



MARYLAND
FOOD BANK

STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE

special edition
SUMMER 2020

FOOD FIRST

How connections make the difference in a time of crisis

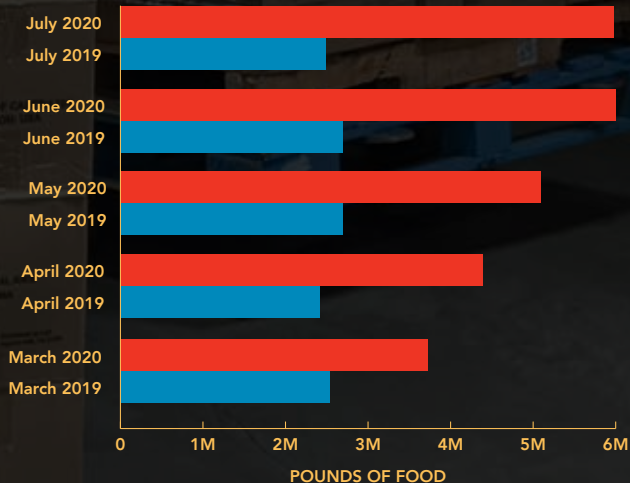
Seven days before Maryland Governor Larry Hogan announced the first series of actions designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 statewide, our Food Sourcing Managers Butch Langenfelder and Andrew Miller were busy protecting the supply of food available to the Maryland Food Bank (MFB).

Langenfelder, who has worked at MFB for more than a decade, recalls the first time he heard about the coronavirus, during a discussion about crisis management with his colleagues from other food banks.

"While we didn't know how destructive the virus was going to be, we knew how a simple snowstorm can slow down the supply chain in our region. We have a responsibility to be here for hungry Marylanders no matter what, so knew we had to act quickly," said Langenfelder.

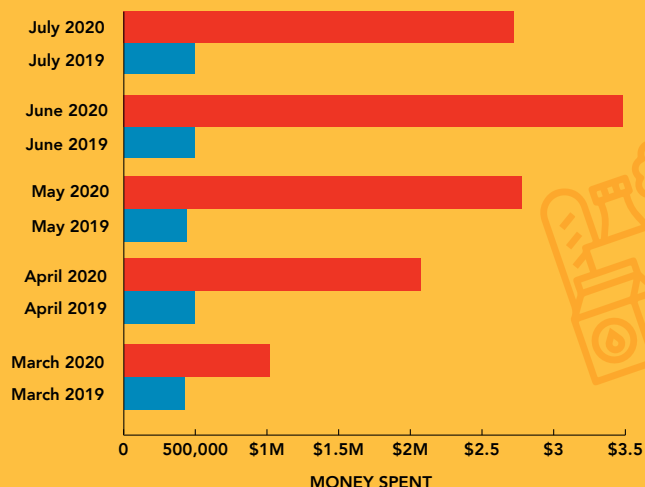
Securing an ample supply of food for our neighbors in need was first and foremost in Langenfelder's mind, so he reached out to his regular food vendors, many of which are on the West Coast.

Pounds of Food Distributed



84%
increase over last year's
distribution rate

Money Spent on Food



“We have a long-standing relationship with our vendors. They understand and support the work that we do so they were really great in those early days. It was unlike anything I’ve ever seen before,” he said.

Through middle-of-the-night telephone calls, emails, and texts, Langenfelder and Miller secured the shelf-stable groceries that make all the difference to someone experiencing the anxiety of not knowing where their next meal might come from.

As it did with other businesses and industries, food assistance took a big hit from COVID-19. Truck drivers called out sick, food manufacturers had to temporarily close, and even those that were open experienced unprecedented issues.

While we were able to continue our mission by bringing on temporary employees and shifting MFB staff into different roles, some companies were not so fortunate. One company we work with to purchase “pop-top” meals (canned meals that do not require a can opener) ran into problems they’d never encountered before.

“Our rep told us that on the days that they had enough food and staff, they were out of labels, pull tops, and lids; on the days they had adequate supplies, they didn’t have enough staff,” Langenfelder added.

