

FOCUS ON OUR MEMBERS

Local officials are a fascinating bunch of people who have careers all over the board and a range of backgrounds and interests. Over the next several months VML will include a brief focus on various members so that we can all gain an appreciation of what a diverse group occupies the seats in council and board chambers. Do you know someone who could be featured? Email Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

By Mary Jo Fields

Katie Cristol, Arlington County Board Member

KATIE CRISTOL WAS FIRST ELECTED to the Arlington County Board in 2015. She served as vice chair of the board from 2017-2018 and as chair from 2018-2019. She was the first millennial to lead the county board, saying in an interview last year that “This is a generation that is actually incredibly passionate about having jobs with purpose, volunteerism and the sense of wanting to be a part of something bigger than ourselves and I think that when you give young people opportunities to plug into local government in a purpose driven way, they flock and rise to the occasion.”



As an advocate for women and girls in Arlington and for the importance of women’s representation in elected office, Katie describes how these issues motivated her run for the County Board in 2015. “I knew that Arlington County had important work to do to improve child-care affordability and community response to sexual assault, among other issues. As a crowded primary field took shape for two open seats on our five-member Board, there were no other women candidates, and I believed that we needed an advocate and champion to make a change for women in our community.”

Katie came to the Arlington County Board with a background in education policy, both local and national. A reading buddy since 2011 at Randolph Elementary School, Katie served as the school’s liaison to the Arlington Public Schools Advisory Council on Instruction. She also worked professionally for a number of years with Education First, a national organization that partners with school districts, states and nonprofits across the U.S., with a focus on student success. Currently, she maintains a practice as an education policy advisor, supporting research, strategic planning, resource allocation and community engagement projects. During her time on the Arlington County Board, Katie has served on the first Joint Subcommittee on Facilities of the Arlington School and County Boards and helped create a joint citizen advisory body on facilities.

Prior to running for office, she was appointed to the Arlington Commission on the Status of Women. She is an advocate for support for survivors of sexual assault and is the co-chair of Project PEACE, an interagency collaboration that addresses domestic and sexual violence in Arlington.

She holds a public policy master’s degree from Princeton University, a bachelor’s degree from the University of Virginia, and is a 2012 graduate of Arlington Neighborhood College. The Neighborhood College is a civic leadership development program.

Armstead D. “Chuckie” Reid, Vice-Mayor, Farmville

CHUCKIE REID’S FIRST TERM on the Farmville town council began in 1986; he has served as vice mayor since 2008. During his tenure on the Farmville council, the town has undergone many changes including the reopening of an historic hotel, the opening of the High Bridge Trail state park and an expansion of the physical campus and academic offerings at Longwood University.



Among the first things people notice about Chuckie is his congeniality, a trait that served him well during his 29-year career as a mail carrier in Farmville. During those years he came to know a lot of people in town because he was more than just a postman – he was a one-person safety net or social services agency as well. He learned which of his customers – typically those who were elderly – needed and liked for him to check on them whether they were receiving mail or not. They wanted to talk to him and as a result over time he learned about them and he learned the names of their children, grandchildren and dogs. As Chuckie says, it was like he was part of the family, they shared so much with him. Chuckie retired from his job at the end of December 2018. It’s hard to say who will miss those interactions more: Chuckie or the people on his route.

Chuckie is a member of “the lost generation” affected by the closing of the schools in Prince Edward County from 1959-64 as a result of the passage of the Massive Resistance legislation. During those years, there was no provision for educating the county’s black students. Some of the children went elsewhere for educational services, some pupils went to makeshift schools, and some children missed part or all of their education for those five years.

Chuckie enlisted in the US. Air Force in 1972 and spent four years in military service as a supply clerk. After completing his military service in 1976 Chuckie returned to Farmville and went to work for Longwood. After 11 years he began his career with the post office. His decision to run for town council was inspired by the late Rev. L. Francis Griffin who believed “working with people is a great thing.” Griffin was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Farmville who was an influential advocate for civil rights and a strong opponent of the closing of the public schools in the county.

About the author: *Mary Jo Fields is an adjunct VML staff member and a contributing editor to Virginia Town & City.*