



# Annual Report 2022

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## **BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN COMMUNITY**

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Sometimes you get so busy building relationships, sharing social capital, and being an accountability partner that you forget to let everyone know about the courageous Leaders who are growing from surviving to thriving! While the data in this report is from 2022, our 10 Leaders who graduated this year are also doing amazing things.

As you consider your year-end gifts for 2023, please keep us in mind. Monica whose credit score improved by more than 200 points, Iesha who is working towards her associate degree, and Catrina who got a big promotion and will soon be a homeowner. Charlene who graduated in 2021 is participating in Ally training so that she can give back some of what she gained through Circles.

Stay tuned for more data and stories from our Leaders who graduated in 2023. Amazing things happen when we build a community to reduce poverty!

Gratefully,

Joel Blum & Lisa Specter-Dunaway  
Circles RVA Co-Presidents

**“WHEN WE STRIVE TO BECOME BETTER THAN WE ARE,  
EVERYTHING AROUND US BECOMES BETTER TOO.”**

# MISSION AND FOCUS

Circles RVA is filling an unmet need in Richmond by partnering with families on the fence between surviving and thriving through the process of goal setting, intentional relationship-building, and an expanded community of support. Circles RVA provides tools and resources to empower families to break the cycle of poverty and move towards economic stability.

We focus on encouraging people as they take steps to permanently move out of poverty. Participants, known as Circle Leaders, come from a variety of backgrounds with income levels at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines due to either situational or generational circumstances. They **Lead** their unique path forward, drawing upon the encouragement and social capital provided by volunteer **Allies**. As an organization, we provide the social network, financial tools, and emotional encouragement that activate their economic independence.



During 2022, we implemented our goal of diverse organizational leadership. Our 14-member Board of Directors is comprised of four graduated Leaders and a broad membership of representative of our Circles RVA community. All are, or have been, involved in our operations as Leaders, Allies or volunteers. This allows us to plan and to operate with diverse perspectives. Cohorts 4 and 5 graduated and continue to move forward with their goals and aspirations. The powerful friendships and social capital they developed through Circles continues to support their growth.

We have two Co-Presidents, each serving for a two-year staggered term because we find diverse leadership to be essential. In 2022, Joel Blum succeeded Dick Ritsch as Co-President for a two-year term. Valena Dixon served her second year as Co-President. Diversity and inclusion maximizes complementary talents to build community.

# OUR IMPACT

## SINCE 2018 FIVE GRADUATED COHORTS

- **36** Leaders started the program
- **33** Leaders completed the initial class
- **19** Leaders continued in the program at least 18 months
- **3** returned to school to continue their education
- **79%** increased their income on average by \$1,154
- **76%** of them increased total assets on average by \$1,481
- On average Leaders' circles of support increased from 1 to 4

**12 NEW GRADUATES**

**6 NEW LEADERS IN TRAINING**

## EIGHT LEADERS GRADUATED IN JUNE 2022 AND FOUR LEADERS GRADUATED IN OCTOBER 2022

All 12 increased their incomes moving them closer to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, increased their savings and credit scores, and built lasting friendships with their Allies and Circles community.

**EIGHTEEN LEADERS ACTIVELY WORKED ON GOALS** for growth and self-sufficiency. Goals included education, career, money management, housing, and health.

## SIX NEW LEADERS BEGAN TRAINING

In September 2022, we returned to in-person meetings and by year's end two cohorts graduated with one Cohort continuing and Cohort 7 began. They will be matched with their Allies to create their Circle and begin their 18-month journey in May 2023.

**12 NEW ALLIES IN TRAINING**

## 12 PEOPLE BEGAN ALLY TRAINING

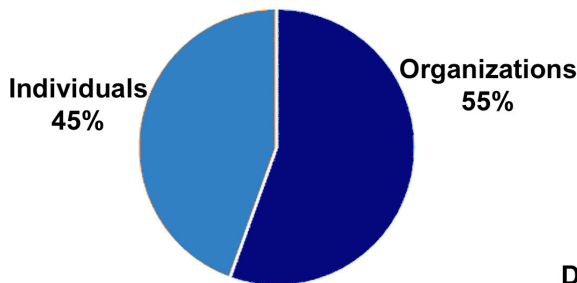
Allies make an intentional commitment to become both cheerleaders and accountability partners for their Circle Leader. Over time, they will expand the Leader's networks, helping them gain access to resources and leverage relationships they might not otherwise access.



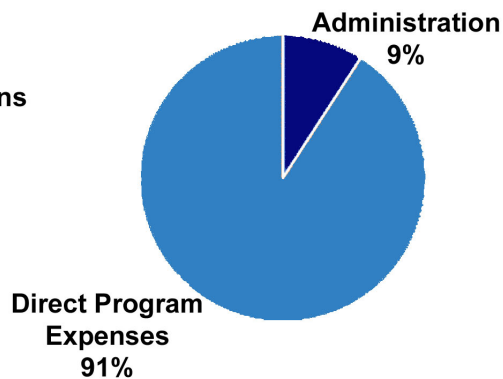
# FINANCIAL REPORTING

We believe in the power of people. Leaders, Allies, staff, and other volunteers come together to make Circles RVA's high-impact approach possible. Therefore, investing in our mission translates to investing in Richmonders. The following summarizes finances for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2022. These are unaudited financial reports. Detailed financial reports are available on GuideStar, where Circles RVA has a gold star for transparency.

