

Integrated Campaign: Brand Awareness

Virginia Housing

Communications: Integrated Campaign

HFA Staff Contact

Suzie Bird

Suzie.Bird@virginiahousing.com

VIRGINIA HOUSING

2021 NCSHA Award Submission

ENTRY NAME:

Brand Awareness Campaign

ENTRY CATEGORY:

**Communications -
Integrated Campaign**



“Changing our name and logo to better reflect our mission was just the beginning. The next step was to educate our stakeholders and the public about the importance of our mission — to show that affordable housing helps everyone, not just people who live in affordable housing.”

— Kyla Goldsmith-Ray, Virginia Housing Communications Director

Brief Description

Since our founding, we had operated as the Virginia Housing Development Authority, or VHDA. In recent years, based on feedback from stakeholders and our own observations, we saw a need to more clearly identify who we are as an organization and what we do to support affordable housing across the state — and how that benefits *all* Virginians. This was the start of a major brand evolution, resulting in a new name (Virginia Housing), a new logo and rebranding of all our communications. **Next, it was time to spread the word through a statewide Brand Awareness campaign.** Our campaign goal was twofold:

- 1- To build awareness among stakeholders and the general public about Virginia Housing, our mission and the importance of affordable housing;
- 2- To make Virginians aware of our educational and financing programs.

Since our audience is multifaceted, our campaign has two parts:

- **The master campaign, *Home Helps Everyone***, was designed to inspire the general public, constituents and business partners in a way that makes things personal and addresses their concerns.
- **A capsule campaign** was also developed to specifically target existing and potential partners and government officials with the rallying cry of ***Let's Solve This*** — inviting collaboration and innovative solutions for our communities' housing challenges.

The capsule campaign and master campaign were designed to work in tandem to raise awareness about our mission, our programs and the importance of affordable housing.

Why/When it was undertaken

Many Virginians — including potential partners and customers — didn't know about our organization, our programs, or the importance affordable housing. We needed to raise awareness across the state. But before launching a major campaign, something had to be done about our identity: “Virginia Housing Development Authority” was long and hard to remember, and the words “Development” and “Authority” were problematic because they implied we were developers or a public housing authority. The acronym “VHDA” sounded cold and gave no indication of who we were or what we did. On top of that, our logo and design guidelines were more than a decade old and starting to show their age.

Initial discussions about a rebrand and statewide outreach campaign began in the fall of 2018, followed by research and planning that lasted into 2019. After the research was complete, work began on the rebrand, including logo design, new brand guidelines and key messages. All marketing and communications materials were redesigned, including digital and print

publications, signage, letterhead, company vans, social media channels, promotional items and apparel. In June 2020, we introduced our new name, logo and brand, and began working on a statewide **Brand Awareness campaign**. Work continued through the fall, and our new campaign launched with the airing of a new TV spot on New Year’s Eve 2021, just after the ball dropped at midnight. Besides TV, the campaign also includes radio, digital, email, a dedicated landing page, public relations, social media and search marketing, and is scheduled to run through the rest of calendar year 2021.

What it has accomplished

With our new name and brand, we now have a clear identity. Our name reflects who we are and what we do; it’s short and easy to remember. Our new logo and brand guidelines provide a foundation for creating consistent, on-brand communications. Our Brand Awareness campaign is getting the word out that Virginia Housing is here, that we have programs to make housing affordable, and why that’s good news for everyone — not just the people who use our programs. Our associates and stakeholders have embraced the new name and brand, and excitement is growing as people begin seeing our campaign ads all over the state.

Why it is meritorious and meets NCSHA award judging criteria

- **Innovative:** The Brand Awareness campaign marked the first statewide rollout of our new name, logo and branding — for an organization that had operated under the same name for nearly half a century. It took innovative thinking to propose and deliver a major overhaul to such an established identity, to reimagine all of our communications and to introduce the new brand statewide.
- **Replicable:** Any HFA could replicate what Virginia Housing has done with our Brand Awareness campaign. The process begins by asking if the current branding reflects who the organization is, and what they are about. In our case, we drew our conclusions based on research and interviews with internal and external stakeholders. Much of the work was done in-house, and we brought in an external branding agency to consult and partner with us on the rebrand and campaign development.
- **Engage targeted audience:** The master campaign and capsule campaign were designed to reach an audience of adults 25 and over, homebuyers, renters, business partners, government officials and multicultural communities. Creative executions included multicultural talent, and media buys were carefully planned to engage with each of our target audiences via digital, social, search, out-of-home, TV and radio advertising.
- **Achieve measurable results:** Unlike a direct-response promotion that would show immediate, short-term results, our Brand Awareness campaign (like most awareness campaigns), is educational in nature with a much longer-term objective. Results will be measured over a longer period of time, as the campaign continues to run. Based on a pre-campaign brand awareness survey, we expect the campaign to increase our awareness by 25%, driving a 5% increase in business. We’re measuring this by tracking

