



MARYLAND
FOOD BANK

FALL 2020

“Everyone needs help sometime,
and this time I need help.”

HENRY R.



2020 has been a year unlike anything any of us have ever seen. In 2020 Maryland, hunger itself is hungrier than ever before. It's reaching further and further into our communities, touching many for the first time — people we know, people we care about, people whose lives were upended, literally overnight, when COVID-19 emerged:

- © The family down the street who has been quarantined in their home for most of this year, whose resources have been limited by both a lost job and reduced hours
- © The kind senior who once made sure everyone else in the neighborhood was fed, now reaching out for herself
- © The woman who worked hard, planning events at a local hotel, who is struggling to find another way to support her family

Because of the work of the Maryland Food Bank, fueled by empathetic donors like you, our neighbors affected by COVID-19 can feel a little more hopeful, and focus on rebuilding their lives, all because of your kindness.

"Before COVID, I worked for Baltimore County Public Schools at Lakewood Elementary, helping give out food to families from the school pantry. With the virus, schools are closed, and there is no summer work available, so now I'm a recipient of food, for the first time in my life," shared Shawn M., a grandmother trying to help her family get by.

We met Shawn in the parking lot of Mount Pleasant Church in northeast Baltimore on a 92-degree day in early September. She was one of nearly 750 food-insecure Marylanders patiently waiting in a serpentine line of vehicles to receive a supply of shelf-stable food and fresh produce to take back to the home she currently shares with her six grandchildren.

Like all of us, Shawn is hopeful that things will return to normal soon. She misses not only her independence, but the opportunity to help those she cares about.

"Once this passes and we get back in those school buildings, I'm going to keep on giving and giving."

— SHAWN M.



MFB's Phase 2 COVID-19 Response Plan

Last spring, your generosity allowed us to blanket the state with food in response to the historic need brought on by the first wave of the virus, but based on conversations with economists, public health experts, and disaster response professionals, we know we're going to have to maintain this high level of food distribution for the foreseeable future.

That's why, as part of Phase 2 of MFB's COVID-19 Response Plan, the food bank is now concentrating on expanding food access to those who are struggling most as a result of COVID-19, including Marylanders who:

- Are newly unemployed or underemployed due to COVID-19-related closures and layoffs
- Are homebound or self-quarantined/quarantined or caring for sick family members and cannot safely leave their house to access food
- Are members of communities of color, whose historic challenges with systemic racial disparity and injustice have only been exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19



OFFERING A HAND UP, WHEN OPPORTUNITIES ARE DOWN

Federal funds have delayed the full economic impact of COVID-19, and low-wage, hourly, and gig workers are likely to be heavily impacted in the long term. Providing assistance to Marylanders suffering from a loss of work or hours is essential to helping our state recover.

JEFFREY K.

Male breast cancer survivor and cardiovascular disease sufferer Jeffrey was a busy Uber driver, while his wife worked full-time at Johns Hopkins Hospital. The couple was able to manage the bills for their family of four, until COVID-19 derailed things. Jeffrey's concern for his compromised health, combined with the state's Stay at Home order, saw his weekly passenger

volume drop by 75 percent. His wife's position at the hospital was furloughed, and suddenly, the family found themselves in a troublesome situation.

However, asking for help did not come easy for Jeffrey.

"We always had a great income, never been food insecure before, but my pride got in the way – I know there are people out there who are less fortunate than my family is," he said.

Until the economy improves, Jeffrey expects to continue visiting the pantry at Holy Nativity Lutheran Church in Arbutus, Md as needed.



NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

"My wife and I saw on the news that people lost jobs and needed food. We decided to donate a large portion of our stimulus check to the food bank to help others in this crisis who haven't been as fortunate as we have.

— DON L., FIRST TIME MFB DONOR FROM COLUMBIA, MD.



“The food we get really stretches for the whole week, especially the produce and fruits. Those are the things that we really look forward to.” — KATRINA W.

KATRINA W.

Married with four girls under the age of 12, Katrina and her husband immigrated to the United States five years ago in search of employment and better opportunities for their family.

They both found positions helping others — Katrina as a health care aid, and her husband as a technician at a local dialysis center. They both were working full-time when COVID-19 struck, and as fewer patients came in, it meant fewer hours for them. Hearing concern about their continued ability to provide for their family, a friend suggested they visit a food pantry run by the Asbury Church Assistance Network (ACAN) in Severna Park, Md.

“ACAN is able to provide us with some basic needs, which allows us to save money and put it into some other things that are needed,” said Katrina.

They fear that if things continue, they could lose their jobs entirely. But Katrina, like many other Marylanders whose income has been affected by this pandemic, finds solace knowing that the food assistance safety net will be there for her family.