But our food sourcing team was able to navigate the challenges and keep a steady supply of nutritious food coming into the food bank.

“I’m here to get some food today. It’s my first time ever coming out and probably won’t be my last. I was on disability even before coronavirus, and now things have changed. Even the food you can find at the store is more expensive. I heard about the food here from my neighbor. This is good. This will help me.”

— Dante, neighbor in need at the Langston Hughes Community Center



A woman with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white checkered face mask and white gloves, is working with cardboard boxes in a warehouse. She is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt with yellow text that includes the word "Volunteering". The background shows more boxes and a red and white logo on a wall.

STAYING SAFE WHILE STILL HELPING NEIGHBORS IN NEED

Dedicated volunteers didn't let anything slow them down

Pre-pandemic, the biggest challenge our volunteer team faced was scheduling the sometimes-overwhelming number of groups and individuals who had a passion for helping their hungry neighbors.

But once businesses started shutting down, group volunteer cancellations started flooding in. And when the Stay at Home order was announced, individuals canceled shifts, many expressing concerns about their personal safety. Thomas Higdon, MFB's volunteer program manager, recalls an eventful 48-hour window, where he rebuilt the Volunteer Program to meet social distancing, mask-wearing, and hand-washing requirements.

"Safety is always a concern when working in a warehouse or kitchen setting, but keeping our volunteers safe from a pathogen required us to rethink and revamp almost the entire process, from how we greet and train volunteers to the physical spaces they would be working in," explained Higdon.

"I'm in this situation because I worked hard before the coronavirus. Now I have a lot of stress and uncertainty, but no job and no money. I am learning how to receive today. I usually like to give support to other people, but now it's me that needs help, and I am very grateful for the Maryland Food Bank."

— Maria M., food-insecure Marylander at the Henderson-Hopkins School



Higdon and his team moved orientation into MFB's largest space, modified the conveyor belt and kitchen areas to account for social distancing, and expanded the area where volunteers 'kit' food into boxes.

Once new procedures were in place, Higdon began reaching out to some of his most trusted volunteers, while new volunteers were recruited through our website, social media channels, and public relations efforts. Thankfully, passionate Marylanders responded.

Masks and gloves became part of the volunteer "uniform," and it was heartwarming to see that while COVID-19 may have affected the physical distance between volunteers, it did little to diminish their unbelievable spirit.

"It's not a hypothetical family we're serving. As I'm working, I can picture my students, I can picture people in my neighborhood, I can picture the elderly office manager in my apartment building. These are all people who are vulnerable right now," said Isabella Bowker, a teacher at Belair-Edison School who first began volunteering with MFB during the pandemic.

With a newfound wealth of helping hands, and an exponentially heightened need for food distribution, we took the procedures that had been established at the Baltimore warehouse for kitting and within a month, had an offsite facility up and running to help feed even more Marylanders.



Volunteers donated nearly
20,000 hrs
from March through July

75%
of volunteers since March
were new to MFB



SCALING UP FOOD DISTRIBUTION

How Back Up Boxes and strong partnerships keep food flowing

In recognizing that the virus' effects were far-reaching and would likely be long-lasting, we realized that our existing warehouse simply would not provide enough space to serve a rapidly growing food-insecure population.

"In a time of crisis, you learn a lot about the businesses you work with," said Rick Condon, MFB's senior vice president of operations. "Merritt Properties has always been a good friend to the food bank, but they really stepped up at the onset of the pandemic. Offering the use of some of their warehouse space in Halethorpe allowed us to nearly double production of Back Up Boxes at a critical time."

These Back Up Boxes, otherwise known as BUBs, were an early part of MFB's strategy to respond to the rising demand for food. Using boxes donated by Columbia Container, each BUB contains a 30-pound supply of shelf-stable food that could easily be transported, stored, and distributed quickly wherever needed through our partnerships in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and the other 20 jurisdictions we serve.



144,515

BUBs distributed through July



“Our weekly budget is what our monthly budget used to be! Thank you, MFB, for the extra funding so we can feed more people here in Dorchester.”