loan production, grant applications and new business partner initiatives — and early indications are good. Our Homeownership and Rental Housing divisions are expected to break their own production records. **Our campaign landing page had more than 35,000 unique page views within the first four months of the campaign.** Associates, business partners, government officials and the media have adapted surprisingly quickly to using our new name. We're encouraged to see these trends so early in the campaign, and expect to see awareness continue to grow in the coming months, along with increased understanding about what affordable housing is, and who it helps.

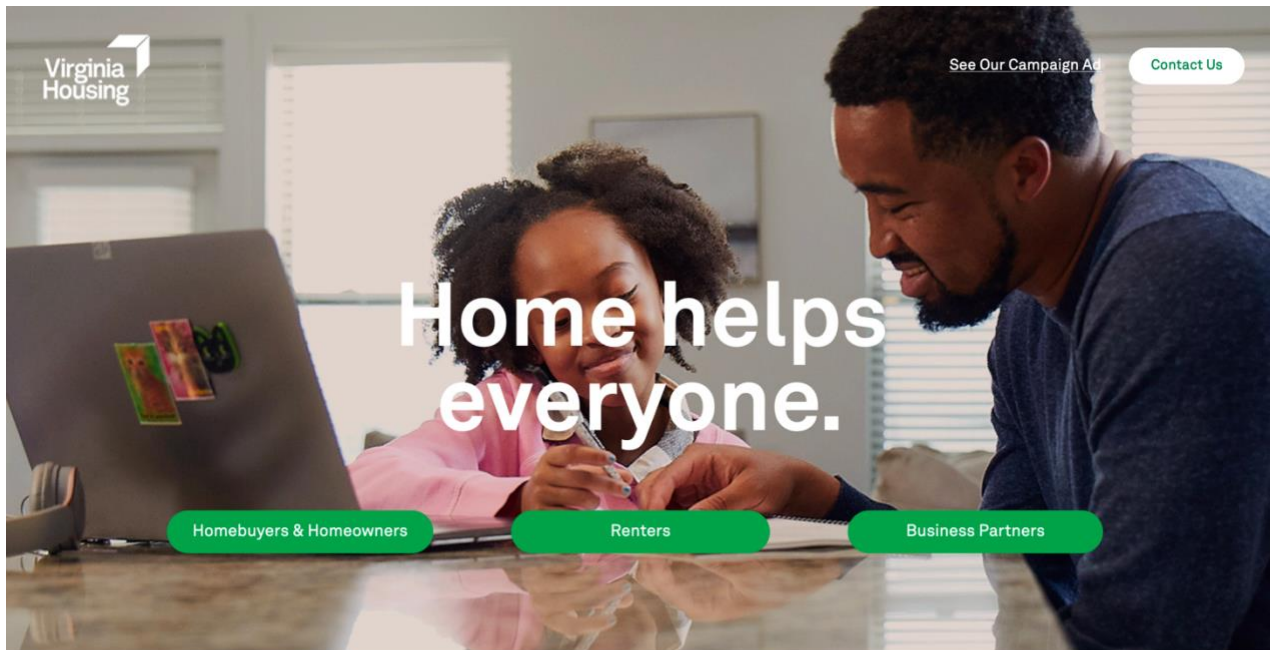
- **Provide benefits that outweigh costs:** Our Brand Awareness campaign is the most significant communications initiative we've undertaken in our nearly 50 years. The campaign clarifies our identity and purpose, and shapes perceptions about our mission and the impact of affordable housing for all Virginians. These benefits far outweigh the costs associated with a complete rebrand and statewide campaign. We realized many cost-saving efficiencies in producing the campaign. While shooting still photography and video for campaign ads, we took additional shots and video clips that we could use later in other projects, such as our website, social media and print collateral. We saved more by using stock footage and images where we could, and by having our own in-house Creative Team redesign, rewrite and rebrand most of our marketing materials.
- **Demonstrate effective use of resources:** After nearly 50 years without a major rebrand, we knew that changing our name and logo, redoing all communications and launching a statewide campaign would require additional resources. To ensure success, our internal Communications Team partnered with an external marketing agency to help us navigate the rebranding process and launch the campaign. The alternative would have been to hire three or four additional full-time staff, which would have far exceeded the cost of partnering with an agency.
- **Achieve strategic objectives:** Through the campaign, we're achieving our strategic objectives of outreach and education. Audiences across Virginia are learning about Virginia Housing and our mission as they never have before — and seeing how quality, affordable housing benefits all of us. Consumers are finding out about our first-time homebuyer programs, and local governments, developers and others are realizing they can partner with us to address unmet rental needs in their communities.

