
New Directions

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Arlington New Directions Coalition
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A Tale of Two Counties

Mary Rouleau, Lyon Park resident and Doorways volunteer

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...” -Charles Dickens

Okay, it probably is the “best of times” for relatively few these days--even in Arlington. But for many, if not most, Arlingtonians--at least according to recent reportage--these are at least “okay” times. For others among us, however, it is the worst of times. The summaries that follow are but a few of the tales of increased need that face our County--a representative sample of reports about how the economic downturn has impacted a diverse grouping of individuals and families.

The County Board will have to make some stark choices in crafting the 2011 Budget--the review cycle for which is well underway. There will be a revenue-expense shortfall, the full nature of which will be revealed in mid-January when the real estate assessment process is completed. Currently, the County is doing community outreach with a projected shortfall of \$30-35 Million while outlining scenarios to close the gap

with a combination of spending cuts and tax hikes. To see a recent presentation summary that is both a good snapshot of the economic picture and is easy to understand, go to www.arlingtonva.us/departments/ManagementAndFinance/budget/file73563.pdf.

The Arlington nonprofit community is pulling together to work with the County Board and concerned Arlingtonians to preserve the social safety net. As the sample summaries below indicate, it is a safety net that has needed to catch even more people over the past 16 months. In addition to serving human need, nonprofits provide great value to our community, as Jean Falvey explains below, easing the tax burden and providing employment themselves.

The choices for the County are not pleasant--but they do not need to be brutal either. I go to my hometown Detroit a lot. It is a city on the brink of collapse, due both to the economy and a confluence of particularly bad “public servants”. There is some hope these days, as those public servants have been replaced with a group of newish politicians who want to put the city on their collective backs. Still, the near-term choices are overwhelming. Driving around, I saw blocks--indeed whole neighborhoods--of boarded up homes and businesses. No part of Arlington can remotely compare. We get “good press”. An October 7, 2009 story in the New York Times described the “Rosslyn-Ballston corridor...(as) an oasis of stability--and even of prosperity.” There are lengthy quotes and descriptions from developers, business owners and County officials. Shortly thereafter, an article in the Washington Post [November 7, 2009] reported that Arlington [8.82%] ranked behind only Loudon County [10.06%] in the percentage of households headed by people 25-34 who make more than \$100,000. These

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are NATION-WIDE statistics. Detroit--and many other places in America-- would be lucky to have just a portion of these households.

Arlington prides itself on its liberal tradition, its diversity and belief that “each person is important”. We may not always know the tale of the “other” Arlington and hopefully what follows will help round out the picture of our community. All the above said, I firmly believe that the vast majority of Arlingtonians want to help our neighbors in need, but we--activists, neighbors and, most importantly, our elected leaders--must work together to make it happen. To the County Board’s “call”, we must “respond”.

Arlington Nonprofits Impact Arlington County for Sound Return on Investment

Jean Falvey, Development Manager, Vanguard Services Unlimited, www.vanguardservices.org

According to the 2007 study entitled Beyond Charity: Recognizing Return on Investment, pub-

lished by the World Bank and Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, the region’s robust nonprofit sector produces cost savings to society, multiplies impact by leveraging public, corporate and philanthropic assets and strengthens our community.

In fact, the study found that “In many areas, nonprofits deliver results for the people and communities they serve in remarkably fiscally prudent ways.” For example, studies have shown that substance abuse treatment programs like Vanguard Services Unlimited save \$7 - \$12 in associated societal costs (healthcare, lost productivity, criminal justice) for every dollar spent. Vanguard was founded in 1962 in an Arlington church basement and today is the Washington, DC area’s leader in addiction recovery and prevention, operating inpatient and outpatient programs. On any given day, more than 150 adolescents and adults are enrolled in our treatment programs. In addition, we are engaged in drug and alcohol education and prevention programs. We have helped more than 30,000 men, women and adolescent teens overcome their substance abuse problems, rejoin their families and lead productive, fulfilling lives.

