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teams, 1B

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menopause, 1C



# VIRGINIA GAZETTE



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## Lack of plumbing is still a problem

Leadership Historic Triangle to help out

By Steve Vaughan

When one thinks of housing in greater Williamsburg, McMansions in gated communities come to mind.

In a place where \$300,000 is the average selling price for a home, it's hard to believe that there are 82 privies out back for lack of indoor toilets.

The new class of Leadership Historic Triangle is doing something about that by promoting the issue, raising money, and laying pipe.

"We were shocked when we heard that," said Michelle DeWitt, who's leading the plumbing program. Leadership Historic Triangle pulls together rising stars in the community to give them a crash course in how things work. Each class takes on an ambitious community project.

The leadership class doesn't know the addresses of the substandard housing because the Census redacts that information to protect individual privacy.

The group does know that 58 of the houses are in James City, 17 are in York and 7 are in the city. "It's a problem that affects our entire area," DeWitt said.

Locally, Housing Partnerships has for years assisted poor people in getting the funds and installing plumbing. In years past, Housing Partnerships built many an outhouse as well. The leadership class has turned to Housing Partnerships to leverage as much as \$825,000 for indoor plumbing.

DeWitt works as economic development director for the City of Williamsburg, and she knows her way around the Richmond bureaucracy.

"The state provides up to \$30,000 in funding for each house, but in most of these cases it will cost more because they aren't on the city or county sewer line and they will require some type of alternative septic system," she said. "That's why there is a fundraising component to the program."

Abbitt Woodall, executive director of Housing Partnerships, told the leadership class that most the houses that could easily be fitted, "the low-hanging fruit," have already been helped.

The remainder require independent septic systems, which cost more than the state's Indoor Plumbing & Rehabilitation program will cover. Plus, the septic systems require perennial maintenance, which would fall on homeowners without the wherewithal to afford it.

That's why the leadership class needs to raise money for the project.

The group will tap into Indoor Plumbing & Rehabilitation grants for \$450,000. Another \$150,000 will be raised from Virginia

Department of Housing & Community Development grants. A grant for \$150,000 is in the works from the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation. DeWitt said her

group will turn to the community for the remainder of the funding, hoping to raise \$55,000 from area churches, \$14,500 from local businesses and \$5,500 from individuals.

Fully \$675,000 will go toward installing plumbing in 15 homes. The remaining \$150,000 will be put in an endowment to provide annual maintenance for 20 alternative septic systems for 20 years.

See Funds, page 14A

NO PLUMBING	
James City	58
York	17
Williamsburg	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>

Source: 200 Census

What  
we  
need

### PLUMBING GAP FUND

Revenue	
Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development Pilot Project Grant	\$150,000
Williamsburg Community Health Fund Grant	150,000
Virginia Indoor Plumbing & Rehabilitation Grant	450,000
Contributions from area churches	55,000
Corporate contributions	14,500
Individual donations	5,500
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$825,000</b>
Expenses	
Installation of plumbing in 15 homes at \$45,000 per home	\$675,000
Annual maintenance of 20 alternative septic systems for 20 years at \$500 per year	150,000

## Plumbing funds

Continued from page 1A  
The project breaks into three phases.

Phase 1 will raise the gap funding and establish the endowment fund for maintenance of the septic system. Both are to be completed by May.

Phase 2 will create a marketing plan by May to increase public awareness.

Phase 3 will install indoor plumbing, a well and septic tank for one family on Barlow Road in York. The job is budgeted up to \$25,000 for a disabled homeowner who's been on the waiting list a long time for state help.

The balance of the funds will revert to Housing Partnerships to do many more homes.