



## VACAP NEWS

February 2024

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### VACAP Celebrates Black History Month

Community Action Agencies care about the entire community and continuously work to ensure dignity and access to opportunity for all people. VACAP and our members serve as anti-poverty organizations and the history of our federal funding has close ties to the Civil Rights movement. Please consider joining the VACAP Racial Equity Committee. The first meeting for 2024 will be held on Thursday February 29, 2024. We welcome VACAP members to join and value your contributions to this important initiative.

Our national partner, NCAP has many resources for Black History Month that we recommend you utilize as a resource for your agency: <https://communityactionpartnership.com/black-history/>

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### VACAP Legislative Conference & Recap

Thank you to those who attended VACAP's Legislative Conference and for your support and energy around our 2024 priorities, requesting a \$5.8 million annual investment to expand the successful whole family approach pilot from six agencies to a statewide program through

community action and increasing the CASH Campaign/Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program from \$185,725 to \$935,725. We had 28 agencies represented at your conference. VACAP members were recognized on both the House and Senate floor during our advocacy day on January 24, 2024.

Thank you for all VACAP member efforts to respond to legislative action alerts last week. The House and Senate will release their versions of the budget on Sunday, February 18. Full budget details will be available by at least Wednesday, February 22. **VACAP will report budget status and then please be on the look out for action alerts in the weeks ahead to further weigh in on the budget process.**



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**VACAP & NCAP Present Whole Family & Connections to Workforce Webinar**

NCAP and VACAP will be hosting a Whole Family Discussion around workforce, higher paying jobs and how to refer clients to resources for higher paying jobs on February 22, 2024 from 2:00pm-3:30pm.

We have confirmed Sara Dunnigan with the GO Virginia program at DHCD that funds regional projects aimed at creating higher paying jobs in those regions. Projects funded by the program include at the middle school, high school and community college level different trainings designed to prepare students for current high paying jobs in their regions.

More information on Go Virginia and the 9 regions: <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/go-virginia-regional-materials>. The nine regions are listed on the side of the webpage in a little blue box called “Go Virginia Regions.” When you click on the region, it will give you information about that region. The region’s growth and diversification plans can be found on right side of the region’s page, inside a little blue box called “Resources.”

Randy Stamper with the Virginia Community College System will also be on the presentation to discuss their offerings and bring to you all information for your clients about courses and steps towards an accreditation, degree or more for higher paying jobs.

This presentation will be held during a normally scheduled Whole family pilot meeting, however since many other agencies are interested in, or working on launching whole family approach, or are working to deepening your work force services, we are inviting the entire network to join in on this presentation and gain valuable insight for your clients.

Please email [kdahlman@vacap.org](mailto:kdahlman@vacap.org) for Zoom information for the webinar.

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## **2024 Marks the Start of 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Community Action**

2024 marks 60 years since the birth of Community Action! Over the next 12 months and into 2025, NCAP, NCAF, CAPLAW, VACAP and the Community Action Network will commemorate the 60th anniversary with national, state, and local events and activities. There are several tools available to use to recognize the 60 years of Community Action. Consider flyers, events or social media posts that highlight the amazing impacts of your agency and all the good work that has been done in the community. Success stories of clients paired with some facts and figures are a great way to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and all the great work you and your staff do daily in Community Action. This is a great time to share your vision for the future and focus on the community action brand in Virginia – Whole Family Approach.

60th logo and resources available at:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/d52d9850501/75238709-2ff7-4ace-b13e-6769df229341.pdf>



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## **Save the Date! VACAP Regional Meeting Dates Announced**

Save the Date for:

**May 1, 2024: Wytheville, VA**

**May 15, 2024: Williamsburg, VA**

**Plan now to bring a staff member for every peer group.**

Regional Meetings are designed to:

- Inspire team members by remembering the spirit of community action – our Why!
- Hear updates from key partners
- Break into peer groups and learn from peers – develop new relationships and peer partners

Peer groups that are planned include: CEO/ED, Senior Leaders, HR, Fiscal, IT, ROMA/Planner, all program areas (weatherization/housing, Head Start, whole family, digital opportunity/broadband and MORE).

