

**Founding
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- The Arc of Virginia
- Partnership for People with Disabilities
- Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
- Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy

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Virginia Alliance for Community

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"Community for All"

Over 80 local, state and national organizations join call for reform

On February 15, The Arc of Virginia held a civil rights march in Richmond where hundreds of people with developmental disabilities and families from across the Commonwealth voiced opposition to the state's plans to rebuild Southeastern Virginia Training Center (SEVTC) a large, segregated institution in Chesapeake, VA.

Willie Foster, who used to live in SEVTC, spoke at the march. Thanks to the help of local advocates, Willie moved out of the institution this year and now lives in a townhome in a Chesapeake, Virginia neighborhood. "I don't ever want to go back there. My life is so much better now." Mr. Foster said to fellow advocates at the march. "Some of my friends are still there; they want to leave too. We've got to fight for them! Do you hear me? They NEED us!"

Today, the Virginia Alliance for Community announced that over 80 local, state and national organizations stand with Willie and The Arc's families in their call for reform. Each of these organizations have signed on in support of the Alliance for Community's recently released proposal, "Reform Now: Community for All", available on The Arc's website at www.thearcofva.org.

The Alliance proposal calls for Governor McDonnell and members of the General Assembly to halt the rebuilding of large, costly, segregated institutions for people with developmental disabilities and instead redirect these funds to create integrated, community-based housing for training center residents.

"The Arc's families are not alone in this fight," said Howard Cullum, President of The Arc of Virginia. "Combined, the organizations that have signed on to the Alliance proposal represent the voices of over 100,000 Virginians who are opposed to the segregation of people with developmental disabilities."

"The assumption that individuals with developmental disabilities need to live in institutions in the 21st century is simply wrong," says the Alliance in its whitepaper. A recent state-sponsored study by the well recognized Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) has confirmed that for every person living in Southeastern Virginia Training Center, there are individuals with equivalent (if not greater) needs being served in the community. A key finding of the report is that all people living in the institution can be served in the community.

The Alliance for Community's call for reform has been endorsed by local family support organizations, private non-profit providers, Centers for Independent Living and civil social justice organizations across the state. Supporting organizations of the "Community for All" campaign include affiliates of Easter Seals, the Autism Society of America and the Down Syndrome Association.

Organizations in the Tidewater region have also made their position known. South Hampton Roads supporters of the Alliance proposal include Hope House Foundation, the Endependence Center, the Tidewater Autism Society of America, the Down Syndrome Association of S. Hampton Roads, the South Hampton Roads Friends of The Arc, Support Services of Virginia, Eggleston Services, and Niche Housing.

"Governor McDonnell and members of the General Assembly, the disability community and its partners are speaking loud and clear," said Mr. Cullum. "Stop the rebuilding of large segregated institutions for people with developmental disabilities. The time for Virginia to act is now."

The Alliance proposal and the HSRI report are both available on The Arc of Virginia's website, www.thearcofva.org. For more information about the Virginia Alliance for Community, contact Jamie Liban at 804-649-8481, ext. 101 or jliban@thearcofva.org

ALLIANCE SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

1. APSE Virginia
2. Association of University Centers on Disabilities
3. Autism Society of America-Central Virginia Chapter
4. Autism Society of America-Northern Virginia Chapter
5. Autism Society of America-Tidewater Chapter
6. Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
7. Coalition for Housing Opportunities in the Community for Everyone (CHOICE)
8. Commonwealth Autism Service
9. Community Concepts, Inc.
10. Community Opportunities, Inc.
11. Community Residences, Inc.
12. Danville Arc
13. disAbility Resource Center
14. Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond
15. Down Syndrome Association of Hampton Roads
16. Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia
17. Easter Seals-UCP Virginia
18. Eggleston Services
19. Family Alliance Network and Support
20. Family First of Virginia Beach, Inc.
21. Fine Metals Corp.
22. Greater Richmond Arc
23. Hanover Arc
24. Hope House Foundation
25. ICON Community Services, Inc.
26. Imagine
27. Just People
28. L'Arche of Greater Washington D.C.
29. Legal Aid Justice Center
30. Lynchburg Area Center for Independent Living
31. MVLE, Inc.
32. National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
33. Niche Housing
34. National Disability Rights Network
35. Parents and Advocates for Special Housing Needs (PASHN, Inc.)
36. Parent to Parent of Virginia
37. Peninsula Autism Society
38. People First of Chesterfield
39. People First of Northern Virginia
40. Positive Vibe Cafe
41. Post Educational Services
42. Richmond Residential Services
43. ServiceSource
44. Shenandoah Community Residences, Inc.
45. Shenandoah Valley Autism Partnership
46. Social Action Linking Together (SALT)
47. SPARC
48. Special Olympics Virginia
49. Substance Abuse Addiction Recovery Alliance (SARAA)
50. Sunrise Community
51. Support Services of Virginia
52. TASH International
53. TecAccess
54. The Arc of Augusta
55. The Arc of Greater Prince William
56. The Arc of Greater Roanoke Valley
57. The Arc of Greater Williamsburg
58. The Arc of Halifax
59. The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham
60. The Arc of Loudoun
61. The Arc of Northern Shenandoah Valley
62. The Arc of Northern Virginia
63. The Arc of the Piedmont
64. The Arc of Rappahannock
65. The Arc of Rockbridge
66. The Arc of Virginia Peninsula
67. The Arc of Warren County
68. The Arc of the United States
69. The Lamano Agency
70. The Post Institute and Assoc. LLC
71. Wall Residences
72. Worksource Enterprises
73. vaACCSES
74. VA-TASH
75. Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL)
76. Virginia Association of Personal Care Assistants (VAPCA)
77. Virginia Federation of Families
78. Virginia Organizing Project
79. Virginia Rehabilitation Association
80. Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
81. VOCAL Network