



On September 26, four nonprofit leaders, all recipients of Enriching Communities grants, talked about their work and its impact. The following has been condensed and lightly edited.

TAMARA WILKERSON, Executive Director of the African American Teaching Fellows



WHO WE ARE: Our mission is to recruit, support, develop, and retain a cadre of African American educators to serve the students in Charlottesville city and Albemarle County. In our area we have 40 percent of students who are African American and only 8 percent African American teachers. So when we talk about the possibility of becoming a teacher, they don't see it, because they've never *seen* it. To date we have supported over forty educators and we have a 100 percent retention rate beyond the first two years of teaching.

IMPACT: *I am* the impact story. I was an African American student at UVA and when I came into the Albemarle public school system as one of two African American Spanish teachers within this entire region. When I faced difficult issues in the workplace, AATF was the space for me that kept me from quitting my job. It provided a space not only for me professionally to grow, but a community of educators that literally were going through the same things that I was going through.

RANDY RODGERS, Manager of Insurance Counseling at Jefferson Area Board for Aging



WHO WE ARE: Our mission is to promote, establish, and preserve sustainable community for healthy aging, for the individual but for the family, too. We have many programs; I run the insurance counseling department, which provides advice on Medicare.

IMPACT: We had a client who was on Medicaid and Medicare, and she was a little reluctant to even be there. Between her Medicare prescription plan and then what Medicaid picked up, there wasn't much left over for her to pay. Which is great. But we looked at it anyway and realized that two of the life-saving drugs she was taking were no longer going to be on her plan for the next year. This is someone with less than \$1,000 a month in income. The cost for her prescriptions that next year was \$20,000. We found a plan that covered her prescriptions and she was back to paying hardly anything.

JESSICA HARRIS, Founder and Artistic Director of Empowered Players

WHO WE ARE: We are a nonprofit that focuses on bridging the divide between students in Fluvanna County and quality arts experiences, youth empowerment, and community service. We offer free and reduced-price theater classes for students, access to performances at a free or reduced price, and opportunities to engage by volunteering or mentoring younger students.



IMPACT: What we are giving students is something they would not have access to otherwise. It's seeing them come together doing a show. It's seeing them connect with students they wouldn't know. It's all through the power of this thing they are creating together. And I could list numbers off to you: 200 students who serve every semester, both in and out of school. It's the volunteers we see coming through our community and the audiences that fill our performance center—those are the hard-data impacts. But with theater and arts it's hard to quantify impact. It's something that you just feel, and something that you see students experience very directly. It's a student who says, "I didn't know I could do this, but now I know that theater is for everyone."

MICHAEL REILLY, Chair and Co-founder of Virginia Foodshed Capital

WHO WE ARE: Our mission is to provide financial stewardship to small and mid-scale organically run farms throughout our region, in both rural and urban communities. We do so through a 0 percent loan fund capitalized through charitable contributions. We give out loans of under \$10,000, with three- to five-year payback terms.



IMPACT: Our loan program solves a big problem for local farms. Low-income families running these farms are just simply shut out from the traditional financial system. As a result they cannot get the capital they need to grow and compete. We helped a chicken farm in Nelson County that was limited by some inefficiencies. When they processed their chickens on the farm, the chickens had to be chilled right away, and they would have to carry them in coolers down this driveway to a small indoor refrigeration unit. They just didn't have the money to do it any differently but we helped them outfit a huge outdoor walk-in cooler that's right next to their processing station. They're just ecstatic over how much more efficient it is and how much more opportunity it's given them to grow and to compete.

Photography by Jesus Pino.