— Leslie Bishop, director, Meals 'til Monday, Dorchester County



Initially, MFB volunteers worked multiple shifts in our Baltimore warehouse to pack these Back Up Boxes. But with increasing pressure to make even more boxes available, the decision was made to hire temporary full-time workers to take on this work at the off-site facility.

After recognizing how hard the hospitality industry's workforce was hit by layoffs, we had a unique opportunity to address one of the root causes of hunger – unemployment – by employing additional individuals whose jobs had disappeared.

“When we opened the off-site location in early April, it was a scary time for many people in the hospitality and restaurant industry who had lost their jobs literally overnight. We made every effort to recruit and hire these individuals because we knew they had the skills and the work ethic needed to make the Back Up Box Program a success,” said Tim Regan, the executive director of our FoodWorks culinary training program.

The Back Up Box Program has been successful on many levels and will continue to be an important way to keep feeding Maryland moving forward.



“We're providing food to people who are not able to get it on their own right now — it makes you feel really good at the end of the day to know that you are helping the people who really need it.”

— Elizabeth Sopel, temporary full-time Back Up Box worker



"We feel very comfortable that the food bank has done the right research, and knows the right places to reach the people who really need it during this pandemic and beyond."

— Josh Johnson, President & CEO Mariner Finance

COVID RESPONSE **\$12 m**

\$1 million

25,000 BUBs to Baltimore City

\$6 million from state of Maryland

(disbursement of federal CARES Act funding)

\$3 million

Food to our statewide Network Partners, allocated by county

\$2 million

Strategic solutions that support populations impacted by COVID-19

\$6 million from MFB donors

\$3 million

Food purchases

\$1.5 million

Operating expenses to support MFB's COVID response

\$1.5 million

Non-food resources and supplies for MFB partners

PLANNING TO DISTRIBUTE HOPE

"Over the last four decades, we've built up a rock-solid, statewide safety net for food-insecure Marylanders, and we were ready when the pandemic first broke," said Meg Kimmel, MFB's executive vice president of programs & external affairs. "Early on, we held conversations with stakeholders in each of the 22 jurisdictions we serve to ensure we could meet the rapidly growing need on a daily basis, and for months, if not years to come."

Those discussions resulted in an initial 90-day, \$12 million plan to help hungry Marylanders navigate the first three months of COVID-19. The State of Maryland directed \$6 million in federal dollars from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to the food bank to support food assistance efforts statewide, and we were able to fund the remaining \$6 million thanks to the incredible generosity of individual, foundation, and corporate donations.

One of those donors had a very personal reason for giving. Mariner Finance President & CEO Josh Johnson found that MFB's efforts align closely with those of Jeffie's Choice, the non-profit he founded in memory of his mother, Jennifer "Jeffie" Ann Moss Johnson, who cooked and provided food to those in need.

"She knew good, home-cooked food could help bring people back from a place that wasn't maybe the best for them. And while she was right about everyday hunger, her lessons resonate even stronger today as we band together to get through COVID-19," Johnson explained.

The contribution from Mariner Finance and others will have a direct impact on the largest number of food-insecure Marylanders our state has seen in over two decades. Facing a 2x increase in demand for food assistance, we are grateful for the support of every one of our donors. Thank you!



STAYING OPEN, MEETING THE INCREASED NEED

When COVID-19 struck, what were once mundane tasks, like leaving our houses to get food, became complicated processes, requiring masks, gloves, and respecting social distancing guidelines. Now, imagine that scenario on a much larger scale — hundreds of people trying to secure food, their most basic of needs, while remaining safe. It is now your responsibility to meet that need, with a whole new set of rules.

Pre-COVID-19, our Network Partners met the challenge of feeding food-insecure people head-on, with grace, dignity, and personal interactions. Then, in the blink of an eye, things changed. The traditional ways of distributing food were no longer viable.

Gone were the ordinary “shopping” experiences for hungry Marylanders in our partners pantries, replaced by drive-thru, contactless distributions.

