



THIS MONTH IN ST. PAUL'S

JANUARY
2025

PEOPLE FIRST

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CHOICE

Shanell K. is proof that transformation goes beyond relocation—it's about building new opportunities.

This mom of four decided it was best for her and her family to relocate outside of the St. Paul's area of Norfolk. She is very happy with her new home in Norview Heights and so are her children who are thriving academically and socially.



The positive impact of her relocation choice was just one of many new opportunities for Shanell. Through the People First^{USI} partnership with Old Dominion University's Dream Builder Program, she also expanded her entrepreneurial dreams. Shanell started writing **children's books** during COVID. Today, she now hosts book signings and runs a growing publishing business.

With support from a mentor at People First, she is working toward homeownership and launching a nationwide contest for young illustrators.

"It's been an incredible journey," she says.

> Discover Shanell's full story in the [Year 5 Tidewater Gardens Impact Report](#).

> [Watch](#) Shanell share her story in her own words.

CommUNITY!

The holidays were brighter thanks to the generosity of community partners and volunteers!

Thanksgiving: Salvation Army, Urban League of Hampton Roads (ULHR), Lambda Omega Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Impact VA, and the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore provided turkeys and complete dinner kits to 121 families.



Christmas: Christmas was very special thanks to a generous donation by Bank of America and Toys 4 Tots. Toys 4 Tots donated over 300 toys which were transported by Norfolk Fire & Rescue to St. John's A.M.E. Church who allowed People First "elves" to store, wrap and deliver gifts to families before Christmas day.

Bank of America contributed monetarily to impact all other members of the family.

And it was a party at the 2nd annual Holiday Extravaganza at the Murray Center, where hundreds of families celebrated with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Thank you to all who helped make the season magical!



THANK YOU!

In December, we bid a fond "thank you and farewell" to Danica Royster, co-chair of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee (SPAC). Ms. Royster, who served as Norfolk City Council representative for Super Ward 7 and chose not to seek re-election, is stepping down as Chair of SPAC but will continue her involvement as a private citizen, appointed by Mayor Kenneth Alexander.

As Chair since 2021, Royster worked tirelessly to revitalize the St. Paul's area, focusing on leadership and collaboration with residents, City Council, and key stakeholders. She led a dedicated group of 17 citizens, always putting people first and ensuring that residents had access to vital services like housing, education, employment, and health care.

Royster was deeply involved in community activities, from job fairs to public art projects, and played a key role in creating a workgroup focused on Youth and Violence Prevention Solutions, which initiated the conversation that resulted in an RFP being issued by the City to bring a "credible messenger" program to our area. She and co-chair Councilman John Paige also championed economic diversity in contracting, advocating for equitable opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses.



We appreciate Danica's warmth, humor, determination, and skillful leadership. We are grateful that her participation with SPAC will continue!



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DEVELOPMENT

ASPIRE GRAND OPENING



December 17th was an unseasonably warm day, perfect for the ribbon cutting ceremony marking the official opening of Aspire at Church Street apartments. Attendees were serenaded by the soulful voices of the Ready Academy Christian School chorus and city and state representatives made remarks.

The highlight of the ceremony was the \$20,000 investment in the ASPIRE Scholarship Fund, presented by the Richman Group, developers of the project. This scholarship will provide tuition support at 2 and 4-year colleges and trade schools for graduating high school students in the City of Norfolk.

The ASPIRE Scholarship Fund will be managed by ISSA of Virginia, Inc., a non-profit community development corporation (CDC) affiliated with First Baptist Church, Bute Street. ISSA of Virginia is responsible for defining the eligibility criteria and overseeing the application process for the scholarship.

Scholarship applications will be available to Norfolk Public Schools students starting in early March, with awards to be announced in June. For more information about the ASPIRE Scholarship Fund, please contact Jerry Holmes at ISSA of Virginia, Inc. at 757-610-7212 or via [email](mailto:jerry.holmes@issaofva.com).

Mark Your Calendar for April 8, 2025!

Are you a contractor or builder looking to get involved with Norfolk housing construction projects, but don't know where to start? Join us for the Norfolk Housing Contracting

Symposium on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, from 9am until 2pm, at the Kroc Center in Norfolk. Norfolk's Department of Housing and Community Development, and Virginia's Small Business Diversity Program have partnered to help businesses become "contract ready" for housing construction projects in the City of Norfolk.



For more information contact Ha Chau at ha.chau@norfolk.gov.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION OPPORTUNITIES

Get Certified!

FREE SWaM (small, women- and minority-owned) and DBE (disadvantaged business enterprises) in-person sessions to help you certify your business and file an application.

FREE VDOT pre-qualification process to help you become pre-qualified for VDOT's procurement opportunities

FEB. 12 SWaM/DBE Certification and VDOT Prequalification Workshop
9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
[REGISTER HERE](#)

March 18 SWaM/DBE Certification Workshop and VDOT Prequalification Workshop
9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
[REGISTER HERE](#)

For application assistance email for One-on-One Sessions
SWaM Certification: Angela Barber - angela.barber@sbsd.virginia.gov
DBE Certification: Nina Britton - Nina.Britton@sbsd.virginia.gov

ST. PAUL'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

The next meeting will be held on February 18, 2025 from 6-7:30pm at the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, 800 Tidewater Drive in Norfolk.

You can find the presentations and meeting minutes of previous meetings [here](#).

Questions?
Please email us at stpaulstransformation@norfolk.gov.