

Opportunity Neighborhoods

Winter 2024 Briefing

Highlighting the priorities and progress of ON ambassadors, communities, and partners

Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON) is an initiative that brings together residents, service providers, schools, and other supporters in defined communities to create a shared vision to address needs and achieve equitable results for youth and their caregivers.



The Crossroads ON youth council hosted former Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross at the Culmore Teen Center for the Youth Council Meeting. They were able to share information about the youth council and describe their activities. The council members prepared questions for Ms. Gross, and she was very helpful in answering those questions. The president of the youth council expressed gratitude to Ms. Gross on behalf of the youth council members for her attendance. After the questions and answer session, there was a raffle for the youth involved in her visit. (Photo courtesy of Second Story.)

Spotlight on School Readiness, Early Childhood Education, and Literacy

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ON Impact

Metrics across all sites



Between October and December 2023, our ON-wide efforts included:

69
residents

of prioritized
communities served in
an ambassador or other
leadership role

15
active teams

organized to move ON work
forward, including community
councils, working groups,
steering committees, and the
ON Partners' Network

155
strategic partners*

supported ON through
service, data, or
sponsorship

179
attendees

participated in training or
professional development
through ON

**Strategic partners are those partners that contribute programming, data, and/or sponsorship to prevent and address root cause issues, and/or increase access, quality, and utilization of needed resources in the community.*



The Crossroads ON Team invited interested youth to participate in the Crossroads ON youth council where they learned to be leaders in their communities. They were provided school supplies and additional resources such as mentoring and tutoring to ensure youth have all the tools needed to succeed. Events such as college and career days were organized, to provide youth the opportunity to receive resources for college, internships, and summer jobs. Workshops were held to build confidence and to learn more about the dangers of gangs and gang activity. (Photo courtesy of Second Story.)

In Focus



Spotlight on the Neighborhood School Readiness Project

The Fairfax County Neighborhood School Readiness Project (NSRP) works to establish, sustain, and increase collaborative partnerships that support children so they enter kindergarten ready to be successful in school and life. The NSRP facilitation team joined the Social Impact Unit of Neighborhood and Community Services' *Inclusive Engagement and Targeted Interventions (IETI)* division in Fall of 2023. This move from the *Early Childhood Programs and Services (ECPS)* division will strengthen NSRP's ability to foster enhanced collaborations at the neighborhood level, in coordination with NCS's *Culture, Recreation, and Community Connections (CRCC)* division, Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON) and other place-based initiatives serving communities of opportunity.

There are currently eight NSRP teams around Fairfax County, including Annandale/West Falls Church, Centreville, Fairfax, Falls Church/Tysons, Herndon, Reston, Mount Vernon, and Springfield. Each of these teams is comprised of individuals who represent local government agencies, public schools, early childhood learning and development programs, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations and businesses. In their respective communities, each team works to:

- Coordinate the work of partners in support of school readiness efforts.
- Bring the voices of families to the conversations.
- Partner with families to grow school readiness opportunities in all communities.
- Foster quality and effective professional learning in all early childhood programs and services.



In Focus

Spotlight on the Neighborhood School Readiness Project - Cont'd

NSRP team facilitators sit at the intersection of a wide array of community resources and partnerships designed to foster school readiness and improved access to and quality of early learning experiences. In recent months, the teams have:

-  Fostered collaboration between high school representatives and staff from Child Care Assistance and Referral so the child care needs of teen parents could be addressed.
-  Shared dates for local school kindergarten orientations to encourage timely kindergarten registrations.
-  Connected elementary school representatives with health care staff promoting Medicaid services so they could understand services available (such as transportation to school after a doctor's appointment).

As NSRP collaborations with ON and other place-based initiatives grow, we are setting our sights on the following goals for spring/summer 2024:

-  Connect local community residents in Opportunity Neighborhoods to councils and working groups focused on equitable school readiness and early childhood development access.
-  Support development of an *early childhood resources toolkit*.
-  Promote awareness of the importance of the first five years of life through presentations to partners.
-  Support registration for FCPS PreK and kindergarten.
-  Support school readiness and literacy events planned for March through May.
-  Promote awareness and opportunities for inclusion of children with special needs with typically developing children in early childhood settings.
-  Share information about early childhood development, school readiness, and child care quality standards with parent groups, councils, and networks in Opportunity Neighborhoods.
-  Work with ON leads to foster direct relationships and connection between service providers on the NSRP teams with parents in the local school communities.

Highlights

Annandale ON



The Annandale ON team hosted a 3-part series of Opioid Information Sessions to discuss the medical perspective, police perspective, and parental perspective, and provide Revive training to participants. The series was well-attended and highly successful, with approximately 20 community members at each session.



Wedgewood Community Development Advocates disseminated flyers and called residents regarding the Wedgewood food distributions and community events. They provided residents of the Wedgewood Community access to the computer/printer room, food pantry, a bulletin board with current programs/information on county resources, case management, and service referrals. Flyers were disseminated along with other helpful resources regarding food access, healthcare, job opportunities and education development throughout the community.



