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Cost of Social Conscience

Supervisors commit to push for affordable housing, dental and ESOL services.

BY AARON STERN
THE GAZETTE

Margaret Davis recently had surgery. She has no job, no place to live, and without the support of her church she would have little hope. Recently someone told her that she didn't look like a homeless person, and it made her mad.

"I am homeless and I'm not too ashamed to say it,"

"Sometimes when there's hard times, people start to [abandon] what they hold precious."

— Imam Johari Abdul-Malik

Davis said. As Fairfax County grapples with a projected \$650 million budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year, Davis said it was important to continue to fund programs that offer affordable housing and other services to the county's low-income residents.

Davis was one of many speakers at a rally on Sunday, March 8 organized by Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) at Bethlehem Baptist Church. The rally included public commitments

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The Rev. Keary Kincannon of Rising Hope United Methodist Church emphasized the importance of providing affordable housing and dental care to Fairfax County residents in need at a meeting of Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement on Sunday, March 8.



Sharon Bulova, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, voices her support for the VOICE agenda to the Rev. Tuck Bowerfind, Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, and nearly 300 in the audience.

Corridor's Future?

Perspectives vary on status of Mount Vernon revitalization.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE GAZETTE

Although Richmond Highway has received a couple new Walgreens and four new hotels, opinions are divided as to the status of the long-awaited revitalization effort on Richmond Highway. The high-end grocer Wegman's bailed out of a proposed new store last year and funding for a long-awaited transit study suddenly disappeared in December. The wait for a revitalized Richmond Highway has become an exercise in patience. "Route One is still an orphan in the district," said Frank Cohn, chairman of a strategic planning committee for the Mount Vernon Council of Civic

Associations. "If the transportation system is not in place, you cannot expect an influx of first-rate restaurants and stores, can you?"

For many residents in Mount Vernon, the dream of replacing crumbling strip malls with high-end stores and dense urban development has been a distant dream — one that some say is being choked by congested roads and gridlock-added motorists. Although much of Richmond Highway has six lanes, a critical stretch of the road between Sherwood Hall Land and Telegraph Road is still two lanes north and two lanes south. Funding for a transit study aimed at this section were reallocated elsewhere last year by the

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Person of the Year

Anne Andrews receives county-wide award.

BY ALEKSANDRA KULCZUGA
THE GAZETTE

Anne Andrews of Mt. Vernon has volunteered and served the citizens of Fairfax County for over 40 years. This Sunday the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations will honor her work in providing human services to her fellow citizens.

"This was completely out of the blue and I was overwhelmed," said Andrews, on finding out she was this year's recipient.

"We are proud to publicly recognize the achievements of Anne Andrews, our citizen of the year, and Linda Byrne and Christine Morin, our Citation of Merit win-



Anne Andrews

ners, who have selflessly worked to make Fairfax County a better place," said John Jennison, the Citizen of the Year chair. He adds that these are regular people who work hard to improve the quality of life for county residents and serve as role models for their com-

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Bulova, Hudgins Reaffirm Social Programs

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from Sharon Bulova, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, and Hunter Mill District Supervisor Catherine Hudgins to fund \$50,000 in the county budget to fund a full-time dentist at the Northern Virginia Dental Clinic as well as to continue the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund and maintain current funding levels for English as a Second Language programs both inside and outside of Fairfax County Public Schools.

"This is not going to be an easy year for us and your voices are important," Bulova told those assembled at

Bethlehem Baptist on Sunday. Bulova said preserving the Penny Fund — which allocates one cent out of every dollar of collected real estate taxes to affordable housing programs — so that those who work in Fairfax County can afford to live in Fairfax County. The projected Penny Fund budget for 2010 is \$20.5 million but the possibility of reducing funding for the program has been raised as supervisors look to balance the county budget.

REPRESENTATIVES from VOICE, a multi-faith, non-partisan political action group, said that it was important not to cut social

programming when it was needed most. "Sometimes when there's hard times, people start to [abandon] what they hold precious," said Imam Johari Abdul-Malik.

In addition to public statements of support given at Sunday's meeting by Bulova and Hudgins, a letter read at the meeting from Supervisor Gerry Hyland indicated support for the VOICE agenda. A letter read from Supervisor Penny Gross expressed support for the Penny Fund but was non-committal towards the other agenda items. VOICE leaders were critical of Supervisor Pat Herrity, who was scheduled to attend Sunday's event but did not and did not no-

tify VOICE of a reason for his absence, said VOICE co-chair the Rev. Tuck Bowerfind. Bowerfind said Herrity's absence was "an important indication to us" of a lack of recognition of the organization and its goals.

Bulova and Hudgins said that while they supported the VOICE agenda, balancing the county's budget will be an arduous process and citizen involvement will be important.

"We must convey to all of our residents the role that they play in our community and they must each step up to help," Hudgins said.

