

MIDYEAR REPORT 2022



OUR YEAR SO FAR AT
DOWN HOME NORTH CAROLINA.



AUGUST
2022



FROM OUR DIRECTORS

So many of our rural neighbors pay close attention to the seasons. For some, it is because they are farmers and must time the planting of their crops. For others it is because they do construction work or manual labor that requires long stretches in the unforgiving summertime heat. Others walk to work, along long stretches of state highway, and need to time their commute around the weather.

At Down Home, we, too, are following the seasons this year.

This winter, we slowed down for reflection and planning-- the way a gardener maps out a garden and orders their seeds. In the spring, we went about the business of planting: We hired new teams and dispatched them across North Carolina to conduct a deep listening project. Come summer, we got to see this work blossom as we launched seven new chapters, growing Down Home's footprint to a total of eight rural counties from the mountains to the sea.

And here we are now entering fall. Fall will be busy with endorsements, a large field program, and intensive and intentional organizing work around our core 2022 issue areas. As you will see in these pages, we are well situated for a bountiful harvest. *Thank you for your support of our work.*



Down Home members celebrate the launch of their new chapter in Granville County

BUILDING POWER ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA

This past spring and summer, Down Home built new chapters across rural North Carolina.

Our talented and passionate field team conducted deep listening sessions, site and door canvassing, and other outreach. They listened to the concerns of rural people and asked them how they wanted to create change.

This deep listening work positioned Down Home to launch 7 new chapters across the state in July. Down Home members now have chapters from the mountains to the coast, from the Virginia line to just north of Charlotte.

After launching their chapters, our new members have quickly set out to start interviewing candidates and preparing to make their 2022 endorsements.



Members lead a conversation about fair economics in Alamance County, North Carolina



A meeting of our members in our Cabarrus County field office



Celebrating after launching our second Appalachian chapter in Watauga County



In the Piedmont of North Carolina, our members launched a chapter in Person County



Down Home members play tug o' war in an exercise about solidarity in Ashe County



A conversation and brainstorming at our chapter launch in Johnston County



Our members gathered in Craven County to celebrate our eastern most chapter

DEEP LISTENING ACROSS RURAL NORTH CAROLINA

Emerging data from Down Home's deep listening project*

Down Home asked rural North Carolinians three questions:

1. What keeps your up at night?

2. Who do you think is responsible?

3. What should we do about it?

26%

of responses to our deep listening survey included "housing costs" as an issue keeping them up at night

Other top concerns cited:

- 12% included "low wages"
- 10 % included "healthcare"
- 6% included "education"
- 6% included "jobs"

24%

of survey response said that "local government" is responsible

Other common responses:

- 22% cited the "rich and powerful" as responsible
- 8% said the "state government" was responsible
- 7% said "large corporations" were responsible

44%

of survey responses included "community action" as something we should do about our concerns

Other common responses:

- 12% of responses include "better public services"
- 11% of responses include "healthcare for all"
- 10% of responses include "raise wages"
- 10% of responses include "get money out of politics"

Note: Data is not finalized as of this printing. These are emerging themes and trends.



DOWN HOME FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

In June, Down Home launched our inaugural fellowship program with eight fellows from across rural North Carolina joining the program.

This six month, full time, paid fellowship is designed to train and orient small town folks and bring them into leadership in their communities.

Fellows receive a combination of skills training, mentorship, support and an opportunity to integrate into our programs to introduce them to movement work and organizing.

This current cohort includes fellows from Alamance, Ashe, Cleveland, Johnston, Rowan, and Yancey counties.



Top: Fellowship cohort during onboarding **Middle:** A fellow speaks at a conference **Bottom:** Fellows engaging in a power training



SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

Public schools are places our communities connect around a common goal, a positive goal – educating our kids.

We are working to build a team of public school parents, educators, students, and supporters capable of making positive changes for our public schools and creating structures for ongoing organizing at the local level with staying power.

Our core strategy rests in the idea that people that want fully funded schools are a majority and it is our job to create an accessible, basic ladder of engagement that spans from “willing to post on social media” to “I am an active and engaged member of a movement for public schools.”

Down Home began our public school strategy over the winter by holding mass calls to talk about the strategy of far-right extremists and the targeting of our schools and school boards. People from across the state joined these calls, sharing what they were seeing in their hometowns. We moved from this work into intentional base building and organizing in the spring.



