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## **Regional Metrics Point to Incremental Progress in Reducing Poverty, Homelessness, Teen Pregnancies and Other Key Measures**

*United Way's "Indicators" report reveals mixed results in education, crime*

**RICHMOND, Va., Nov. 14, 2017** – At the same time the population of the Richmond region continues to grow – up 6.4 percent from 2010 to 2016 – the number of people who are living in poverty, homeless or getting pregnant as teens is falling, even as progress in education levels out, according to a report released today by United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg.

“Our *Indicators of Community Strength* report is a foundational component of everything we do,” said James Taylor, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg. “This year’s report, along with our new *Steps to Success* framework, allows us to calibrate our efforts as effectively as possible and ensure our work has the greatest possible impact throughout the region.”

The *2017-18 Indicators of Community Strength* report, a broad compendium of metrics designed to assess the health and prosperity of Richmond, Petersburg and nine other area jurisdictions, finds the number of people living below poverty thresholds declined between 2013 and 2015 by 1.1 percent, from 138,852 to 129,684, a decrease of 9,168 people, including 5,541 fewer children.

Within the region, the City of Richmond saw a 1.0 percent drop among residents living in poverty over the same period – from 51,290 to 50,763. In Henrico County, the decline was 2.0 percent, with Chesterfield County falling 1.1 percent. The City of Petersburg witnessed a slight uptick (0.3%), while Hanover County saw an increase of 0.6 percent.

“Poverty is an enormous problem for many across our region—not just in our cities. If residents cannot afford basic needs like food and safe housing, it is extremely difficult for them to work toward a higher degree of prosperity,” said Taylor. “It is encouraging to see positive trends in this area, but we know we still have a lot of work to do.”

### Other Areas of Progress

The region continued to see accelerated progress in reducing the number of **homeless**, which has dropped 19 percent from a single point in time in January 2015 to a comparable day in January 2017 (818 to 662 people). The number of chronically homeless single adults (again, measured on one specific day in January) fell 37 percent over the same two-year period.

**Teen pregnancy rates** continued a downward trend. The region has seen a 47 percent decline in teen pregnancies from 2010 (when there were 486 pregnancies) to 2015 (253 pregnancies). Most of the larger jurisdictions saw comparable decreases: City of Richmond (-42%), Henrico County (-46%) and Chesterfield County (-47%). Teen pregnancy rates in the City of Petersburg dropped 62 percent. Only Dinwiddie County saw an increase in teen pregnancy, up from 4 in 2013 to 8 in 2015.

“Teen pregnancy is an area where we have seen really positive shifts,” said Taylor. “United Way has worked closely with the Petersburg Department of Health to implement a program to address teen pregnancy in Petersburg. By working with students in schools as well as families, I think we have been able to make real progress.”

**Unemployment** rates continued to decline, in keeping with national trends. In 2016 the region’s unemployment rate was 4.0 percent, down from 5.4 percent in 2014 and 7.9 percent in 2010. The City of Petersburg had the highest unemployment rate in 2016 at 7.6 percent, while New Kent County’s was the region’s lowest at 3.4 percent.

The region saw a significant reduction in the number of **adults without health insurance**. From 2013 to 2015, those without insurance declined from 122,354 to 88,400, a drop of 28 percent. Charles City County had the highest percent of uninsured (19.5%), while Goochland County had the lowest (5.8%). The City of Richmond saw the biggest decrease, from 34,327 in 2013 to 24,703 in 2015, a 28 percent decline.

### Progress in Education Levels Out

The report also revealed areas where progress has not been as tangible, particularly in education. The percentage of kindergartners who met **fall PALS-K benchmarks** in 2016 was 84.6%, down from 87.4% in 2012.

The percentage of third graders who passed the **Standards of Learning (SOL)** reading test dipped slightly year over year, from 76.4 percent to 75.2 percent. In the City of Richmond, just 57.8 percent of third graders passed the SOL reading test this year. In New Kent County, 82.9 percent passed.

The SOL tests for eighth graders in English showed marginal improvement, with 73.0 percent of students passing (up 1.5% from 2016), yet remains almost three percent below the state average of 75.8 percent. Just 44.7 percent of Richmond city eighth graders passed the SOL test in English. In Hanover County, 83.4 percent passed.

Even fewer (40.2%) eighth graders in the City of Richmond passed the SOL test in Math, while 89.9 percent of eighth graders in Chesterfield County did so.

The **on-time high school graduation rate** in the United Way region has remained steady at 89-90 percent over the past three years. Graduation rates fell significantly in Charles City, New Kent, Petersburg and the City of Richmond. In Richmond, the rate fell from 80.5 percent for the class of 2016 to 76.6 percent for the class of 2017. In Goochland 96.5 percent of students graduated on time in 2017.

Four-year high school dropout rates have increased in the region, moving from 5.9 percent in 2016 to 6.9 percent in 2017. The City of Richmond dropout rate nearly doubled from 2016 to 2017, from 9.9 percent to 18.0 percent. The number of students dropping out of high school in Richmond increased by 18 percent, from 789 students in the class of 2016 to 928 students in the class of 2017. No students in the City of Colonial Heights dropped out during the 2016 school year.

#### **About the Data**

The data cited in the Indicators report comes from a variety of highly credible sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, Homeward, the Virginia Department of State Police, the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Department of Education. Data included is the most currently available at the time of publication. A one- to two-year lag time in data currency is typical for data from public sources.

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#### **About United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg**

Established in 1924, United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg unites the community by identifying the needs, strengths and solutions to our region's greatest challenges. Through this legacy of "learning, leading and uniting," United Way enhances the prosperity and resiliency of the Richmond and Petersburg community.

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