The Annandale ON team hosted a presentation at Annadale HS called, "Principal's Coffee," presented by Medical Care for Children Partnership for Healthier Communities. Annandale ON Council members attended training to share information on how to apply for health insurance for students and receive free physicals for eligibility to play high school sports.



The Fairmont Gardens gift distribution by Mason Police drew 250-300 people. The ON Annandale Children's Activities Working Group arrived at 7:30 AM to set up a tent and tables and begin preparing hot cocoa made with milk on outdoor burners. They served 10 gallons of hot chocolate and 144 croissants. Children went home with a small bag of cookies (assembled by working group members) and adults could choose a gift to take home--either an insulated grocery bag with the ON Annandale logo (gave out about 75 of these) or a large plastic mixing bowl suggested by a working group member (gave out about 60 of these). Anthem Healthcare provided funding to cover the cost of the refreshments and gifts.



Highlights

Crossroads ON: Bailey's Crossroads and Culmore



This Ambassador-Led Afghan Community Food Distribution was the fourth collaborative event in partnership with Food for Others, at which members of the Afghan community in Skyline Towers received bags of food and other needed items. Mr. Mirwais, a community ambassador for this community, assisted in organizing and managing the distribution. The event was a success as the organization made it easy for families to come and grab their food and other needed items. Community members spoke to the Health Department partners to raise concerns and give feedback about their needs. For this month, the main topic was a clothing drive.



For the Glasgow Middle School town hall, the community members were given the opportunity to ask questions to Glasgow Middle School staff, which included counselors, teachers, and special education coordinators. The topics included subjects such as school attendance, family liaisons, bathroom safety, school security, and the school online portal view. Also, as a new initiative this month, the Crossroads Youth Council will attend the after-school programs at Second Story at least once a month to conduct a class for those younger students regarding a variety of relevant topics. This month the youth council assisted the Future Leadership Youth Conference hosted by Fairfax County and met with youth from different neighborhoods to talk about the teen center and youth council.



The Crossroads youth council hosted Supervisor Penny Gross at the teen center for the Youth Council Meeting. They were able to share information about the youth council and describe their activities. The council members prepared questions for Ms. Gross, and she was very helpful in answering those questions. The president of the youth council expressed gratitude to Ms. Gross on behalf of the youth council members for her attendance. After the questions and answer session, there was a raffle for the youth involved in her visit.



The Fairfax County Health Department students representatives engaged with Crossroads ON students in a health literacy class to learn about the importance of washing hands to sustain good hygiene and to avoid disease and contamination. The students were able to engage in an interactive workshop where they viewed their hands through a hygiene sensor machine to see how dirty their hands were and were taught by the Fairfax County Health Department how to clean their hands properly and thoroughly with soap and water.



Highlights

ON Herndon



The ON Herndon Team collaborated with the NCS Community Developer and the Neighborhood School Readiness Project Team to develop a Sherpa tour of Herndon and the ON Herndon-identified neighborhoods to present at the Herndon NSRP team meeting in October. The ON Herndon organizers pointed out the places or sites for partners to post flyers and shared some of the lessons learned about Herndon and the communities in the ON sites.



The Herndon FCPS Principals' meeting included principals from various schools in the Herndon Pyramid, including Aldrin E.S., Armstrong E.S., Herndon M.S., Dranesville E.S., Hutchinson E.S., Herndon H.S., and ON Herndon. The main topics of discussion centered around reducing absenteeism, increasing attendance across the schools, and improving connections between schools and families.



The ON Herndon Team met with the facilitator for the Neighborhood School Readiness Project Team to discuss the need to engage with parents of preschool age children. The ON Herndon Team convened with the Neighborhood School Readiness Project facilitator to address the importance of involving parents with preschool-age children in our initiatives. Emphasizing the pivotal role parents play in early childhood development, the meeting also focused on strategies to strengthen their ongoing partnership, ensuring a cohesive effort to promote school readiness within the community. They will continue working in partnership with FCPS and community partners to meet families where they are, build trusting relationships, and start the conversation about the importance of Early Childhood Education.



During the meeting with the Outreach Representative for Senator Mark Warner, four neighborhood ambassadors told their stories about how ON Herndon has impacted their lives and their communities, why they decided to become Neighborhood Ambassadors, and their passion for helping others and giving back to their communities.



Highlights

ON Mount Vernon - “ONMV”



Representatives from ON Mount Vernon, and the Mount Vernon Neighborhood School Readiness Project Team are supporting the Child and Youth Wellbeing working group of the Community+ Initiative, bringing better collaboration and reducing overlap in the work of these three initiatives supporting the Mount Vernon area. This group is focusing on early childhood, behavioral health, and educational wellbeing.



The ONMV team presented a PowerPoint for the Neighborhood School Readiness Project, which shared the Buckman Loop Tour "Seeing is Understanding" - getting to know our communities of the Route 1 corridor. They collaborated with the Neighborhood School Readiness Project Team to share information for FCPS PreK and Kindergarten registration and partnered with the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center to host two workshops for families with children with special needs. They shared workshops, training, and scholarship information to help youth and families with college preparedness.