DELIVERING FOOD, OFFERING HOPE

In addition to the quarantine restrictions placed on those who test positive or are exposed to the virus, vulnerable populations (seniors, immune-compromised individuals, etc.) who self-quarantine need to have food delivered. Home delivery benefits the affected individuals and families while keeping the whole community safe.

EMILY H.

“I am retired, and only have \$27 in my bank account. COVID made me postpone hip replacement surgery, and getting around is really difficult now,” said Emily H., a senior food recipient from The Door pantry in east Baltimore.

For nearly 50 years, Emily worked hard in various office roles, and proudly provided for herself. She was in a comfortable enough situation that she even volunteered at 40 West, an MFB Network Partner.

“I used to help with the produce drops at 40 West, and I never expected to be on the other side of the line. Food is a must, and you have to humble yourself to receive it,” she added.

While postponing the surgery forced Emily to spend some of her limited funds on a walker and other medical items to manage her condition, she remains positive.

“Everyone thinks that this is something you never would have to do for yourself, but times change. And I'm thankful that the Maryland food Bank is able to help people like me.” — Emily H.





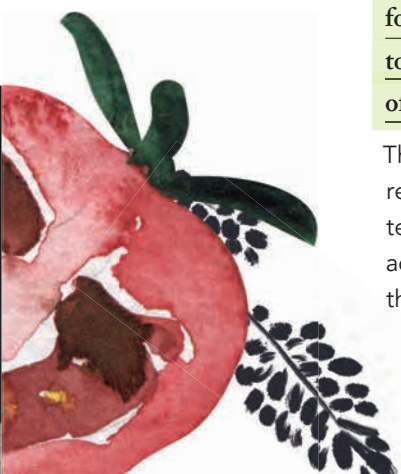
MEET THE SHRIEVER FAMILY: STRUGGLING, BUT SURVIVING IN SALISBURY

Two kids, two stable jobs, a house and car that they own — the Shriever family is trying their best to live the American Dream in Salisbury. Since COVID-19 emerged, that dream is becoming more difficult to realize.

The Shrievers both work so that their twin 10-year-old boys Adam and Aaron can live happy and healthy lives. Stephanie works at a local Walmart, while Robert has been with a local engineering and manufacturing company for more than 20 years. The boys are afflicted with Rieger Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that causes vision and heart issues requiring constant medical care at Johns Hopkins Hospital, nearly 120 miles away in Baltimore.

Even with both parents working, the family found it a challenge to pay all their bills and medical expenses and have enough left over to feed two growing boys. **The Shrievers were in a Catch-22 that nearly 40 percent of food-insecure Marylanders find themselves in — they don't make enough money to cover all of their expenses, yet they make too much to qualify for most types of government assistance.**

Thankfully, Glen Avenue Elementary, where the twins had been receiving reduced-price meals, also hosts a food pantry. One day, Mindy Demaris, a teacher who helps Adam and Aaron with reading, recognized there were additional challenges the family was facing when one of the boys shared that there wasn't much food at their house.





“Oh, I was certainly embarrassed at first, that someone else noticed that we were struggling. You work so hard to provide a good upbringing for the boys, but at a point, you realize that the money you are bringing in is sometimes just not enough.” — STEPHANIE S.

Mindy realized that the cost of their regular visits to Baltimore for treatment was contributing to the family's food shortfall and knew the pantry could help. The next day, she invited Stephanie to visit the school's pantry.

“Oh, I was certainly embarrassed at first, that someone else noticed that we were struggling. You work so hard to provide a good upbringing for the boys, but at a point, you realize that the money you are bringing in is sometimes just not enough,” Stephanie said.

Then in mid-March, COVID-19 shut down schools, blocking access to not only breakfast and lunch for the twins, but the food pantry the family had come to appreciate. Now, it was up to Stephanie to figure out how to provide additional food for her family, and childcare for the boys so she and Robert could continue to work.

As if that were not enough, an intense tropical storm in early April caused their next-door neighbors' tree to fall, crushing and ultimately totaling the very vehicle the family used on those 2.5 hour rides to Johns Hopkins for the boys' medical care.

Faced with an unexpected car payment and an increased food bill with no end in sight, Stephanie was thrilled to

learn that with support from the Maryland Food Bank, her sons' school pantry was able to offer home delivery so they could continue to provide food to families like hers.

“With a team of volunteers, we've been able to deliver food boxes to students' homes. Many of our families are having a tough time juggling the stressors of work, children being home and financial struggles, but it was just heartbreaking to hear what the Shrievers were going through. I'm so glad we're able to help them,” explained Kyle Beebe, the school's community program coordinator.

“The boys are almost 11, and it seems like they're hungry every couple of hours — that's expensive! Combine that with the babysitter we have to pay, and it makes the lunches, drinks, and healthy snacks we get from the pantry delivery so much more important to us. I tell Kyle how appreciative we are every time I see her,” said Stephanie.