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## **Member News**

Cierra's Story: **People Incorporated's** Whole Family Approach offers wraparound support services to help families forge a new path.

<https://www.peopleinc.net/testimonials/cierra/>

**TAP's** Annette Lewis Will Be Inducted into NCAF's Community Action Hall of Fame.

Ms. Lewis will be inducted into NCAF's Community Action Hall of Fame during the NCAF Washington Conference and Fly-In Day from March 12-15, 2024 in Washington D.C.

Congratulations!!

<https://mailchi.mp/9e71651d820b/announcing-2024-master-class-events-4883064?e=2f5a530e9b>

VACAP members secure Homeless Reduction Grants. **People Inc., Causeway and Bay Aging** all were announced as grant winners for DHCD's Homeless Reduction Grants by the Governor this week. Congratulations and thank you to all community action agencies and our partners working to serve our most vulnerable neighbors. See press release for more details:

<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2024/february/name-1021187-en.html>

**SERCAP** was selected as Host Community for International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Economic Recovery Corps' Inaugural Cohort. The Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellowship program aims to build capacity in economically distressed areas across the U.S. while cultivating the next generation of economic development leaders. The program connects 65 host sites nationwide with diverse practitioners and leaders with the passion, skills, and vision to create new ways of engaging in economic development. From a pool of over 500 host applications,

SERCAP is one of only 65 host sites selected to receive help in advancing a project critical to the economic recovery of our community. Each project across the U.S. receives a dedicated fellow (fully funded for 2.5 years from the ERC program) who serves as a field catalyst to enhance, strengthen, and coordinate relationships and local efforts alongside the host community. SERCAP is delighted to be matched with Devin Journiette, who brings a wealth of expertise and passion to help the agency and local stakeholders on the Rural Economic Ecosystem Services project, for the next 2.5 years.

The “Rural Economic Ecosystem Services” initiative led by **SERCAP** aims to address regional challenges in rural communities of Eastern Maryland and Southside Virginia. Rural communities in these regions face challenges with accessing markets, lower median household incomes, and limited business training and support services. The project focuses on building strong partnerships in communities that prioritize innovation, collaboration, mentorship, and infrastructure development. Focused attention will be given to value-added agriculture in collaboration with key entities like the Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center, Agriculture Extension Offices, and educational institutions. The ERC Fellow will play a vital role as a technical assistance provider and community liaison. Their responsibilities will include conducting research, developing partnerships, and analyzing community assets. The initiative aims to transform rural communities into thriving economic ecosystems, with a focus on sustainable economic activity, particularly in agriculture. For more information on the program: <https://economicrecoverycorps.org/>

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## **Goodreads and Newsworthy Updates**

### **What Is the Future of ACP? NDIA’s Resource Hub for Updates on the ACP**

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a federally funded program that has offered a monthly benefit to eligible households that is winding down.

The FCC’s ACP Wind-Down guidance includes critical information and estimated dates. In addition, NDIA is providing guidance, based on insights from our community of affiliates, for organizations navigating this difficult period.

<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/affordable-connectivity-program-transition/>

### **Virginia’s historic markers largely ignored Black history for decades. That’s finally changing.**

By Grace Mamon, Cardinal News

The state is making a concerted effort to fill the gaps created by what one expert called a “skewed portrayal of history.” In the last five years, 63% of all new historic markers in Virginia have directly related to Black history.

[https://cardinalnews.org/2024/02/01/virginias-historic-markers-largely-ignored-black-history-for-decades-thats-finally-changing/?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Virginia%20s%20historic%20markers%20largely%20ignored%20Black%20history%20for%20decades&utm\\_campaign=Monday%2C%20January%2015%2C%202024](https://cardinalnews.org/2024/02/01/virginias-historic-markers-largely-ignored-black-history-for-decades-thats-finally-changing/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Virginia%20s%20historic%20markers%20largely%20ignored%20Black%20history%20for%20decades&utm_campaign=Monday%2C%20January%2015%2C%202024)

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# Energy Efficiency First: Preparing your Nonprofit for Solar

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Renew America's Nonprofits Program is hosting an informational webinar to highlight opportunities and tools available to nonprofits for energy efficiency projects. Register to learn about the importance of energy efficiency first as an important step in preparing for solar. This webinar will focus on tools for benchmarking, identifying low-cost improvements, and identifying the right financing option.

