

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Shape of the Region 2021 – What are You Inspired to do in our Community?**

### *Stories of a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable region*

**March 12, 2021 (Oakton, VA)** – The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia held its annual Shape of the Region Conference on Thursday, March 11, 2021 in partnership with 12 regional organizations to inspire our community about ways our region is coming together to institute real change. More than 300 people registered to attend the virtual event.

This year's conference, **Co-Creating a New Northern Virginia: An Emerging Vision of a More Inclusive, Sustainable, and Equitable Region** examined strategies for advancing a more inclusive economy in our region while facing some of the biggest challenges of our day – entrenched poverty, structural racism, and the environment.

Strategic Futurist Nancy Giordano, our keynote speaker shared insights on how to build a safe, inclusive, thriving future and championed bold solutions. “What does the future need and expect of you? And what are we each in a unique position to create to contribute to that future? she asked attendees during her presentation.

Four video presentations highlighted inspiring examples of cross-sector collaboration – individuals and organizations working to build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable region.

A panel discussed the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 virus on communities of color including the Hispanic and Latino communities in the region, the inequity the pandemic has revealed, as well as the role local government and business can play in addressing inequities.

“The private sector needs to play in making the region more equitable and inclusive of its diverse population,” said Danny Vargas, Founder & President of VARComSolutions. “There’s a need for more diverse elected officials at all levels of government.”

Since the pandemic arrived, the City of Alexandria has been dealing with the highest level of food insecurity in the region due to massive job loss. “My food distribution program has grown from serving 10 people to 300 people weekly,” said Yolonda Earl Thompson, Senior Director of Community Impact, United Community.

How to better partner across all sectors for more sustainable and equitable growth starts with “better community engagement with the people in the community who want to be part of the solution” said Thompson.

“A region that does a good job of welcoming its recently immigrated new Americans helps set the table for successful economic development,” said Buddy Rizer, Executive Director for economic development in Loudoun County

The large and growing Asian American and Pacific Islander community in Northern Virginia now stands at 16% of the total population, but one of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the use of inflammatory language that has led to an increase in anti-Asian racism. Julian Ha, a Partner at Heidrick & Struggles announced the launch of a new (yet unnamed) national policy and advocacy organization to help better address those challenges facing the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

“The perception is that AAPI’s are perpetual foreigners, outsiders and that the virus has unfortunately amplified some of those particular challenges,” said Ha. “The inflammatory language has fed the flames of discrimination.”

In their commitment to support growth and resilience of diverse businesses, Kaiser Permanente’s Economic Opportunity initiatives is bringing a new program to Loudoun County for the first time. “This is a program for small to medium size businesses, especially to help people of color to grow and learn how they can do business with companies like Kaiser Permanente,” said Laura Flamm, Senior Program Manager, Kaiser Permanente’s Community Health Department.

The complete list of participants and panelist include: **Nancy Giordano**, Founder and CEO of Play Big Inc., **Catherine Buell**, Head of Community Development, Amazon; **Irene Chambers**, Interim President, Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation; **Laura Flamm**, Senior Program Manager, Community Health, Kaiser Permanente; **Brittany Greer**, Executive Director and Founder, Rosie Riveters; **Julian Ha**, Partner at Heidrick & Struggles; **Nikki Graves Henderson**, co-chair, Tinner Hill Historic District Mural Project; **Harry Klaff**, Principal and President of Clients, Avison Young (Community Foundation Board Member); **Buddy Rizer**, Executive Director, Loudoun Economic Development; **Stewart Schwartz**, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth; **Zuzana Steen**, Academic and Community Relations Director, Micron Technology, Inc.; **David Tarter**, Mayor, Falls Church; **Yolonda Earl Thompson**, Director of Community Impact, United Community, and **Danny Vargas**, Founder & President of VARComSolutions LLC.

This event was presented by the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia in partnership with the following: Asian American Chamber of Commerce, George Mason University, Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, Loudoun Chamber, Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Northern Virginia Community College, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Northern Virginia Technology Council, and Virginia Hispanic Chamber.

Support for this event was generously provided by the following sponsors: The Mather (Silver Water Break Sponsor), and Deloitte (Copper Sponsor).

The event was recorded and is [available for viewing](#). A copy of the slides shared is available [here](#).

All registrants received an e-copy of keynote speaker Nancy Giordano's book: ***LEADERing, THE WAYS VISIONARY LEADERS PLAY BIGGER.***

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#### **About Community Foundation for Northern Virginia**

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia grows philanthropy to respond to critical need, seed innovation and lead and convene the community. Comprised of donor advised funds, permanent funds, giving circles, and other charitable endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors to community and promotes a more equitable and inclusive prosperity that marries our economic strength with the full breadth of our diverse community. In 2020 the Community Foundation awarded more than \$13 million in grants and scholarships and reports more than \$80 million in managed philanthropic assets. For more information please visit us at [www.cfnova.org](http://www.cfnova.org), follow up on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)