The Center for Civil Society at Johns Hopkins University found that Arlington was home to 9,944 nonprofit employees in 2003 – or 9 percent of all private employment in Arlington County and 11.2 percent of private employment in Greater Washington. According to the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, those figures may be 10 percent greater today. That is a significant economic engine and employer.

What does that mean in terms of return on investment for the public dollars that Arlington County invests in its nonprofits? It means that Arlington’s more than 400 nonprofit organizations are saving Arlington money by solving and preventing problems...and saving money and generating money by tapping into potential. How? By addressing critical community problems such as substance abuse, employment, hunger, housing and education, nonprofits mitigate their immediate impact and find long-term solutions – all of which prevents unnecessary spending. In addition, nonprofit programs that create opportunities and self-sufficiency contribute to the local economy by lifting people out of poverty and into more productive roles.

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New Directions is the newsletter of the Arlington New Directions Coalition (ANDC). ANDC reports on local news and presents formal ANDC positions. *New Directions* also publishes articles and opinion pieces consistent with ANDC’s mission and values concerning critical public issues in Arlington County.

Special thanks to Carlos Luna for his assistance in the preparation of this newsletter.

For more information about contributing an article or opinion piece to *New Directions*, contact Charles Rinker at: (703) 243-5775 or cwrinker@juno.com

Motivated by a mission, Arlington's effective nonprofits create value for all of us.

Arlington Food Assistance Center [AFAC]

Christine Lucas, AFAC Executive Director www.afacinfo.org

The mission of the Arlington Food Assistance Center is to distribute supplemental groceries to families in need in Arlington. Hunger might not seem like an issue in Arlington, but the high cost of living and the downturn in the general economy and real estate markets mean that more and more families are struggling to make ends meet. While distributing groceries is our only mission, we help relieve the food budgets of our families, thereby allowing them to make other necessary purchases without sacrificing their health and nutrition needs. Supplemental groceries from AFAC mean that families can remain in their homes, workers can stay on the job, children are ready to learn, and mothers and babies have the nutrition they need.

In FY08, we served an average of 776 families each week. We are currently serving over 1,200 (and often nearly 1,300) families each week, an increase of 64%. Our food budget is up 78% since FY08, reflecting the increased number of families that we are serving, as well as the increasing price of food.

The types of people who turn to us for assistance are the low income elderly (some of whom face rent payments nearly the size of their total income), the disabled (many of whom are negatively impacted by rising food prices), and the working poor (some of whom are working less or not at all and are facing a long downturn before they may be fully employed again).

Food is the most basic need, and County funding provides a base of support both to our organization and to the community in general. Knowing that the most basic needs get provided is an important factor in keeping Arlington families healthy and together.

Buyers and Renters Arlington Voice [BRAVO]

Susan L. Korfanty, Executive Director www.bravotenants.org

BRAVO is a non-profit organization that assists Arlington tenants by helping with their day-to-day issues (such as pending evictions, code violations and job loss) and by involving them in advocating for af-

fordable housing. Between 2000 and 2005, 52% of Arlington's market affordable rental housing was lost and the trend continues. This loss disproportionately affects low income and minority residents. In 2007, 23% of Arlington households earned less than 60% of the area median income and 35% of the population was minority. The work of BRAVO and the tenants with whom we work is helping to preserve Arlington's economic and ethnic diversity.

In addition to housing advocacy, BRAVO works at the grass roots level doing outreach to tenants. BRAVO organizers distribute information about tenant issues and go door-to-door talking to tenants. As a result, three new tenant associations have recently been formed and four tenants have become new members of the BRAVO Board of Directors. BRAVO is also an active participant in Arlington's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

BRAVO receives funds from the County, foundations, and individual donations. Since 2008, foundation grants have decreased by nearly \$50,000. Although the amount from the County has remained constant, demand for our services has increased. With funding cutbacks, BRAVO would have to reduce its tenant organizing staff and the amount of material printed and distributed to tenants. BRAVO's role in assisting low income residents would be significantly diminished.