Register here:

<https://doe.webex.com/webappng/sites/doe/meeting/register/0648b5258dce4648a14bb67a0fda8d16?ticket=4832534b0000000423e256b6a89c76d76d07c59b2aa67bd59513dc918fb3e0ead1e33d1a79761774&timestamp=1707947463285&RGID=r2f1cee93d876d27292e10138f408412d>

# ROMA Superheroes Peer Group Meetings Announced

The peer group will hold its inaugural quarterly meeting on February 22, 2024. Going forward, virtual gatherings will take place every 3rd Thursday from 2:00-3:00 pm. **To participate, registration is mandatory for all sessions.** This initiative aims to foster a robust network for community support and knowledge sharing. Membership in this group is open to anyone interested in delving deeper into the ROMA framework and understanding its relevance to the CAA mission, programs, outcomes, and overall community impact.

Contact Landis Faulcon with any questions, [Landis.Faulcon@hrcapinc.org](mailto:Landis.Faulcon@hrcapinc.org). Register here for first session: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=qeUKYsFOoE-GQV2fOGxzCQfYf5fmHG1NiXcciHaYHspUQVIKQ0JUWlQxMlNYTzICRjJSVFcwVDVOWS4>

Date	Topic & Description
February 22, 2024 (Quarter 1)	Keeping It Real! ROMA Challenges and Opportunities
May 23, 2024 (Quarter 2)	Applied ROMA Tools, Techniques, and Practices
September 26, 2024 (Quarter 3)	ROMA Wild Card—Toss Up Creating Train-the-Trainer Opportunities within Agencies Resource Development Using the ROMA Framework
November 7, 2024 (Quarter 4) *Held earlier due to Holiday	Leading the In-House ROMA Team ROMA Superhero Year in Review
Note:	*Topics are Subject to Change *Registration is Required *Meeting Link will be Provided

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## **Virginia Rural Leadership Institute Accepting Referral Nominations and Applications**

The Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI) is a rural leadership program that develops and supports highly-skilled, highly-motivated leaders who are committed to revitalizing their communities across the Commonwealth. VRLI addresses the need for high-quality, professional leadership and economic development training that equips community leaders with the skills they need to lead long-term economic advancement in their community and region. The program also seeks to increase cooperation, collaboration, and coordination across a broad array of organizations and sectors. Each year, VRLI will accept up to 30 applicants. VRLI provides opportunities for participants to hear from economic development and leadership experts, engage with and learn from peers, apply knowledge through classroom exercises, and learn about community successes.

For more information:

[https://www.cfrv.org/files/ugd/c50ea4\\_786cce2aea194e1aa4df49b5ec113633.pdf](https://www.cfrv.org/files/ugd/c50ea4_786cce2aea194e1aa4df49b5ec113633.pdf)

To Apply:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSchCzNL4qKKWvgCKGRSWPzoH1ofRzfTlavCpDDYOIUesY1ijA/viewform>

Refer or Nominate Someone:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKcZ1mSVfPre0S8wRfnOzpEG5\\_7HzdaQSoiT Pmd\\_C\\_y3aS-w/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKcZ1mSVfPre0S8wRfnOzpEG5_7HzdaQSoiT Pmd_C_y3aS-w/viewform)

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## **VACAP CEO Interviewed by Key Virginia Tech Center**

Read Erik Johnston's interview with Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement. Erik serves on this board to share news with key partners across the state the role of community action and explores opportunities for grant partnerships.