The Partnership with Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) continues to be an integral part of programming that grants access to early childhood education. Additionally, community members looking for early childhood education are routinely referred to the Early Learning Center.



The Creekside Center has partnered with the Hybla Valley Community Center to hold an afterschool enrichment program and 8-week summer camp. This will expose participants to new technology and an opportunity to interact with children they don't usually interact with. The goal is to become more socially aware and be familiar with their community's diverse ethnicities. They will complete mini projects. For example, the Creekside scholars created their personalized 3-D printed keychain.



Highlights

ON Reston - “RestON”



The ON Reston Team collaborated with “Community Connected Sites” center-based staff to bring local FCPS staff to the communities of Cedar Ridge and Crescent to allow for residents to get to know school administrators, ask about policies and procedures, and enjoy a meal together. A hundred residents developed a deeper relationship with FCPS, Community Connected Sites, and ON staff while improving their understanding of school system policies regarding attendance.



The RestON Network Convening event hosted 40 members of the Opportunity Neighborhoods RestON network including local leaders, Neighborhood Ambassadors, parents and local government representatives. The vision for Reston was shared and a commitment was made to working within the Opportunity Neighborhoods initiative to make Reston more equitable. Participants shared their vision for Reston.



The ON Reston Team met with the new principal for Forest Edge Elementary School to discuss strategies for supporting families and youth who live at Cedar Ridge apartments and attend Forest Edge Elementary. The ON Reston Team developed a relationship between FEES and the Cedar Ridge community. The Forest Edge Elementary School principal wants to participate in community meetings to engage with the community more.



The Langston Hughes Middle School Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program received approval from the Fairfax County Department of Housing to apply for Little Libraries in four communities. AVID’s mission is to close the opportunity gap by preparing all students for college and career readiness and success in a global society. There has been increased collaboration and partnership between the FCPS Family Engagement rep, FCPS Social Work staff, and RestON.



ON Focal Areas

ON develops capacity and infrastructure in five primary focal areas. We engage residents and partners to work toward positive change in areas prioritized by the community.



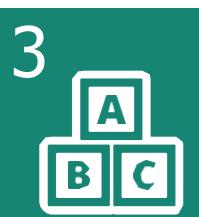
INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Youth and caregivers are active leaders and contribute and benefit fully from a community that supports and encourages them to thrive.



CONNECTED & MOTIVATED YOUTH

Youth are plugged in to a comprehensive network of caring adults that encourages and guides their positive academic and personal goals.



SCHOOL READINESS & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Children and adults have access to an array of evidence-based, quality resources that prepares them for and addresses barriers to lifelong learning.



WELLNESS & FAMILY STABILITY

A continuum of supports allows youth and families to identify their goals for health, safety, stability, and self-sufficiency, and to access resources for reaching them.



WORKFORCE READINESS & STUDENT CAREER PREPAREDNESS

Students and parents are empowered to take advantage of the academic and career preparatory resources that are best tailored to their personal skills and assets.

LEARN MORE

<http://bit.ly/opportunityneighborhoods>

Email: ONNetwork@fairfaxcounty.gov

Sites and Leads

	Lead Nonprofit	Web/Contact	Established	FCPS Region	HHS Region	Site Scope
ON Mount Vernon	United Community 	www.unitedcommunity.org/onmv/ www.unitedcommunity.org	2011	3	1	Prioritized communities in zip codes 22306 and 22309 and schools in the Mount Vernon and West Potomac pyramids that serve those communities
RestON	Cornerstones 	www.cornerstonesva.org/rest-on/ info@cornerstonesva.org	2016	1	3	Prioritized communities in zip codes 20190 and 20191 and schools in the South Lakes pyramid that serve those communities
Crossroads ON	Second Story 	www.second-story.org/ info@second-story.org	2020	2	2	Prioritized communities in zip codes 22041 and 22044 and schools in the Justice pyramid that serve those communities
ON Herndon	Cornerstones 	www.cornerstonesva.org/rest-on/ info@cornerstonesva.org	2020	1	3	Prioritized communities in zip codes 20170 and 20171 and schools in the Herndon and Westfield pyramids that serve those communities
Annandale ON	FACETS 	www.facetscares.org/programs/annandale/ Facets@FacetsCares.org	2021	6	2	Prioritized communities in zip codes 22003 and schools in the Annandale and Falls Church pyramids that serve those communities
Centreville ON	FACETS 	Coming Soon...	This site is in the research and development phase, and will be established in 2025	4	4	Prioritized communities in zip code 20120 and schools in the Westfield and Centreville pyramids that serve those communities



The Fairfax County Health Department students representatives engaged with students in a Health Literacy class to learn about the importance of washing hands to sustain good hygiene and to avoid disease and contamination. The students were able to engage in an interactive workshop where the students viewed their hands through a hygiene sensor machine to see how dirty their hands were and were taught by the Fairfax County Health Department how to clean their hands properly and thoroughly with soap and water.

(Photo courtesy of Second Story.)

