



# The Progress-Index

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## **BRAC boom may add to nonprofits' workload**

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**PETERSBURG — The expansion at Fort Lee will bring thousands of new jobs to the area, but it could also add to the workload of nonprofit groups, schools and emergency crews.**

Connect Southside, a recently formed group that helps local nonprofits network, met last night at the Tabernacle Community Life Center in order to evaluate the effect of the Base Realignment and Closure actions of 2005.

"In terms of the expansion, that's going to create a bigger need for social services," said Anne Douglas, a program officer for the Cameron Foundation, which has given millions of dollars to local organizations.

"What kind of services are [incoming personnel] going to want to see and are the nonprofits going to be able to keep up?" she said.

Karen Cameron, the executive director of the Central Virginia Health Planning Agency, said the possibility of 4,500 new residents within the Tri-City area will, in general, not greatly affect the health care in the area. Cameron said that there are currently 300,000 people in the local area.

But the loss of John Randolph Medical Center's obstetrics ward in Hopewell a year ago did have an effect. Cameron said that many of those coming into the area are younger, and will have a higher need for obstetrics and psychological doctors.

The increased amount of people coming to the area will also mean increased traffic, car accidents and crime in the local jurisdictions, said Colonial Heights chief of police, Col. Jeff Faries.

"We welcome the BRAC. However, it's going to affect us," he said. Additional personnel and larger court dockets would be needed with the increase in population, crime and accidents.

With Monday's report on the potential numbers of students coming to the local areas, Dinwiddie County Superintendent Dr. Charles Maranzano said there is a great need for more classrooms given the high number of students coming to already crowded schools.

Maranzano said if 24 elementary school students come to Dinwiddie County and are all from one grade, it would cost a minimum of \$150,000.

But while there will be a greater need for some services, the expansion at Fort Lee will also bring more people to help with issues such as foster care and to work in social services.

"We have a very high turnover rate," said Kimberly Willis, the director of social services in Petersburg. "We see an opportunity to receive some of the trailing spouses."

Other speakers also said partnership is a necessity among the nonprofit groups, especially with the personnel expansion within the local jurisdictions.

"We see this as another resource and networking tool," Douglas said. "All of these are kind of connected to opportunities for collaboration, partnership and networking."

Conaway Haskins, the deputy state director for Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., said the meeting showed that nonprofit groups can benefit from the upcoming changes.

"This even allows the nonprofit community to be proactive, not reactive," Haskins said.

Every non profit should think outside the box in order to capture the potential coming from BRAC, Haskins said. "The message I want to leave with you is ... you've got to think creatively," he said. "It calls for a creative response. Think in ways you haven't thought before."

Haskins said the local areas have identities that are partly defined by the rich military history and that BRAC could become a part of that.

“We have an opportunity to continue to define and redefine the community,” Haskins said.

“This is an ongoing conversation,” said Nancy Stutts, director of the Connect Network, on the effect BRAC will have on the local area.

“I continue to be amazed by the enthusiasm of the Southside region,” Stutts said. “Our goal was bigger than [being] an Internet-based tool. The community itself brings its knowledge together to make something happen.”

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