### **Meet a CECE Advisory Board Member: Erik Johnston, Virginia Community Action Partnership**

*Erik Johnston serves as the president and CEO for the Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP), the state association for the 31 community action agencies in Virginia that works to create pathways from poverty to prosperity. Over the course of his career, he has served as the associate legislative director for the National Association of Counties, the director of government affairs for the Virginia Association of Counties, deputy policy director in the Governor's office, and the director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Mary Washington and a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Tech.*

## **1. What does a day in your life look like as president and CEO of the Virginia Community Action Partnership?**

I love my work because I deeply believe in our mission of building partnerships to create pathways from poverty to prosperity for Virginians experiencing poverty. Every day is different. I spend my days training our members, developing and implementing partnerships on their behalf, and advocating for the solutions community action believes will truly move families out of poverty.

VACAP implements training and technical assistance efforts for our members and partners. This includes virtual and in person events for CEOs, senior leaders, program managers, front line staff, and central office staff of community action agencies and our partners. One of the key benefits of associations is connecting with peers to learn best practices, support each other through challenges, and to develop professional friendships that you have on speed dial.

We are always seeking partners to collaborate with on grant applications aligned with our mission. We doubled our budget over the past year with grants to serve Virginians in whole family wraparound services, digital equity/opportunity, energy efficiency, and more.

We partner with the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Housing, DHCD, Virginia Energy, and many other state agencies in service delivery. This General Assembly session we are advocating for expansion of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Network/CASH Campaign that VACAP oversees, along with moving a whole family approach from a service delivery pilot to a statewide effort. The results of this nationwide best practice have been incredible in helping Virginians achieve their dreams for their whole family in overcoming poverty.

## **2. What projects are you currently working on with the Virginia Community Action Partnership?**

One of our most exciting projects is the Whole Family Pilot Project. We are working to secure more funding in that space from the General Assembly and from private/public sector sources. The effort serves families, both children and parents, and helps them increase their income and achieve their dreams and goals. This is a program we feel a strong passion for because we've seen the results of it, and it points to the core mission of community action – to move families out of poverty. We have six pilots across the state in diverse geographies and are working on taking the pilot effort to a statewide program to help more families. This is truly the future of human services delivery as we are helping families get trained in higher paying jobs and ensuring we have coaches with small caseloads that have the time to help families navigate the resources available to overcome the benefits cliff. These coaches stick with families and help overcome barriers to training and employment such as transportation, child care, mental health, and more.

## **3. What is your proudest accomplishment over the course of your career?**

I'm really proud of my work during the pandemic. I worked with the Department of Housing and Community Development and other partners in the public and private sector on eviction prevention, broadband expansion, and economic collaboration (GO Virginia). Virginia led the nation in providing rent relief at scale first, which helped renters and landlords during the crisis and implemented a bold goal to seek to fully fund a public/private partnership to achieve universal broadband. It was amazing to work with the team, DHCD, and the partners in communities that made this happen. During that time, I was also really impressed by community action and their work on the front lines of the human services and economic empowerment spaces.



**4. What do you like most about being a part of CECE's advisory board?**

I love hearing about the current projects underway and the vision for future projects. I also love getting to interact with a diverse group of people and organizations from across the state that are working to make a difference in the commonwealth.

**5. How would you like to collaborate with CECE in the future?**

I'd like to continue exploring possibilities for overlapping our missions and figuring out ways that community action can partner with initiatives in workforce development, regional collaboration, digital equity, human services, and more. Our organizations are alike in the way that we're trying to create connections across a lot of different types of partnerships.

**6. What is the best advice you've ever received?**

Don't be afraid of failure and be entrepreneurial in your public sector work. Don't let the fear of something going wrong prevent you from going big and bold. I've worked for public sector organizations where the leader shared that advice with me and others, and it's something I always remember when I'm trying to do something new and innovative. It is empowering to know that failure is okay and part of the process to achieving great things in service to others.

**7. What books have you read recently that you would recommend?**

I recommend *Poverty, by America* written by Matthew Desmond. It is a short and inspiring read that dares to dream big about how poverty is a policy choice and there are multiple solutions to overcome it, many of which have bipartisan support. In community action, we have a history of working in a bipartisan manner to support the bold vision that poverty can be overcome.