



This month took us everywhere, from festival grounds to correctional walls to boardroom tables. Every place added a new perspective.

A festival shows what belonging looks like.

At the Autism Society of Central Virginia's Festival of Inclusion & Duck Race, families cheered for rubber ducks while kids simply got to be kids.

A strategy session proves the value of stepping outside your role.

At Capital One's Pro Bono Marathon, we stepped out of our consultant role and into the seat of a small business owner getting expert advice.

A celebration honors persistence.

At The Richmonder 25 in '25 celebration, we saw how tenacity shapes community in unexpected ways.

A boardroom proves some decisions are best made face to face.

Around the table with Richmond Volleyball Club's board at Sports Backers, strategy moved forward in a way that only happens when you're all in the same room.

A reminder that powerful storytelling happens in overlooked places.

Behind the walls at Lawrenceville Correctional Center, we worked with Real Life participants to package and share their violence prevention mission.

The places we go each teach their own lessons, shaping not only what we do but how we understand the work itself.



25 ways to build community

What does community building actually look like? [The Richmonder's 25 in '25](#) honorees had answers and they weren't what you might expect.

Horror movie nights. Cat rescues. Barber shops. Martial arts. A neighborhood art walk. A park restored. A community sports program for kids with disabilities.

What struck us about the list:

- Community happens everywhere - movie nights, bike rides, art walks, barber chairs
- It's built by people who show up consistently
- The work is hyperlocal but sends ripples across the community
- Nobody waited for permission or funding - they just started

The night was about ordinary people doing extraordinary things quietly, day after day.

community sightings



Festival of Inclusion, Duck Race Edition



Capital One Pro Bono Marathon



RVC Board Strategic Planning

take this with you: the five-foot rule

Community building starts small. At any gathering, before you check your phone or find familiar faces, look within five feet.

Introduce yourself to one new person. Ask one genuine question.

That's it. No networking strategy, no agenda. Just proximity turned into connection.

It's the smallest unit of community building, and sometimes the most powerful. Take it from the introverts on our team!

🐙 what's in the net?

As always, we cast the net wide! Here's what's floating around the Blue Octopus crew this month:

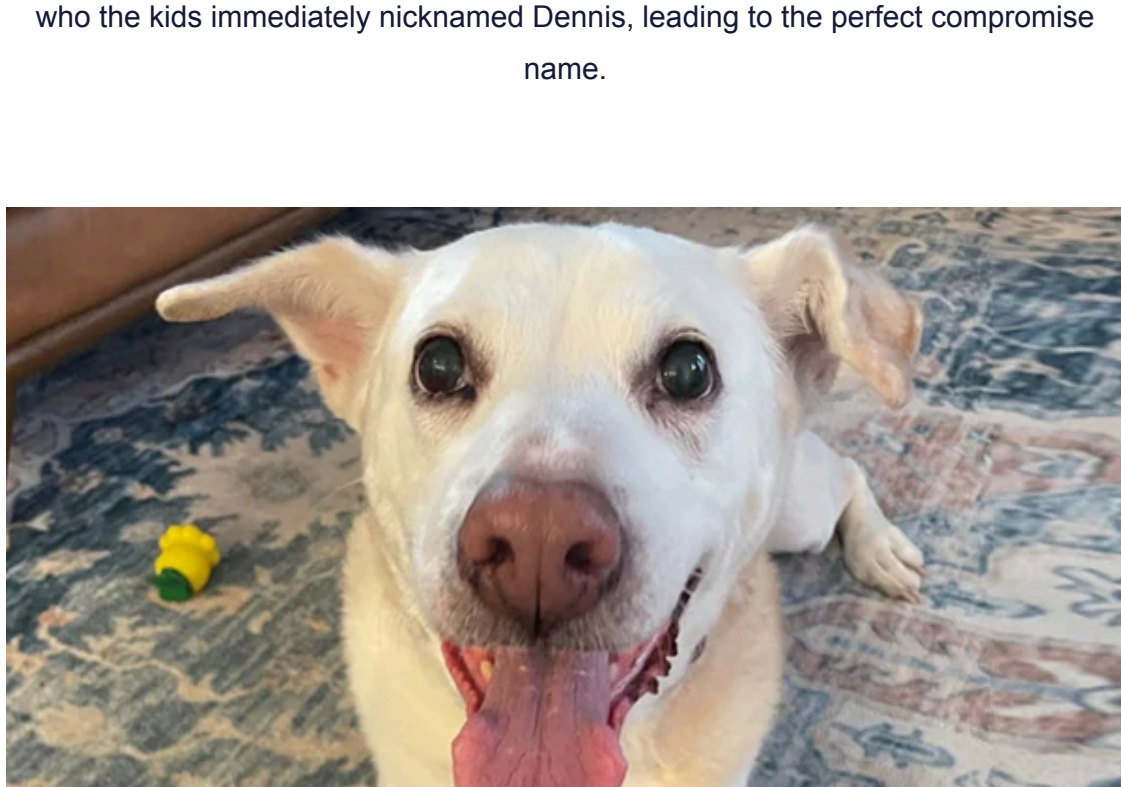
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Laura is listening to *Alive with Steve Burns* (yes, the former Blue's Clues host): thoughtful conversations that hit different when your daughter's childhood TV friend is asking the big questions.

Quillin just saw *Weird Al* in concert in Richmond: accordion-powered nostalgia at its finest.

Carter has been all about the WNBA playoffs: rooting for the Las Vegas Aces to go all the way!

Shelley is adjusting to life with *Lady Dennis*: a senior rescue dog named Ladybug who the kids immediately nicknamed Dennis, leading to the perfect compromise name.



save the date

October 11

Step UP for Down Syndrome

5K & Family Festival

Dorey Park

9am-1pm

[Step UP!](#)

November 23

Jacob's Chance

A Chance to Shine Talent Show

St. Christopher's School

3pm

[Take a Chance!](#)

From our arms to yours - keep showing up and remember that some things can only happen when you're actually there.

Hit reply and tell us where have you seen connection happen in unexpected places!

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