Recently, BRAVO has been working at a complex where living conditions are deplorable. The management claimed the problems no longer existed. BRAVO photographed the numerous problems, which included an entry door to a unit that will not close and a refrigerator that does not work. After sharing these photographs with County staff, a meeting with the owner to address the problems has been scheduled. BRAVO is also assisting a tenant who has lived in the same apartment for nine years. He received an eviction notice after calling Arlington County to report conditions in his apartment that violate the County's Housing Code.

Doorways for Women and Families

Linda Dunphy, Executive Director, www.doorwaysva.org

Doorways capped its 30th anniversary year of providing services to both end domestic violence

and prevent family homelessness by receiving the prestigious Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. Because Doorways relies on private sector funds for 65% of its funding, the downturn has had severe consequences on the operating budget. Several funders have cut back, resulting in losses in the hundreds of thousands for both FY 2010 and 2011.

In 2010, Doorways will fill the gap by depleting Operating Reserve funds, as well as taking other cost-cutting measures, chief among them a salary freeze. Further Operating Reserve funds will be insufficient in 2011. Currently, the County funds 30% of both the Domestic Violence Safehouse and the Family Home. Without a \$350,000 increase in County support for FY 2011, one of these shelters may be at risk of closing. Like other nonprofits, much of the private funding Doorways receives is directed, and we cannot simply shift funds from other programs. Further, comprehensive and integrated service delivery makes partial closure of one or both of these facilities impractical.

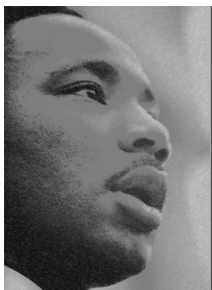
Todd, Desiree and their 4 children came to the Family Home after several years of unstable housing and underemployment. Homeless and unable to provide for their family, they arrived feeling like failures and struggling with depression and low self-esteem. With the help of our Financial Educator and Client Services Coordinator, Todd secured a job at a premiere Clarendon restaurant (where he created an award winning recipe) and Desiree enrolled in Training Futures' intensive job training program and is now employed by a leading philanthropic foundation in DC. Doorways Children's staff worked with each child to help them achieve stability in school and to recover from years of chaotic living. The family continues to work with HomeStart staff learning skills to succeed as working parents, to manage their new family finances, and to successfully, and permanently, remain stable in housing.

Offender Aid and Restoration [OAR]

Dr. Gail C. Arnall, Executive Director www.oaronline.org

OAR welcomes the previously incarcerated back to our community, providing vital services to 1,363 clients and their families just in the first six months of this year – a substantial increase over this time last year. But, our state funds have already been cut 12% this fiscal year, and we are fearful that we will see more cuts next year. That will put in jeopardy our PREP education program, serving 80 clients weekly at night and on weekends. Less funding will also mean less ability to place felons in stable housing, and help them find employment. This is not only a humanitarian need, but a public safety need as well. And it is cost effective: It costs about \$600 per person for OAR to provide services to help clients coming back to our community, compared to at least \$25,000 a year for the county or state to provide room and board in jail or prison.

A scared and distracted man walked into the OAR office in Arlington holding a plastic bag with all his belongings. With hesitation he said "I was just released and I need help getting home". He told us his name was Joe. He seemed surprised at how fast we moved to get him the help he needed. Joe told us he had three young daughters and that it had been 16 months since he last saw them. Within 30 minutes, Joe had a food voucher, a winter coat, a bag to put his belongings in, transportation assistance to get home, Christmas gifts for his daughters, a business card with the date and time on the back for his next appointment with OAR, and a flyer with information on the PREP educational program at the OAR office. When Joe walked out of the office he turned and said "Thank you all so much! Happy Holidays and I will be here on Wednesday at 10am".