Over the years, your consistent support of our programs has given MFB the flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing hunger landscape in our state. It enables us to continue helping families like the Shrievers through some of the most challenging times in recent memory.



BREAKING DOWN SYSTEMIC BARRIERS WITH FOOD



Many of the people the Maryland Food Bank serves are members of communities of color. They have historically been and continue to be disproportionately affected by racial injustice and inequality, which create additional barriers to food security.

At Kingdom of Celebration in Anne Arundel county, site coordinator Randy Curtis is keenly aware of how these issues are affecting his community yet sees a hopeful opportunity for progress.

"The racial tension in the world, I think it's brought the Anne Arundel community together. We have a stronger relationship with the police; they come to our distribution events, help keep it moving, hand out food," said Randy.

ANITA L.

During a recent drive-thru Pantry on the Go event at the church, we met Anita, who had not visited the food pantry at Kingdom of Celebration prior to the pandemic. She suffers from diabetes, which is twice as likely to strike women of color like Anita than her white neighbors.*

"I'm supposed to watch what I eat, and they have a great variety of vegetables here," Anita said.

But like many other Marylanders, COVID-19 has stretched her budget even thinner, making the food that she receives all the more important to her well-being.

"We worry about buying masks and cleaning supplies all the time now. We didn't have to do all of that before. It's extra money, it's too much," she added.

ROSA D.

Twenty-three miles to the north at The Door pantry in Baltimore, former housecleaner Rosa D., finds relief for her family.

"With the virus, people got scared about people they don't know coming into their homes to clean, so I have not been able to work in a long time," she shared.

The combination of Rosa losing wages and her six children losing access to school meals has made providing for her family even more difficult, but the assistance she receives helps keep her kids' bellies full of nutritious foods.

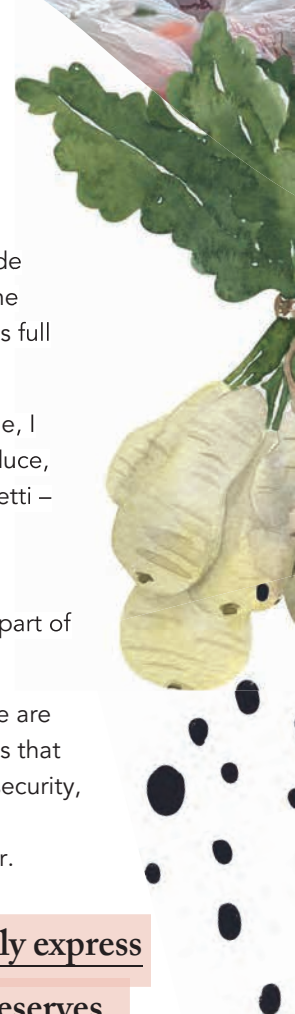
"The food here is really great. When I bring it home, I know my kids are going to just eat up all the produce, and now I can cook one of their favorites – spaghetti – for dinner tonight," she added.

Anita and Rosa are just two Marylanders whose burdens are lessened by your willingness to be a part of something bigger than yourself.

Throughout our Phase 2 response and beyond, we are working diligently to create programs and services that not only address the immediate issues of food insecurity, but the underlying systemic issues that cause it in disproportionate numbers in communities of color.

Words and images cannot completely express
the level of gratitude your support deserves.

We hope that hearing directly from some
of the people you've helped throughout this
crisis renews your dedication to working
together and extending a hand to our neighbors
who have lost their jobs, live in communities of
color, or are homebound.



* <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ccdpc/Reports/Documents/Report-Diabetes.pdf>



THE NEW NORMAL

As we reflect on 2020, a year that most people would like to put behind them, the fact is, this is the new normal for the Maryland Food Bank and far too many hungry Marylanders.

The need for food assistance is **DOUBLE** what it was just a year ago, and that is not going to change any time soon. Government support to individuals has dwindled; our children are still missing out on school meals due to distance learning; and some of our most vulnerable neighbors face immense obstacles to obtaining food for their families.

The people of Maryland need us more than ever before, and we simply cannot fail them.

We are the only organization in the state that has the expertise, the experience, and the infrastructure to meet this unprecedented need for food.

Fortunately, because of your generous support, we have been here since day one of the pandemic, working in Baltimore, Salisbury, Hagerstown, and at partner sites statewide to make sure that the resources you provide are helping as many Marylanders as possible.

But this new normal means operating at this historic level for the foreseeable future, which has very real costs associated with it. Product donations are unpredictable. Food costs continue to rise, and many of the institutions we received financial assistance from are facing their own challenges.

Simply put, we need you. Without the Maryland Food Bank, where will families like the Shrievers, and others you've heard from in this newsletter turn to for help?

CARMEN DEL GUERCIO

PRESIDENT & CEO, MARYLAND FOOD BANK

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