program Coordinator, we entered 2020 with a lot of momentum towards realizing our goal of building a vibrant and sustainable multi-generational community center in Southern Albemarle. Like many other things, the pandemic required us to reorient our approach and expectations for the community center. Our focus shifted from expanding social programming to supporting communications and community resiliency during the pandemic. Despite the shift in priorities and projects, the connection to the community and especially to the Yancey Advisory Panel has never been stronger. The Yancey School Community Center represents a deep and purposeful partnership with community members to do transformational work—breathing new life and new trust into the former elementary school building. Every success that has been realized with the community center this year is due to the continuing connection and partnership between community members and local government staff.

We look forward to reopening our doors and welcoming folks back into the center in the near future.

Seasonal Celebrations

Creating opportunities for socially distanced or completely virtual community celebrations became a post-covid priority. Approximately 200 community members participated in seasonal activity offerings, including a pumpkin carving kit giveaway, gingerbread kit giveaways, and a partnership with William and Mary's Highland to create fall harvest décor.

COVID-19

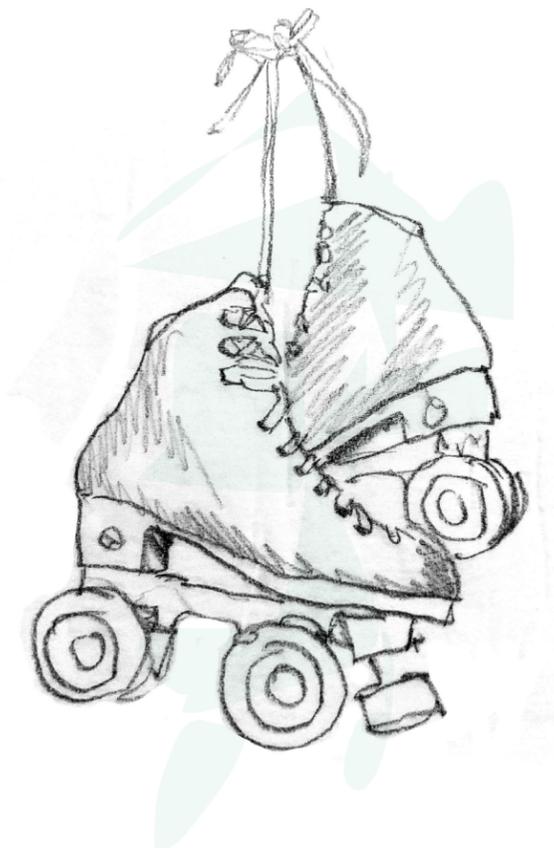
During the pandemic, the community center has acted as a communication and distribution center for the area, distributing masks, hand sanitizer, and a biweekly community newsflash circulated to over 200 residents. The space has also been used by many of our community partners for events ranging from covid testing to free turkey giveaways.

"This Community Center has been an invaluable "hub" and continues to unify the rural communities as barriers to good health and wellness are broken down. During the pandemic it has worked to improve communication, education and awareness while bringing in needed resources that strengthen our communities and empowers residents."

Peggy Scott, Esmont Resident, Yancey Advisory Panel member

Family Skate Night

January 2020 started off with real pizzazz. The Family Skate Night event saw more than 225 people show up to skate, snack, and shuffle to the music. More than 20 local residents served as volunteers to bring this event to life.



