Celebrating the life of Jawad Abdu

Virginia LISC had the great honor of working with Jawad Abdu through our support of VA League for Safer Streets. Jawad, who passed suddenly in July, was a co-founder of The League, alongside Paul Taylor and Robert Morris.

Virginia LISC safety staff member Shekinah Mitchell shared, “Jawad was a man of BIG vision. He understood first-hand the challenges in our community, and he dedicated the last few years of his life to making a difference. His spirit and passion has left a mark on me, our organization and our region. He will be dearly missed.”

Jawad was an incredible man with a powerful legacy of passion and service to this community. In honor of Jawad and his legacy, LISC will continue our work to foster safety.

Financial Opportunity for Southside

Over the past decade, the Richmond region’s Latino population has exploded. The 2010 census recorded just 13,689 Latinos in our region; however, that population is expected to grow to more than 111,581 people by 2020 according to UVA’s Weldon Cooper Center.

In response to that growing population in our Richmond Region and the needs and challenges that many Latino residents face, Virginia LISC, in partnership with Southside Community Development & Housing Corporation (SCDHC), SunTrust Foundation, and Altria, have launched LISC’s fourth Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) in the Greater Richmond Region. Continued on page 2
Southside FOC Continued

The fourth FOC is the first to have two permanent bilingual coaches to serve Richmond’s growing Latino population. It joins the ranks of our three other FOCs serving residents of Richmond, Chesterfield, Henrico, and Petersburg.

On June 6th our partners, supporters, and FOC staff gathered for the official launch of the Southside FOC. Held at SCDHC, the event included remarks from all partners and a testimonial from an FOC client, given by Southside's bilingual employment coach, Nury Mojica - hear the powerful remarks in this video clip.

The launch of the fourth FOC was made possible by grants of $200,000 each from SunTrust and Altria. The two grants will support and sustain the fourth FOC for the first high-quality services for Southside residents. Both corporations have strong philanthropic identities in our region and have collectively given millions of dollars to support cause-driven projects and programs in Virginia.

Virginia LISC’s expansion of FOC services to Richmond’s Southside is an important step in building financial stability for our region’s most vulnerable communities and will mean more than 500 individuals will be served by 2020 across our entire FOC Network. No parent should have to choose between keeping the lights on or putting food on the table for their children; FOC services help increase their income and reduce expenses to achieve financial stability and ultimately build wealth.

The End of a Healthy Food Desert

The East End of Richmond has long been a food desert with few healthy food options for a community characterized by extreme and densely-populated poverty. Virginia LISC’s team had been working with the City of Richmond and other local partners to identify a grocer to operate a store in this Richmond community for nearly a decade. When Richmond philanthropist and developer Steve Markel became interested in opening a grocery store in the East End as a social impact investment, Virginia LISC was the first to offer New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) towards the construction of the store. Being the first in is often the catalyst for other NMTC investment. Virginia LISC provided $8m in NMTCs, prompting other investors to join, for a total of $25m in NMTC for the project. This partnership successfully brought a beautiful grocery store back to this underserved community.

The Market @ 25th, which opened in April, is one element of a multi-use development that includes: a health education and wellness center run by Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Health System; a soon-to-be culinary institute operated by J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College; retail space; restaurant space; and 54 apartments. The entire project will be split into two separate four-story buildings located next to each other at the intersection.

The grocery store itself is a beautiful homage to the rich history and culture of this historically resilient black community. Black and white photographs line the walls, telling the history of the community and its residents, and the various departments are named after the area’s public schools. The Market anchors the neighborhood and serves as a reminder of what the community was and what it can continue to be.

LISC is proud to have supported such an important project and we hope to see you shopping at The Market @ 25th!
Three weeks later the same group from across Virginia, Georgia, and Tennessee assembled in the community center of the Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Some attendees flew in; the twelve participants from the Virginia LISC Network opted to drive and rented two passenger vans to make the five and a half hour drive to the Tri-Cities of Tennessee. The journeys down and back were not wasted, as coaches and LISC staffed traded tips and tales throughout the long drive.

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Financial Resiliency Continued

During the two days in Kingsport, two members of national LISC’s Family Income & Wealth Building team led our coaches in exercises that ranged from roleplaying challenging situations with clients to prioritizing financial commitments in times of crisis. The presentations, on the other hand, focused on coaches’ soft skills including methods to build rapport and strategies to keep clients positive and determined such as S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based) goals.

This first of its kind opportunity to build connections and memories with participants from the rural LISC Network proved both insightful and impactful for the training’s attendees. Whether our coaches had been working for years with clients to increase their net worth or started in this role mere months ago, all twelve participants from the Virginia LISC FOC Network came away from the financial coaching training with new tools, honed skills, and fresh perspectives on their work.