## 2022 Revenue \$159,278



## 2022 Expenses \$125,196



# MOVING INTO 2023

Our Circles Leaders lost family members and jobs and continue to be negatively impacted by COVID. Our families were teetering between crisis and security before the pandemic and now face a road to stability that may be longer and more complex. For some, this has reduced their capacity to participate at all resulting in smaller cohorts than in the past. That said, our recruitment plan is solid, and we are reaching out to groups about the opportunities provided through the Circles experience. We are committed to ensuring that whoever is ready will have access to the social capital and emotional support that we provide so that they too can move from surviving to thriving. Contact us if you know someone who might benefit from Circles.

# PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT

To remain fiscally efficient and to best leverage existing resources, we operate as a volunteer-centric organization focused on engaging Richmond's strengths and goodwill. Every individual or organization that connects with Circles brings an array of valuable experience and talent to share.

## Resource Teams

These behind-the-scenes volunteers share specific skills/knowledge with our Circle Leaders and support our efforts. Assistance includes resume or business plan development, legal or financial advice, connections to jobs and education information and connection with other community resources and services. Volunteers provide the social capital that everyone needs to support their success with information, or simply a contact in an agency or organization.

## Community Collaborations

Our community collaborations allow us to connect Leaders with expertise that is helpful as they navigate a path forward. We offer sincere appreciation to each partner for their willingness to share their expertise with Leaders and their families during our weekly programming. Our monthly BigView night provides education and engagement around system barriers. Hospitality volunteers allow us to have fellowship and build relationships with our weekly meals.

American Heart Association  
Boys and Girls Club of Metro Richmond  
Capital One  
City of Richmond Office of Community  
Wealth Building  
Dreamscape Yoga  
Fit to Go  
Grace & Holy Trinity Episcopal Church  
Health Brigade Clinic

Healthy Heart Plus  
Northside Family YMC  
Richmond City Office of  
Equitable Development  
Sisters Network Central Virginia  
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church  
Virginia Poverty Law Center  
Virginia Credit Union

## In-Kind Giving and Meal Donors

Whether preparing or paying for a meal our meal donors allow us to build a sense of unity with food. We also have local restaurants that donate or discount meals for our Tuesday gatherings.

## Organizational Donors

We rely on the faithful financial support of organizations and foundations, many of whom gifted a firm foundation to Circles RVA from our inception.

## Individual Donors

A growing number of generous individuals demonstrated their commitment to breaking the cycle of poverty in Richmond through financial giving this year.

We are grateful for the generosity and spirit of collaboration that spurs the Circles RVA community.





## IN-KIND GIVING

Capital One Cafe  
Chick-fil-A Brandermill  
Chick-fil-A Forest Hill Avenue  
Dominion Energy Young Professionals  
Domino's Pizza  
First Mennonite Church of Richmond  
Food Lion  
Jason's Deli  
Libbie Market  
Publix Super Markets, Inc  
Sorors and Sisters  
Sous Casa  
Tazikis Mediterranean Cafe  
The Kroger Co  
Underground Kitchen  
Wegmans Midlothian

## ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

AmazonSmile Foundation  
Bonfire Fundraising  
Capital One  
Circles USA  
The Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond  
Elis Olsson Memorial Foundation  
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia Region 10 Council  
First Mennonite Church of Richmond  
Grace & Holy Trinity Episcopal Church  
Hill City Church  
Metropolitan Health Foundation  
Network for Good  
ouRVACollective  
Paypal Giving Fund  
PGA Charities, Inc.  
Richmond Friends Meeting  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
to honor of the Reverend Bo Millner  
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church  
The Kroger Co  
United Way of Greater Richmond  
Universal Leaf Foundation  
Virginia Credit Union

## INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Valencia Adams  
The Ananias  
Anonymous  
Stephen & Mary Ann Batsche  
Ivy Bell  
Rona Berwick  
Kristin Blalock  
Joel Blum  
Verna Boos  
Ross Bowers  
Ellen Boyle  
James Cain  
Courtney Cisneros  
Noah Cogan  
Jane & Don Cowles  
Walter & Karen Crenshaw  
Richard & Anne Crom  
Bradfute Warwick Davenport, Jr.  
Valena Dixon  
Christy & Dennis Ellis  
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Martin & Hope Armstrong Erb  
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A. Hugh & Susan Ewing  
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Jennifer Goodyear  
Ingeborg & Jay Hendley  
Alice Herlihy  
David Hetherington  
Mary Howle  
Nancy Hsu  
Shanteny Jackson  
Wayne K. Johnson &  
Robin Johnson  
Lynne Lancaster  
Mr. and Mrs. James R. Lewis, Jr.  
Mary Lindhert  
Adrian & Paige Luxmoore

