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Press Release

For Immediate Release

For More Information:

Cheryl Ramp
703.276.7444 ext.102
703.966.6603 (cell)
cramp@apah.org

In Their Own Words: Community Progress Network Roundtable Explores Challenges and Solutions to Help Every Child Succeed

Arlington, VA (August 27, 2018) - On Thursday August 23rd, more 75 volunteers and members of the Community Progress Network (CPN) welcomed more than 100 parents and their children for a community dinner and facilitated discussions on the theme *Working Together to Help our Children Succeed*. Held at the Women's Club of Arlington, the evening was designed to provide an opportunity for residents from diverse backgrounds and experiences share challenge and identify opportunities to strengthen services and improve equity across Arlington.

For over 3 hours, parents, grandparents, and friends who spoke a variety of languages including Amharic, Arabic and Spanish talked about the benefits and challenges of being part of Arlington schools, access to childcare and after school programs.

The event organizers expected up to 100 participants, but extra chairs had to be set up to accommodate the number of people who showed up. 11 tables were colorfully decorated and equipped with signs to divide people based on the age group that was relevant to them. There were tables for parents of children 0-5 years old and every age group including Adult learners.

Participants shared positive sentiments about the good teachers and strong after-school programs that Arlington offers. They also bonded over concerns about lack of communication between school leadership and parents as well as transportation for students. Working in small groups, participants also explored potential solutions including information boards in different languages and finding a way for students qualifying reduced fees for lunch and other activities to not have to document their need over and over. School Board member, Barbara Kanninen, who helped lead a small group discussion stated, "I enjoyed collaborating with so many interested parents and community leaders and



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discussing the successes and challenges we face in our schools, including technology, family logistics, stress, and more. The event was extremely well-organized. Many thanks to the Community Progress Network for their great work!"

While nonprofit service providers, elected officials, and county staff were present at the event, their role was to listen and take away information from the participants that can help decision makers better understand the challenges facing lower income families and identify ways to improve services, policies and procedures to achieve a more equitable and welcoming community. Chair of the Arlington County Board, Katie Cristol, stated, "Every member of our Arlington community has a stake in our future, and deserves to have their voice and experiences heard. The Community Progress Network Roundtable brought together so many residents and families whose voices are too often under-counted or under-represented. I was grateful to learn about residents' experiences, and to plan together for constructive change."

The Community Progress Network plans to compile a report based on the thoughts the participants shared among their groups and with the whole room of participants. Everyone present, as well as other stakeholders, will receive the report in the next few weeks. It will also be made publicly available at communityprogressnetwork.org. The Community Progress Network has already begun planning its next Roundtable event which will take place in early November and focus on health and wellness issues.

About the Community Progress Network: The Community Progress Network (CPN) is a coalition of Arlington non-profit organizations, County staff, and citizen leaders committed to our community's vision of inclusivity and diversity. The coalition is focused on educating our community and advocating for equitable programs, policies, and investments in Arlington. The CPN Roundtable series was designed to provide an opportunity for community residents with diverse backgrounds and experiences to share challenges and identify opportunities for strengthening services and supports across the County. Through this and other initiatives such as the Community Progress Network Data Walk, the Coalition seeks to promote equity through education, engagement and advocacy.

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