Conclusion

A name is a first impression. A brand is the foundation on which an organization tells its stories. At Virginia Housing, we have great stories to tell — but we needed a new foundation for those stories to have their greatest impact. As we approached our 50th year, we determined it was time for a very big, and meaningful change to our name and our brand. We now have a new name that says who we are and what we do, along with a new logo, look, feel, tone and clear messaging. On this new foundation, our Brand Awareness campaign is sharing our story with the people who need to hear it, and spreading the word that affordable housing impacts us all — that **home helps everyone.**



Campaign Landing Page: VirginiaHousing.com/HomeHelps



Affordable housing helps everyone.

At Virginia Housing, our loans, grants and resources transform where and how millions of Virginians live and thrive. By boosting local economies, creating a stable workforce and improving education, affordable homes are the foundation of thriving communities.

Campaign TV Spot: [This Is Affordable Housing](#)



Campaign TV Spot: [Affordable Housing Helps Everyone](#)



Behind-the-Scenes Video: [Creating Our New Look & Campaign](#)



Campaign Launch Announcement:

**Celebrate the New Year
with Virginia Housing**

**Tune in on New Year's Eve and be
the first to see our new TV spot**
(Details on back)

New Year's Brand Campaign Kickoff! Starting with a new TV spot airing New Year's Eve, the campaign tells the story of our mission, at a time when it's never been more important. This New Year, with your support, we'll help even more Virginians attain a safe, affordable place to call home. Thanks for all you do — and Happy New Year!

Recipe for a Rockin' New Year's Eve

Pop yourself a bowl of popcorn, and grab the best seat in the house. **Turn on your local ABC or NBC channel by 11:59 p.m.** to watch the virtual ball drop, and celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!

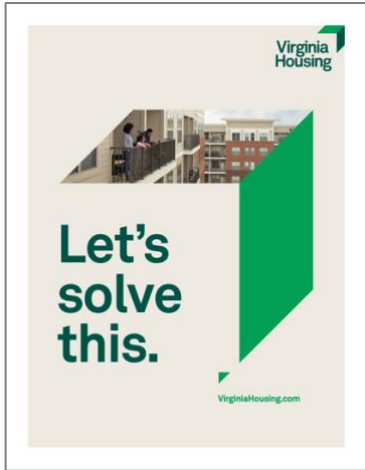
Then, watch for the debut of our TV spot, scheduled to run between **12:10 - 12:30 a.m.** Don't worry — if you miss it, you'll be able to see the spot after midnight by visiting VirginiaHousing.com/NewYear.

Ingredients:

- 1 large bowl for popcorn
- 1 bag popcorn kernels
- 1 bag popcorn seasoning
- 1 viewing device
- Sparkles and glitter (optional)

Virginia Housing

Sample Campaign-Related Collateral, Ads, Exhibits:



Home helps everyone.

Our diverse offerings benefit countless neighbors, industries and institutions, be it directly or via the powerful waves of progress they set in motion across the Commonwealth.

We offer homebuyers & homeowners:

- Homeownership grants and specialty programs
- Homeowner education
- Down Payment Assistance Grants
- Closing Cost Assistance Grants
- Mortgage Credit Certificates
- Home retention and loss mitigation programs

We offer business partners:

- High-potential investment opportunities
- An expanded pool of qualified homebuyers and tenants
- Multifamily, mixed-income rental housing loans
- Accessible rental housing grants
- Federal Housing Credits
- Community Impact Grants (to add or preserve affordable housing for localities)
- Capacity Building Grants
- Revitalization consultation and financing options

We offer renters:

- Virginia Housing Benefits, a free online tool for rental housing savings
- Free renter education online courses
- Renter rights and responsibility resources
- Housing Choice Vouchers

How else are we solving this?

Our Community Outreach Team supports the Governor's Housing Policy and other statewide initiatives that address community revitalization, homelessness and housing accessibility for underserved Virginians.

Our Virginia Housing Directory provides a comprehensive database of nonprofit housing resources available at VirginiaHousing.com.

Our Certified Management Agent program promotes quality by setting high standards among property managers.

Our connections to HUD-approved housing counseling agencies help Virginians make the right financial decisions.

