

2023 IMPACT REPORT

Celebrating
5 years
strong!



BUILDING A BOLD FUTURE



**Anne Arundel
Connecting
Together**

A POWER Organization

Building The World As We Want It To Be

ACT is a people's power organization working across race, socioeconomic background, faith, and geography to win on issues of justice for low- and moderate-income communities in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. We train and develop leaders to act and win on the issues that are most important to everyday people in our communities.

At the heart of our work, we **listen** to each other in one-on-one conversations, house meetings, and listening sessions. We build relationships of trust across differences. We **research** the best solutions to the problems faced in our neighborhoods. We build power and **act** together to change our communities for the better. And we **reflect** and evaluate to learn from our work and plan for the future.



Celebrating 5 Years of ACT



In the past 5 years, we've built power to achieve big wins for justice in our communities:

- **Removed lead from the drinking water** in Anne Arundel County public schools
- **Passed Fair Housing Legislation** to prevent discrimination in rental housing
- **Organized in solidarity with Woodside Gardens residents** to win respect and dignity in their living conditions
- **Launched Feed Anne Arundel** — provided 200,000 meals and kept 74 restaurants open during the pandemic
- **Brought Turnaround Thursday to Anne Arundel County** — a second chance jobs movement for returning citizens

This year, we've built on our legacy to expand our power and make change across our county.



Our Impact in 2023

Listening Campaign

We conducted a successful Listening Campaign where 100+ ACT leaders listened to more than 1200 people in their communities. This created 4 new Action Teams — Housing, Mental Health, Education, and Gun Violence. These teams are led by 9 new team leaders working with a core engagement of nearly 50 people. And this summer, 57 new leaders were trained in community organizing skills in ACT Summer Camp.



Turnaround Thursday

In 2023, ACT helped establish the Turnaround Thursday Movement, which supports returning citizens and others to help them secure well-paying jobs. In the first year, 47 Turnaround graduates obtained jobs and received community organizing training. Luminis Anne Arundel Medical Center is the anchor employer for the movement offering a second chance to many who are turning around their lives. To build on this success, ACT seeks new employers who want to offer someone a second chance, as well as participants seeking jobs. If your business is interested in hiring Turnaround graduates, email katie@actaaco.org. To explore employment and training opportunities, contact **Ms. Roxanne McGowan** at rmcgowan@aacciaa.org or call 410-626-1900 ext. 1001.

Organizational Advancements

This past year, ACT took strategic steps to advance our organization. We improved our communications with a new website and database and welcomed a new Communications Manager to our team. We also updated our bylaws and began a process for being more **intentional about diversity, equity, and belonging** in ACT starting with the creation of a Values Statement.

Our Cycle of Organizing: Affordable Housing Spotlight

● LISTEN

While the bill did not pass in 2023, we've reflected on what we accomplished and what needs to happen to get this bill passed in 2024. We're working with partners, community leaders, and experts to push for the passage of an enhanced bill this year.

● RESEARCH

We've researched the housing shortage in our county and the history of racist zoning policies. We've also spoken with experts and leaders in the building industry to understand what policies could restore equity and provide quality housing options for people from all walks of life.

Building Relationships

● REFLECT

In our listening sessions, housing affordability has consistently arisen as the number one issue facing Anne Arundel residents. Teachers, firefighters, health workers, grocery workers, retirees, young people and many more continue to be unable to find a quality place to live in our county, and people of color are especially impacted.

● ACT

In November, we hosted a public action with 425 ACT members and secured commitments from Anne Arundel Councilmembers to support the Essential Worker Housing bill, which would set aside a percentage of units in any new development to be affordable.

Leader Spotlight

Dominique Scurry Woodside Gardens

"I am a leader in my community of Woodside Gardens because of ACT. At Woodside Gardens, the management was ignoring our concerns. We were living with mold so bad you could smell it above the incense. Kids didn't have a play area and the basketball court was locked up. At first I felt powerless.

But ACT taught me how to bring together other residents and build power in our community.

When we invited elected officials from the City of Annapolis and the County to tour our homes, the management company Fairstead started taking us more seriously. Then, we invited Fairstead representatives to an action with hundreds of people at Asbury United Methodist Church. We told our stories and we got our voices heard. Because we stood up and used our power for good, Fairstead changed. They stopped threatening the residents and they started meeting with us quarterly. They finally renovated all the units. I did the ribbon cutting at our new community center. At that moment I really felt like we made it."



Moira McGuire Islamic Society of Annapolis

"I love being a part of ACT. **It feels great being involved with an organization that builds coalitions, educates, empowers, informs, and includes communities to change the world for the better.**

During a time of increasing national divisiveness, there's no better way to spend my time than with people who are bringing folks together, uniting communities to address issues that make people vulnerable, and making Anne Arundel County more inclusive, safer, stronger, and a great place to live for all!"



Join Us in 2024!

In 2024, ACT will be paving a path to a bolder future. We will be building our power by inviting new member organizations and diverse leaders to join our work. Together we will be fighting for:

- Mental health resources for youth, for educators, and for communities experiencing gun violence
- Housing that is fair and affordable for people of all races, classes, ages, and abilities
- Organize with Turnaround Thursday participants for greater opportunities in housing.

To accomplish these goals, we need additional organizing capacity.

In 2024, we aim to raise \$55,000 from individual donors to hire a second organizer. You can help us reach our fundraising goal by becoming a Friend of ACT.

Make your tax-deductible donation, today!

ONLINE

ACTaaco.org/donate



MAIL

PO Box 6053 Annapolis, MD 21401

Visit us online at **ACTaaco.org** to check out our upcoming issue action team meetings and trainings.

ACT Member Organizations

Annapolis Friends Meeting, Annapolis
Anne Arundel Muslim Council, Annapolis
Ark and Dove Presbyterian Church, Odenton
Asbury Broadneck United Methodist Church, Arnold
Asbury United Methodist Church, Annapolis
Broadneck Baptist, Annapolis
Christ Our Anchor Presbyterian, Cape St. Clair
First Christian Community Church, Annapolis
First Presbyterian, Annapolis
Islamic Society of Annapolis, Pasadena
Joy Reigns Lutheran Church, Edgewater
NAACP of Anne Arundel
St. Andrew By the Bay, Annapolis
St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Annapolis
St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Annapolis
Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, Annapolis
United Church of Christ Annapolis, Edgewater
Woods Memorial Presbyterian, Severna Park

Become A Member

Our member congregations and community organizations benefit from community organizing training to build the capacity to act for justice. Members are part of a diverse coalition across the county and state with the power to make change at a scale bigger than any individual organization could on their own. Our member organizations commit to paying 1% of their operational income annually as membership dues, allowing us to maintain our independence and accountability.

Contact **Katie Zinler**
(katie@actaaco.org) to learn
more about joining ACT.



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Anne Arundel Connecting Together

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