"There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we now have the resources to get rid of it....Today, therefore, the question on the agenda must read: Why should there be hunger and privation in any land, in any city, at any table, when man has the resources and the scientific know-how to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life?...There is no deficit in human resources; the deficit is in human will." Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (New York: Harper & Row, 1967)

The Arlington Social Services Safety Net and Local Tax Rates

There are five important meeting dates for citizen participation in the Arlington County FY 2011 budget process:

- 1-3 p.m. on Tuesday, February 16, 2010, a County Board work session at which the county manager presents her proposed budget. The public may attend but not make comments or ask questions.
- Saturday, February 20, 2010, when the County Board sets the maximum real estate tax rate it will consider to help fund the new budget.
- Tuesday, March 23, 2010, when the County Board holds its first public hearing on the proposed expenditure budget. (On-line advanced sign-up begins on 3/16/10.)
- Wednesday, March 24, 2010, when the County Board holds its second public hearing on the proposed expenditure budget. (On-line advanced sign-up begins on 3/17/10.)
- Thursday, March 25, when the County Board holds its public hearing on setting next year's real estate tax rate.

Voices supporting adequate funding for social service safety net and affordable housing programs need to be heard at each of these meetings. Here is why.

Background

One of the crueler ironies of an economic recession is that the need for social service safety net programs increases as the tax base which supports those programs decreases. Reflecting the former fact, the Arlington Housing Commission, after meeting with representatives of non-profit organizations and advocates serving Arlington's vulnerable and at-risk populations, recommended **increases** in a number of safety net and affordable housing programs (see article p.6) Reflecting the latter fact, the County faces

a decline in real estate tax assessments and revenues, which translates into a \$30-to-\$35 million recession-driven County funding gap just to keep the County budget at this year's funding level. That funding gap plus any additional funding for social safety net programs to meet the increased needs must be closed through real estate tax increases and/or expenditure reductions.

To respond to the funding gap, the Arlington County Board asked the county manager to draft a budget that

- Is no greater than the current year's budget;
- Maintains the County's commitment to fund services for the health and safety of the community, affordable housing, environmental sustainability, public schools and a social services safety net for those in need;
- Preserves the County's AAA bond rating; and
- Fills the funding gap with 50 percent from revenue increases (primarily from higher real estate taxes) and 50 percent from expenditure reductions.

February 16 meeting

The public will learn how the county manager proposes to implement the Board's budget guidelines when the staff-prepared budget is released at the County Board's February 16 work session. That budget will include proposed funding levels for safety net and other programs **and** a proposed real estate tax rate to fund the budget. The proposals will provide the starting point for public comments and County Board actions on the budget. The proposals will also be the basis for determining any need to increase the tax rate above the county manager's recommendation if the county is to fully fund the Housing Commission's recommendations.

February 20 meeting

By law, the County Board cannot approve a real estate tax rate higher than the rate it votes to advertise at this meeting (though it can approve a lower rate), which makes the question of the real estate tax rate to be advertised a crucial County Board decision. Regardless of whether the funding for safety net programs proposed in the county manager's budget is adequate or not, there will be pressures to increase other parts of the budget. To ensure that there is room in the budget to fund the Housing Commission's safety net and affordable housing recommendations, the Board should agree to advertise a maximum tax rate several cents higher than that proposed by the county manager, in order to give the County Board the flexibility that the Board members may need to fund these important programs. A one cent increase in the tax rate generates an estimated \$5.4 million in revenue, which is divided equally between the County's and the school's budget.

While few taxpayers want their taxes to go up, many believe that it is the responsibility of government to provide an adequate safety net for our most vulnerable residents. There are Arlington County programs that allow low and moderate income homeowners to become exempt from paying their real estate taxes or to defer the payment of their real estate taxes until their property is sold. There is also an Arlington taxpayer assistance loan program that allows taxpayers of any income to secure a loan

for the payment of all or part of their taxes.

Proponents should let the County Board know before and at the February 20 meeting that they support tax increases to fund social service safety net and affordable housing programs.

March 23 and March 24 meetings

At these meetings, proponents will have the opportunity to testify in support of adequate funding of safety net and affordable housing programs. Proponents might want to use the Housing Commission recommendations as the basis for their recommendations.