Top: Down Home event outside the Alamance County School Board **Bottom:** Down Home supporter advocating for her school library



SUPPORTING SCHOOLS



For in-person outreach to public school parents, we are currently hosting listening workshops across NC (“What Do You Want? What Do You Need?”) to hear what residents want and need from your public schools. We know our schools need so much, but we also think it is important to dream together to create a vision for the schools our students and staff truly deserve. Already, families do an incredible amount to give their schools whatever they can to improve the tough conditions they are facing. By organizing these families, we have the potential to create powerful, committed teams capable of shifting power locally and statewide.

We have held in-person listening sessions in Alamance, Cabarrus, Johnston, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Wake counties.

Fall plans include hosting a statewide parents summit and working to support Down Home member endorsed school board candidates to win on the local level.

Upper left: Parents and teachers rallied in support of books and healthy school budgets in Johnston County

Top: Supporting schools in Wake County

Middle: Supporters turn out to support a Guilford County teacher facing a book ban

Bottom: Local residents in Cabarrus County in “What Do You Want, What Do You Need?” breakout groups



FIGHTING FOR MEDICAID EXPANSION

For nearly a decade, the North Carolina General Assembly has refused to pass Medicaid expansion despite the overwhelming support of the measure by voters here.

However, earlier this year the Senate majority leader reversed his opposition to Medicaid expansion, signaling it was on the table. Down Home responded by bringing on a statewide campaign coordinator to work in coalition with our partners and rally our base.

We launched our campaign with a successful virtual rally, followed by six virtual trainings helping people from all over the state document their own healthcare stories and send them to their representatives

We also worked with our members as they wrote letters to the editor and opinion pieces on Medicaid expansion for their local papers.

Additionally, we worked with media, deep canvassed into strategic counties, held rallies and vigils, and hand delivered letters from our members to the NCGA. We even brought our members to Raleigh for nearly a dozen lobby visits and meetings.

“The 600,000 North Carolinians living in the coverage gap, as I was, cannot wait for politics to play out over our lives. We have waited long enough.”

- Mark Ortiz, Down Home Fellow

FIGHTING FOR MEDICAID EXPANSION

We got closer than we ever have before to winning. In June, the North Carolina House and Senate passed competing Medicaid measures, but they didn't, couldn't, and wouldn't work out a compromise. They left Raleigh without an agreement and over 600,000 low income North Carolinians are still without coverage.

What's next? It's clear to us that Medicaid expansion needs to become an election issue in North Carolina. We are merging our Medicaid expansion work and the power we built through base building with our field program to make sure that rural North Carolinians who lack health care are taking their needs to the ballot box.



Above: Courtney Crudup, a member from Granville County, visits the NCGA **Top right:** Down Home's Christine Ashley meets with nurses



"After joining a Down Home advocacy training and hearing how members are mobilizing to make powerful change and impact porticoes that matter to me and mine, I knew I had to do something."

I know how much healthcare access means. I have cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. I know what it's like to have a chronic disability."

- Janine Colon, a Down Home member in Alamance County

INVESTING IN OUR TEAM

This year, we have been investing in our movement by investing in our team.

- Down Home engaged in a year long REI consultation and extensive training with Visions, Inc - completed in June 2022
- All managers and directors have completed the *Managing to Change the World* training
- All staff have completed Vision's PACE training
- All organizers and field directors have completed People's Action's Organizing Boot Camp
- We have brought on an organizing coach, Juan Miranda, to provide on the ground support to our field team
- All management is receiving coaching support through The Management Center



WHAT'S NEXT?

Truth be told, the remainder of 2022 is the big part.

- Down Home is about to embark on the largest field plan in our organization's history, mobilizing volunteers and canvassers across eight counties and knocking on thousands of rural North Carolina doors.
- Our members are currently interviewing candidates, sending out questionnaires, and getting ready make their endorsements. Once that vote occurs, our team will begin working to get those candidates elected!
- Our public school campaign and Medicaid expansion campaigns will integrate with the field program, making sure that local voters across rural North Carolina are prepared to vote for candidates who support working class values, including public education and healthcare access.
- Our organizing team will continue building our chapters, holding local town halls and candidate forums, and make sure our members are plugged into all our work.
- Our fellowship cohort will put their training and skills into action, supporting our field and deep canvassing work.

Thank you to our members, supporters, and funders for all that you do to make this work possible. Rural North Carolina is ready for multiracial, working-class change.

Come on in y'all. We've got work to do.