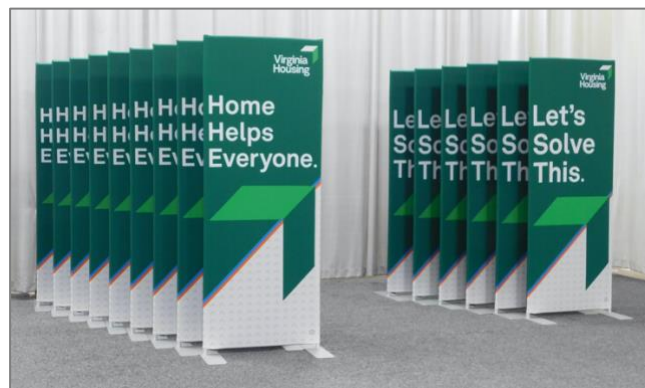
Our grants make homes more accessible for people with disabilities — like our Draining Freedom program for Virginia disabled veterans.

Our Harvest Project helps faith-based organizations develop affordable housing in congregation-owned land.

Our associates provide you with top-tier services to Habitat for Humanity Virginia.

Virginia Housing Mobile Mortgage Office vans provide home loans to residents in every corner of the Commonwealth, including Southwest Virginia, Southside Virginia, the Eastern Shore and smaller towns and communities not served by traditional lenders.

Including you.



**You've got vision.
 We've got resources.
 Let's solve this.**

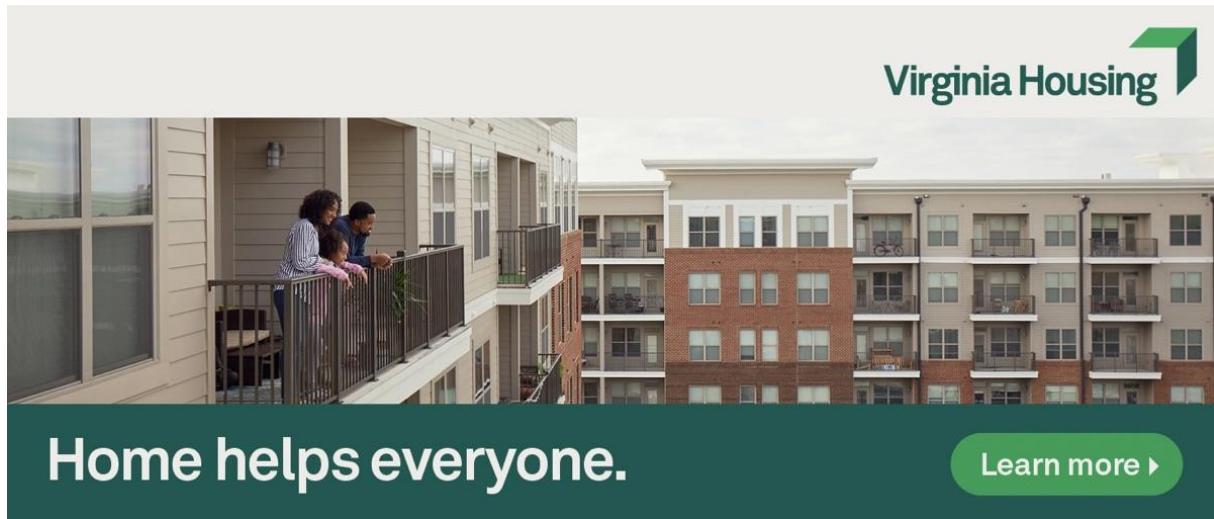
Virginia Housing offers a variety of grant and loan programs to help local governments, nonprofits and developers revitalize neighborhoods and solve workforce housing needs.

To learn more about partnering with Virginia Housing, contact us at Resources@VirginiaHousing.com.



Virginia Housing
 Home helps everyone.

Sample Campaign-Related Collateral, Ads, Exhibits: (Continued)



Virginia Housing

Home helps everyone.

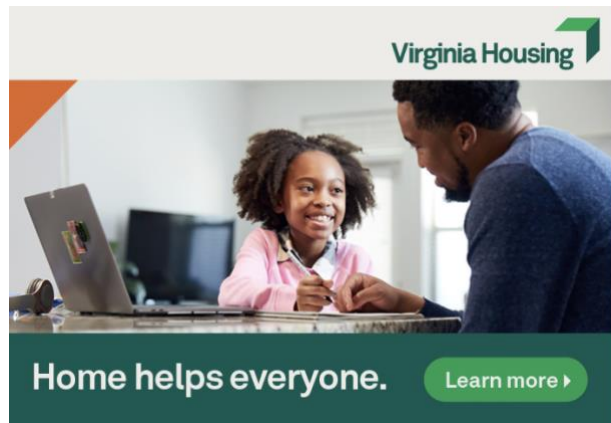
Learn more ▶



Virginia Housing

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Virginia Housing

This is affordable housing.

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