March 25 meeting

In the past, while the County Board budget hearings on proposed spending have attracted considerable public attention, usually only a few people have turned out to testify at the real estate tax rate hearings. This year, it will be important for safety net and affordable housing program supporters to testify in support of a real estate tax rate that will generate the revenue needed to meet the Housing Commission's spending recommendations. It is likely that opponents to any increase in the current or proposed tax rate, or to funding more than 50 percent of the funding gap through tax increases are likely to make their views known at this hearing.

FY2011 County Budget Recommendations to Preserve the Social Service Safety Net and Affordable Housing

On November 30, 2009, the Arlington Housing Commission's Budget Sub-Committee met with approximately a dozen representatives from social service safety net and affordable program providers and advocates to discuss the FY2011 County budget shortfall as well as the increased funding needs being experienced by the providers. That meeting provided some budget recommendations for consideration of the full Housing Commission at its meeting on December 3. The recommendations that follow were those that were passed by the Housing Commission and forwarded to the County Board.

The Housing Commission recommendation letter to the County Board stated, "In making these recommendations, the Commission is cognizant of the economic recession's impact on County revenues from various taxes and other sources. We are equally aware of the recession's impacts on many lower income families and individuals, and of the County Board's direction to the County Manager to protect the County's "safety net" programs."

During the current fiscal year, the Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS) and Arlington's service providers saw a steady increase in the num-

bers of families and individuals who turned to the County for assistance. The demands on the housing grant rental assistance program alone increased by 11%. DHS and Arlington providers all expect increased demand for assistance to continue into FY 2011 and beyond.

The Commission also recommended that the County take every advantage of opportunities to increase investment in committed affordable units and to assist residents in transitioning from shelter to permanent housing, especially in this time of economic recession and flat markets.

The Commission's recommendations are as follows, quoted from the Commission's letter to the County Board [with any extra comments or explanations being provided in the brackets]:

1. Increase AHIF [Affordable Housing Investment Fund] Contributions to \$5 million for FY 2011

Because every single AHIF project dollar invested by Arlington County leverages an average of \$3 dollars in additional funding, the Housing Commission recommends that the County increase its contribution to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) to at least \$5 million dollars in the next fiscal year. Funding in the past two years has decreased, from approximately \$4.8 million in FY2009 to \$4.2 million in FY2010. In addition to committing units to the County's affordable housing stock, a small portion of AHIF money is set aside to fund home ownership opportunities for moderate-income families through MIPAP [Moderate Income Purchase Assistance Program] and housing services grants made to non-profit providers; we recommend that the County remain committed to funding these programs.

2. Increase Housing Grants [The County's locally funded rental assistance program] by \$336,493 for FY 2010 and \$888,490 for FY 2011

In order to meet the 11% growth in demand for these services, the Housing Commission recommends an increase to programs that serve working families. The growth in demand can be directly attributed to the economic downturn; the average caseload in FY2010 has increased from 868 to 950 families, requiring an increase to continue meeting the needs of

families in the current fiscal year, and is anticipated to grow to 1,050 families in FY2011.

3. Increase Housing Grants to 90% of the Fair Market Rents (FMR) [Fair Market Rents are established annually by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development]

The Maximum Allowable Rent (MAR) under this program has remained stable for over six years, while rents have continued to rise. The increase to 90% of the FMR still keeps the rate lower than that of the Section 8 program, ensuring that this County-funded program will not compete with available Federal vouchers as they become available. The current rate covers about 77% of the FMR, creating too high a rent burden for many Arlington families. It is estimated that this will cost an additional \$537,560 to the program.

4. Expand the Housing Grant Program to assist 100 individuals

The Housing Commission recommends that the County expand the categories of assistance under the current program to include up to 100 individuals (single people are excluded from this assistance currently). This is designed to provide a transition from shelter to stable housing for 100 homeless individuals, will further goals of the County's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness and is estimated to cost up to \$550,000.