“One minute you think you can’t do it. Then the next you’re remembering food is a priority, and people need it. So, we had to get to that place, that place where you say ‘We’re going to be here, to make sure people have food.’ And the Maryland Food Bank stood by us.”

— Virginia Dunn, Director, Church of the Redeemer of the Lord food pantry



Since March, MFB has activated **110** temporary partnerships to host Pantry on the Go events



With kids no longer able to access food inside schools or at after-school programs, we're creating and distributing thousands of Grab & Go meals each week to keep Maryland families nourished.

"When schools shut down, my first thought was where are kids going to get food?," remarked Christopher Beck, Stanton Community Center manager. "Then, the Maryland Food Bank stepped up with these Grab & Go meals, which our families really appreciate."

"When the Stanton Community Center put out that they would be feeding the community, it was a weight

off my shoulders," said Robert Eads, a father whose child receives meals from the Stanton Community Center in Annapolis. "If it wasn't for the food bank, I'd be in trouble."

The Stanton Community Center is representative of one of our most valuable resources — a strong, statewide network of nearly 350 community organizations that represent roughly 1,200 distribution points, 77% of which have stayed open since day one of the pandemic. These dedicated partners continued to serve with grace and dignity, even while personal interactions are discouraged.

297,139

Grab & Go meals distributed to kids in central Maryland from March through July



"I do seasonal work and I clean houses, but because of the virus, nobody wants you in their house to clean, so things have been a little more difficult... but it's really comforting that there's still food here for us."

— Christie F, hungry Marylander at Living Waters Ministry in Denton



On the Eastern Shore, where geographic distance is a common barrier to food access, groups banded together, devising creative solutions to not only overcome geography, but the additional barriers brought on by COVID-19.

Building on their already successful Backpack program, Caroline's Helping Hands reached out to nearby MFB partners and Caroline County Public Schools to form an even broader coalition, seeking allies to expand the program for children who could no longer access food at their school.

"With the schools shutting down abruptly, getting food to the 709 kids

we serve was a priority. Cheryl Beulah at Living Waters in Denton was the first of several pantries to sign on and help make sure our children continued to have the food that they need," said Roxanne Wolf with Caroline's Helping Hands.

Times of crisis reveal how close to food insecurity many Marylanders truly are — when missing even one paycheck forces families into anguishing choices like paying bills or grocery shopping, purchasing crucial medication or feeding their

children breakfast. But this pandemic has also revealed just how much concern people have for the well-being of their neighbors in need. Seeing the entire state band together to help struggling individuals and families navigate the unanticipated devastation brought on by COVID-19 has been humbling, and fuels our continued efforts to make sure that no Marylander goes hungry.





We Are Built For This

It is simply incredible to think about all the ways our world has changed since we last sent out this newsletter in the spring. We have faced obstacles in the past, but COVID-19 hit us harder than anything we have ever seen, creating a massive spike in demand for food assistance while the supply chain buckled under the pressures of consumer demand.

The Maryland Food Bank and our network of community partners is built for moments like this and we were able to pivot quickly in response. Our ability to begin aggressively purchasing food early in March was made possible by our **many** long-time donors. If you've been supporting MFB for a while now, I hope you fully appreciate the impact of your commitment to this organization... it made all the difference for us in those first days and weeks.

This is work that we are built to do, but it was the incredible outpouring of support from new donors — individuals, foundations, corporations, and local governments — between March and June that expanded our capacity just in time to keep up with nearly double the demand for food.

Today, we are busy gearing up for the long haul. From where I sit, I can promise you that the work of the food bank just got immensely harder. The hill that we now have to climb just became bigger and steeper at the same time. The effects of this pandemic are going to be long-lasting and will require elevated levels of resources for years to come.

Plain and simple... without you, we could never have made it this far at the level of success we've had in keeping food on the table for struggling Marylanders.

Thanks to partners like you by our side, we can continue to make sure our neighbors in need don't have to worry about where their next meal will come from, so that they can focus on the things that really matter — staying healthy and keeping their families safe.

CARMEN DEL GUERCIO

PRESIDENT & CEO, MARYLAND FOOD BANK

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