



Advancing the region by developing educational partnerships and opportunities

Virginia Department of Social Services Holds Best Practices Forum at the SVHEC



Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Office of Volunteerism and Community Services recently held a Best Practices Forum at the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center. The Forum brought together members of the faith-based and social services communities in Halifax and the surrounding counties to gather information on available resources, partnerships, and potential funding sources.

SVHEC Executive Director Dr. Betty Adams extended greetings to the group, and VDSS Office of Volunteerism and Community Services Director Nikki Nicholau gave opening remarks. Nicholau stated that the Office of Volunteerism and Community Services is a state-wide resource for community service and faith-based organizations. "The Virginia Department of Social Services' Office on Volunteerism and Community Services convenes Best Practice Forums throughout Virginia, specifically in areas with significant economic challenges that are negatively impacting the community," said Nicholau. "The purpose of the forums is to highlight successful faith-based partnerships and available resources that are important in addressing human service needs."

Meeting participants had an opportunity to hear from a panel with information on local resources. Juliane Thurston with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service Family Nutrition Program shared information about several food and nutrition programs provided by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, including the SNAP-ED program that provides hands-on family nutrition learning experiences for adults and youth with limited incomes. Loretta Brown, Administrative Coordinator with The Good Samaritan, explained the operation of the organization's clothing closet, food closet, and crisis room for those in need. The organization is an example of a community service organization that is sustained without grant funding. Hope Harris-Gayles with the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center shared information about the SVHEC and the variety of programs available, including literacy tutoring, English as a Second Language tutoring, and Citizenship and GED preparation.



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“Our desired outcome is that organizations attending will find new partners and resources that will help as they work build a healthy community and a strong future for the region,” said Nicholau.

For more information about the VDSS Office of Volunteerism and Community Service you may call 1-800-638-3839 or visit www.vaservice.org. For information about hosting a meeting at the SVHEC contact Nettie Simon-Owens, Director of Operations and Workforce Services, at 434-572-5477 or nettiesimon-owens@svhed.org.