5. Provide subsidy to support 26 additional households in permanent supportive housing

The Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program maintains a consistent pool of 26 households waiting for housing. The success rate of this program is high; 96% of all residents retain housing for at least one year, and 86% retain housing for at least two years. The additional local subsidy would allow 26 more chronically homeless households permanent housing support in this program, and would cost an estimated \$280,800.

6. Support Safety Net Programs Facing Shortfalls in FY2011

The Housing Commission heard directly from a

number of Arlington's non-profit partners that provide safety net programs; all are facing shortfalls in the coming fiscal year, and may be forced to further cut programs upon which Arlington County relies. [Though the Housing Commission did not put a number to this recommendation, it did provide a list of requests received by them from some providers in an attachment to their letter. Based upon that information, it seems that we should recommend that the County budget include \$500,000 to meet this increased need.]

ANDC recommends that Arlington residents and workers concerned about our social services safety net and affordable housing programs and their fund-

ing in next year's County budget make your views known to the County Board by letter to the County Board Office, 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201, by email to countyboard@arlingtonva.us or by telephone call to 703-228-3130. Provide your views on both the programs that you believe must be fully funded and about the real estate tax rate that the County should adopt. You may also want to speak at some or all of the County Board public hearings as outlined on page 5 of this newsletter. The recommendations from the Housing Commission, noted above, were partly generated by and have the support of a wide range of social service and affordable housing providers and advocates in Arlington.

Foreclosures Are Happening in Arlington County

For over 15 years, Arlington Home Ownership Made Easier, Inc. (AHOME) has provided home buyer education and counseling to low and moderate income first time home buyers in Arlington County and surrounding jurisdictions. When the housing market changed in 2007, AHOME developed an additional focus to include foreclosure prevention and loss mitigation counseling.

Karen Serfis is the Executive Director of AHOME and has served on Governor Kaine's Virginia Foreclosure Prevention Task Force since December of 2007. She is a certified housing counselor; and is also certified through NeighborWorks and the Virginia Housing Development Authority in foreclosure prevention and loss mitigation counseling. Karen is a member of the Virginia Association of Housing Counselors and currently serves on their Board as the Member at Large representing Northern Virginia.

We interviewed Karen recently about foreclosures in Arlington County; and the following are the Q and A's of that interview.

Q: What is going on in Arlington County with foreclosures?

A: We are beginning to see the rate of foreclosures level off in Arlington County. According to Arlington

County court records there were 306 foreclosures in Arlington County during 2008 and 260 short sales. For the 9 months ending September 30, 2009, there were 109 foreclosures and 125 short sales. However, AHOME has seen an increase in our caseload as more people learn about our services and seek assistance from us. We currently have 52 households that we are actively working with to prevent foreclosure. In the last three months, we have increased our caseload by over 30%.

Q: What is AHOME doing to help homeowners prevent foreclosure?

A: AHOME has been providing foreclosure prevention counseling for over two years. We begin the process by sitting down with the clients and reviewing their current situation. An important question to ask the clients is what is their long term goal? Do they want to remain in the property; or do they want to sell their property. We then work with them to complete a budget, identify sources of income and create an action plan. In the last three months, President Obama's Making Home Affordable Plan has helped many of the households we are working with get permanent loan modifications. The following list describes the options clients have (or the steps they can go through) to retain their home as well as the options clients have (or the steps they can go through)

Home Retention Options:

Repayment Plan

This occurs when there is the ability to repay the past due mortgage amount in 2-6 months. If prior plans were made in the last 12 months, go to modification.

Modification

This is any modification to the original terms of the mortgage contract, including interest rate reduction, step rate interest, extending terms and capitalization of past due amounts. The borrower may not obtain more than 1 modification in a 12 month period or 2 modifications in 5 years.

Forbearance w/Modification or Reinstatement

Here the borrower remits no payment or makes payment at a reduced amount for up to 90 days. Borrower should seek debt counseling to reduce expense to qualify. Then lender reinstates the loan in full.