Anne-Marie McCartan  
Dawn McNamara  
Rieman McNamara  
Ann Gordan Mickel  
Bollin Millner  
Glenn Moore  
Pat Muller &  
Jim Bakunas  
John Nelms  
Beth Nelson  
The Rev. Duane J. Nettles  
Cas Overton  
Bill Perkins  
Becky & Chris Peterson  
Rebecca Peterson  
Daniel & Mary Raper  
Cheryn Rapp  
Joel & Valerie Reinford  
Donald Retzer  
Liz & Al Rider  
Dick & Nan Ellen Ritsch  
Merry & Massie Ritsch  
Brad & Janet Sauer  
Lisa Specter-Dunaway  
Frank & Bocky Talbott  
Janine "Jannie" Thomas  
Sherrell Thompson  
Sylvia Uhlman  
Kimberly Vullo &  
Paul Benson  
Stephanie Watkins  
Sandra & Roger Whitfield  
Roland Woodward  
Betty & Buster Wright  
Davis & Polly Wrinkle



## CONTRIBUTIONS MADE IN HONOR OF

Joel Blum, given by  
Diane Sneed

Alice Dixon, given by:  
Joan Batchelor

Christy Ellis, given by:  
Angele Beeman  
Mary Dillingham  
Joseph Doohan  
Patricia Gregory  
Justin May  
Vella Osborne  
Annmarie Penman  
John Pine  
Pam Price  
Graham Rutherford  
Debbie Sangster  
Cheryl Sheets  
Rustie Thomas  
Dee Wallain  
Kelly Zydellis

Harry, given by:  
Saundra Napier  
Diane Harris  
Rubie Height

Gerry Hassig, given by:  
Gerry Hassig  
Diane Dykema  
Jill von Herrmann

David Heatherington &  
Dick Ritsch, given by:  
Joni & Mark Dray

Dan Jamison & Kelly  
Ramsey, given by:  
Thomas Jamison

Wayne Johnson, given by:  
Gay & Stephen Young

Jean Massey, given by:  
Harry Massey

Dick Ritsch, given by:  
Cindy & David Wofford

Kim Vullo, given by:  
Matt Benson

Kim Vullo & Paul Benson,  
given by: Mary Lietman



## Delphine's Story of Hope

I am a Virginia resident with dreams of OWNING a home with a white picket fence and being also able to support myself and 3 children without the help of welfare or illegal activities. After all, it's the American dream, right? Well coming from the levels of poverty some of us face in crime-stricken neighborhoods, just being able to keep food on the table and a roof over our heads isn't easy. I was never taught to plan, dream, and how to execute my goals and dreams. Then a church member introduced me to Circles. I was introduced to groups of individuals who would show me the way and all I had to do was listen and be willing to learn and put in some effort. Over almost 2 years I was taught to budget and save and become productive in my community. For the first time as an adult, people cared enough to invest their time and money into me, a former high school dropout. With the help of Circles, I am now in community college and on my way to home ownership. The values each one teaches one are immeasurable!! I dare anyone to come to see what Circles is about!! Come join the mission, you won't regret it, I certainly don't.

Delphine Harris Cohort 5

### 2022 DIRECTORS

Joel Blum  
Co-president

Valena Dixon  
Co-president

Richard Crom  
Treasurer

Malcolm E. Ritsch, Jr.  
Secretary

Stephen Batsche  
Rev. Remmie Chew, Jr.  
DarShee' Clarke  
Ivy Bell  
Shanteny Jackson  
Wayne King Johnson  
Lisa Specter-Dunaway  
Joy Thomas  
Stephanie Watkins

### STAFF

Christy Ellis  
Community Coordinator

Helen Rai  
Circles Coach

Debbie Williams  
Circles Coach

Rachel Dunaway  
Administrative Assistant

Rebecca Mann  
Jobs Coach

Xiomara Vidal  
Children's Program  
Coordinator



[WWW.CIRCLESRVA.ORG](http://WWW.CIRCLESRVA.ORG)



# A Look Back at 2022

**Back to School Big View Night**

It's back-to-school season! Join us on Tuesday, August 23 6-8:00 pm to hear from the Boys & Girls Club of Metro Richmond and the Community College Workforce Alliance. Dinner will be provided!

Grace & Holy Trinity Church  
8 N Laurel St.  
Richmond, VA 23220

**20 year anniversary celebration**  
by purchasing a Circles RVA t-shirt

**ORDERS TAKEN  
JUNE 30 - AUGUST 4TH  
BY CLICKING  
<https://www.bonfire.com/circles->**

**You are invited!**  
*Big View Night:  
Thankful Tuesday*

Hear from Reverend Daylene Burris, Executive Minister of the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church on keeping an attitude of gratitude! Dinner will be served!

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22  
6-8 PM  
GRACE & HOLY TRINITY  
CHURCH 8 N LAUREL ST.**

**CIRCLES RVA**

Purchase a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or hoodie to support Circles RVA

Purchase December 1 through December 11 for delivery before December 31

<https://www.bonfire.com/circles-rva/>

Support our Leaders in their journey