Albemarle's Black Classrooms

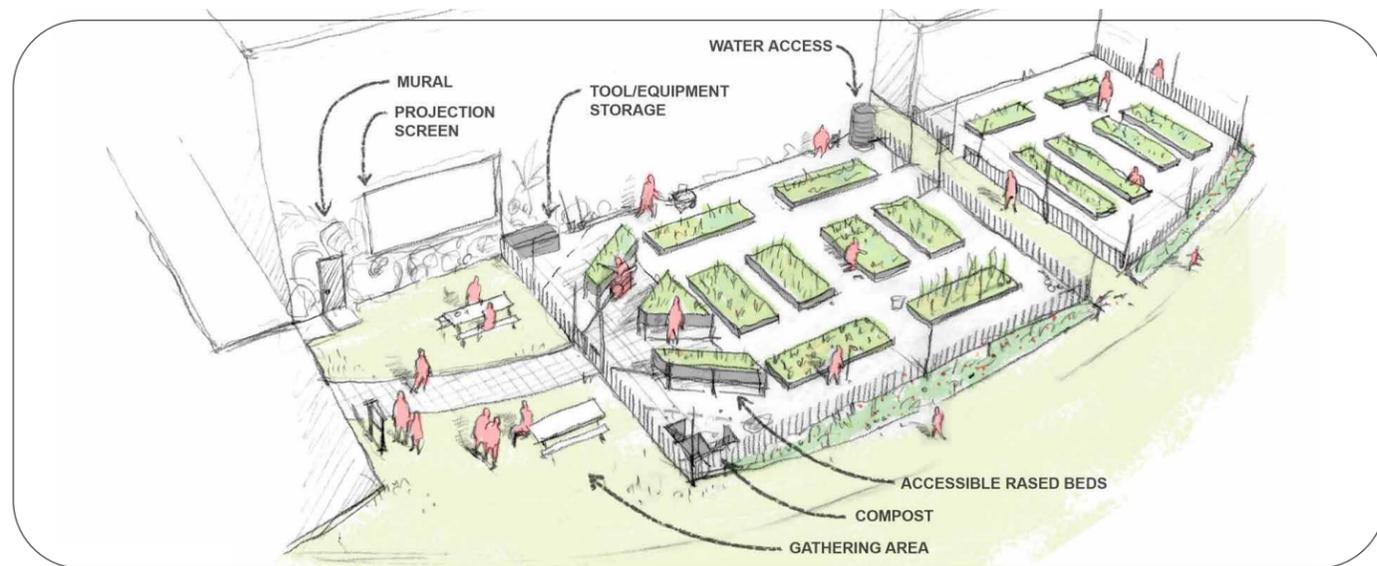
In February of this year, our partners Dr. Andrea Douglas, Executive Director, Jefferson School African American Heritage Center and Lorenzo Dickerson of Maupintown Media joined us at the community center for a screening and discussion around the documentary, Albemarle's Black Classrooms. Over 70 attendees came to listen and learn about the experience of black educators and students in the historically African-American grade schools of Albemarle County.

Yancey Community Garden

Over 170 volunteer hours
The Yancey Community Garden was constructed this year. Codesigned with OEI staff and local residents with pro bono support from a local landscape architect, this vibrant community garden has already added new life (and fresh produce) to the community center. As it grows in productivity its outputs will support the BF Yancey Community Food Pantry.

Community Engagement

The Yancey School Community Center is committed to the overall strengthening and support of the Southern Albemarle Community; during 2020 OEI staff has represented this interest through participation with several other community groups/initiatives including: Friends of Esmont Advisory Council, Charlottesville Albemarle Visitors Bureau/ Black Tourism Committee, Cultivate Charlottesville/ Black & Brown Farmers Initiative, Albemarle County Schools/ Scottsville Elementary Advisory Council, and the Albemarle County Schools/ Red Hill Elementary Family and Community Partnership Council.



Memorandum of Understanding for Collaboration Regarding Equity and Inclusion

On October 28, at the first joint public meeting of Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville, and the University of Virginia, the entities jointly agreed to create a shared memorandum of understanding for collaboration regarding equity and inclusion.

We understand collaboration to be vital to forming connection, forging community, and driving positive outcomes- no single organization can succeed alone. We hope that formalizing our commitment to partnering around equity and inclusion will allow us to draw on each other's strengths, increase our capacity, and provide opportunity for more robust and larger scale action than what we would accomplish individually.

Our current state is an interconnected web of overlapping systems, many of which perpetuate inequities in our community. OEI believes that as a local government institution with a 275-year history we have contributed to this current state, and so have a responsibility to disrupt, reorient, and ultimately transform those systems towards promoting equitable outcomes for all of our residents. We foresee opportunities to more intentionally consider equity across multiple shared platforms.