Non-Retention Options:

Sell the Home

If no loan reinstatement occurs, the borrower validates income and completes extension or modification. If there is no income or not enough income to pay the mortgage, encourage borrower to sell the home at market value.

Short Sale

If the value of the home is insufficient to pay the total debt, the owner can find a buyer willing to pay market value for the home and present this offer to the bank. If approved, the buyer and the bank then negotiate a settlement for the balance of the debt.

Deed In Lieu

If home cannot be sold in 90 days, convey collateral to bank to reduce foreclosure time.

Foreclosure

if retention of their home is not possible.

Q: What is happening to the homes once they have been sold at the foreclosure auction?

A: Some of the homes that have been foreclosed on are vacant and still owned by the lender who foreclosed; but many are being bought by investors. I have heard from a few people in the industry that some foreclosed properties do not even make it to the Multiple Listing Services. Real estate agents representing investors have contacts at the large banks and buy the properties directly from the lenders. Other properties are sold to first time home buyers or other people looking for a place to purchase.

Q: Who is your typical client seeking help?

A: We have had a diverse client base. Some clients are elderly persons, who were refinancing their properties every couple of years and using the cash proceeds from the refinance to pay their mortgages. When the market collapsed, property values went down and these people were unable to continue to refinance their properties, and were not able to

afford their payments. Most of our other clients are seeking help because they have had a reduction or loss of income. As a result of the economic recession many people have lost their jobs or have had their hours reduced. Lenders generally will not work with homeowners who do not have any income. Sometimes, clients are able to rent out rooms in their homes to increase their income. For many, this is a temporary situation that can be modified if and when they are able to obtain new employment. About half of our clients are able to qualify for a loan modification through President Obama's Making Home Affordable Plan.

Q: How do you define success?

A: We define success as avoiding foreclosure. Some clients come to us a few days or the day before a foreclosure sale date; and our options are limited. Some of our clients do not complete the necessary paperwork for a loan modification; and foreclosure becomes inevitable. For most clients that come to us early enough in the process, foreclosure can be prevented. For the twelve month period ending November 30, 2009, AHOME counseled 108

households. Of the 70 households whose files we closed, 81% were able to avoid foreclosure and only thirteen households lost their properties to foreclosure.

Q: What is Arlington County doing to help people facing foreclosure?

A: The Arlington County Crisis Assistance Bureau provides some temporary monetary assistance for struggling households that qualify for their services. Initially, Arlington County believed that foreclosures were not a big issue in the County. But as the market continued its downturn, the County had a change of heart and understanding. During the last quarter of

2009, the County's Housing Division has been going out into the community and letting people know about the services that are available to residents and how to get help. The County in conjunction with AHOME and the Hispanic Committee of Virginia is sponsoring a Foreclosure Prevention Workshop on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 from 6:30 – 8:00 pm at Macedonia Baptist Church, 3440 South 22nd Street. For more information on this workshop, contact AHOME at (703) 527-3854 or Doug Myrick, Arlington County (703) 228-3786.

Arlington Free Clinic -- Today and Tomorrow

Paula L. Potts, Director of Foundation Relations
Jennifer S. Lee, MD, AFC Board of Directors

For over 15 years, Arlington Free Clinic (AFC) has been Arlington County's only provider of free comprehensive health care for low-income uninsured adult residents. Last year, AFC provided close to 10,000 medical visits. This includes cervical and breast cancer screenings, mental health care, and treatment for chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension. The in-house pharmacy filled more than 15,000 prescriptions for patients.

Today's economy makes AFC's mission more important than ever with more people losing their jobs and their health insurance. According to recently released figures from the Census Bureau, 20.3% of Arlington County's residents are uninsured – one of the highest rates in Northern Virginia. More significant, a report on community health status indicators by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments notes that 73% of Arlington's uninsured are low income (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level), the highest rate in the DC metropolitan area. AFC's patients are all uninsured Arlington County residents, have been in the U.S. for at least one year and have incomes at or below 200% of the FPL.

It is well documented that poor health is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. In recent months, the Clinic reports seeing an increasing number of individuals who are part of the "new needy." More than 150 uninsured adult Arlingtonians seek to become new patients at the Clinic's "lottery days" each month, an increase of more than 200 percent since January 2009. One patient had been employed for years as a construction worker with medical benefits. With the industry slow-down, he lost his job and his insurance. Struggling, he began working as an independent contractor but could not afford private health insurance. One day, he fell off a ladder, ending up in the hospital with a shattered shoulder. When released from the hospital, he had over \$50,000 of medical debt and prescriptions he could not afford to fill. When selected in AFC's September new patient lottery, he told an AFC staff member, "I am so lucky! Now I have a real chance to start over."



While AFC cannot do anything about the huge medical debt individuals incur prior to becoming patients, the Clinic can help prevent them from sinking further. When patients get care at AFC, the Clinic helps them manage their conditions, keep them out of expensive emergency rooms, and better control health care spending. In the coming year, AFC expects to provide comprehensive medical care for over 1,700 Arlingtonians, including over 600 new patients.

Because of AFC's limited resources (including volunteers, access to diagnostic services, staff, space and funding), it cannot take care of every potential patient that comes to the Clinic. However, the organization is making every effort to provide more appointments and see more patients. Most significantly, AFC has implemented a Nurse Practitioner (NP) program that offers primary care appointments for patients new to AFC as well as current patients with acute care issues or uncontrolled chronic diseases needing intensive short-term management. In the coming year, the NP program will play a lead role in expanding access by offering over 2,500 primary care appointments.

AFC depends on the Arlington community to help provide its essential services. More than 560 volunteer doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and other partners, including community leaders, are key to the Clinic's success and sustainability. Last year, the Virginia Hospital Center provided over \$800,000 of diagnostic and other services for AFC patients.

Arlington Free Clinic does not receive federal or county funding. It depends on donations from Arlington residents, businesses, community organizations, and foundations to fund the vast majority of care provided to Arlington's uninsured.

While AFC is the only free clinic in Arlington County, it is one of 55 member clinics spread throughout the Commonwealth that belong to the Virginia Association of Free Clinics. This is the second highest number of free clinics of any state in the nation. Historically, Virginia has made limited investments in health care, especially for its poorest residents. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Virginia ranks 48th among the states and DC in per capita Medicaid spending. Medicaid is the government-sponsored health insurance program for certain

groups of eligible, low-income individuals. It is financed jointly by federal and state contributions.

While the currently debated proposals for national health care reform will certainly help expand coverage for the most vulnerable, Arlington Free Clinic has no doubt that there will still be a strong community need for its services. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if national health reform is enacted there could still be anywhere from 18 to 24 million people who remain uninsured in the US by 2019. There will also be those who might gain coverage under health reform but may be unable to find a health care provider in the community who will accept their insurance. As important as expanding insurance coverage is, Arlington Free Clinic knows that actually providing health care is ultimately what is important. As health reform moves forward, AFC is prepared to continue its vital mission, adapting to the changing needs of the community.

New Clinic Facility

In June 2009, the Clinic relocated to a new permanent facility on the Columbia Pike corridor in South Arlington. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of donors – including the Cafritz Foundation, the Meyer Foundation, the Virginia Health Care Foundation and others, AFC owns its space. By not having to pay rent, which is typically an organization's most significant operating expense, AFC can put donated dollars directly to work taking care of patients.

The new space has been recognized through four prestigious design awards including the Washington Business Journal's 2009 award for Green Building Design. The Clinic is seeking LEED® certification as a "green" facility and expects to be the first free clinic in Virginia and the first medical facility in Arlington to receive LEED certification. For a tour of AFC, please contact Pat McDermott at pmcdermott@arlingtonfreeclinic.org or 703-979-1425, ext. 121.

To get involved or to learn more about AFC, please visit www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org.

Arlington New Directions Coalition

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