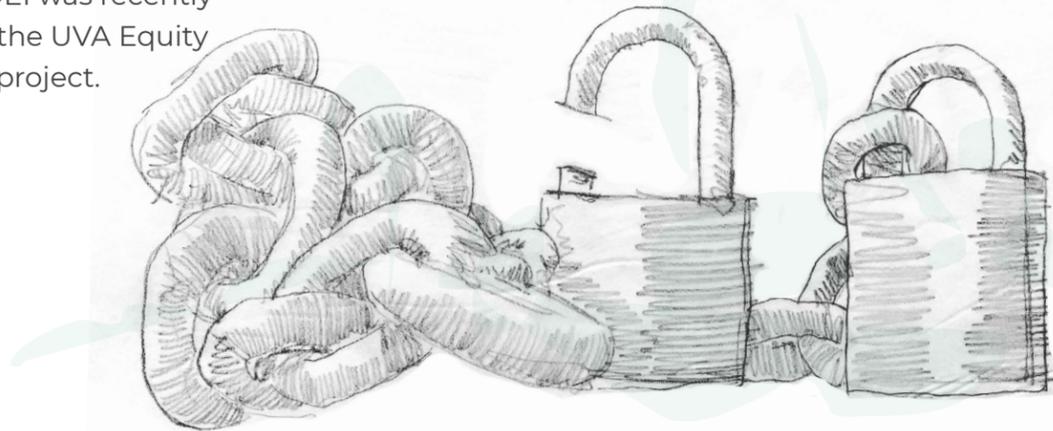
COMMITTED TO REMEMBRANCE

Since 2018, the Board's Community Remembrance Project has worked with community partners to recognize and support the memorialization of our community history. In recent years this commitment has led to multiple exhibitions and community conversations aimed at building community resiliency through shared history and mutual understanding.

Monacan Indian Nation

In February, OEI and Parks and Recreation met with the Monacan Tribal Council to begin a conversation about the memorialization of Monacan history in Albemarle County parks. The Tribal Council was enthusiastic about a collaborative project that would involve Monacan Elders being audio recorded walking the Old Mills Trail at Darden Towe and narrating their history, as well as a traditional folk tale appropriate for the area. The audio would be complemented by physical markers along the trail. While this project was paused during the pandemic, the building of the relationship has been invaluable.

Representatives of the Monacan Nation joined County staff to discuss their history and connection to Albemarle County for the “We are Going to Talk about Race” course. These conversations led us into another collaborative project with, Dr. Jeffrey Hantman—an archaeologist who has worked with the Monacan Nation since 1990 and who recently retired from the University of Virginia. With his help (and support from the Monacan Nation), we will create a map of sites of cultural/historical significance to the Monacan Indian Tribe in Albemarle County. OEI was recently awarded a grant from the UVA Equity Center to support this project.



Historic Highway Markers

In partnership with the County's Historic Preservation Committee, the Albemarle-Charlottesville Historical Society, and local residents, OEI successfully applied for approval from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) Board for two historic highway markers. The two markers approved, memorializing the Albemarle Training School and Ms. Virginia Lee Murray, represent a 40% increase in the number of highway markers in the County on topics related to a woman or person of color. While initially planned for the March 2020 DHR Board meetings, approval was delayed until December due to the state board's covid related cancellation of meetings. Both markers will be installed in 2021.

Disarming Our Court Square

The September 12th removal of the At Ready Confederate monument in the County's Court Square was preceded by a robust engagement process co-created by OEI and the Office of Communications and Public Engagement. All told, over 128,000 people were reached. The engagement effort was recognized with a Special Recognition Award by Preservation Piedmont, acknowledging the inclusive and thoughtful process.

All credit is due to the countless staff in several departments and community partners who worked so hard to make the project a success. Gratitude is extended in particular for the work of community educators and advocates who have devoted themselves to uplifting the stories and history of those in our community who have too often been unheard.



We can do all things through community partners who strengthen us. A special thank you to all of our community partners, including (but not limited to):

Jefferson School African American Heritage Center

UVa Library

Piedmont Virginia Community College- Division of Community Self-Sufficiency

UVa Equity Center

UVa School of Architecture

Sin Barreras / Without Barriers

UVa Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

United Way of Greater Charlottesville

Blue Ridge Health District

African American Pastor's Council

City of Charlottesville Human Services

Health Equity Access in Rural Regions (HEARR)

Equality Virginia

International Neighbors

Charlottesville Pride Community Network

International Rescue Committee

Monacan Indian Nation

Albemarle Charlottesville Historic Society

Charlottesville Area Community Foundation

William & Mary's Highland

Community Investment Collaborative

Virginia Humanities

Jefferson Madison Regional Library

UVa Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost (Vice Provost for Academic Outreach)

Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau

Piedmont Housing Alliance

Cultivate Charlottesville



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