

Community Impact Report

JULY 1, 2024



FOOD FOR NEIGHBORS®

Hunger is closer than you think.
www.FoodForNeighbors.org

No one wants to see a child go hungry.

Partner with Food For Neighbors to make a difference!

THE NEED IS REAL.

Many of our partnering schools have student populations with higher than average free and reduced price school meal eligibility, reaching as high as 91%.⁽¹⁾

All children deserve to have reliable, nutritious food powering their minds and bodies so they may enjoy active, healthy lives. Unfortunately, 1 in 7 children in Virginia face hunger.⁽²⁾ Poverty, combined with the high cost of living, make it difficult for families to afford housing, food, medicine, and other basic necessities.⁽³⁾ During the 2023-2024 school year in Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties, over 93,000 students resided in households with incomes qualifying them for free or reduced-price school meals. Over 1 in 4 students qualified in Arlington and Loudoun counties, and over 1 in 3 qualified in Fairfax County.⁽⁴⁾

These are the children who may be experiencing—or who are at risk of experiencing—food insecurity. This can negatively impact their physical and mental health, well-being, and work and school performance.⁽⁵⁾ As they're in a critical development period, adolescents are uniquely impacted.⁽⁶⁾ What do these youth do during the evenings, weekends, and holidays when they don't have access to their school meals?

WE HAVE A SOLUTION.

Food For Neighbors raises awareness, engages communities, and partners with Northern Virginia secondary schools to connect vital resources with students. We help schools establish pantries and fill them regularly with food and toiletries, almost all of which local community members donate, collect, sort, and deliver to schools. At the schools, staff identify teens in need, develop relationships with them, and connect them with the reliable, easily-accessible resources, which may also include grocery gift cards that we provide for the most vulnerable. Students are better able to focus and learn. In the long term, being better students lifts up them, their families, and our community as a whole.



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to end child hunger in the Northern Virginia area by raising awareness and community involvement. Through awareness comes a desire to help because no one believes a child should struggle with hunger.



OUR PROGRAMS

What began in 2016 as a handful of volunteers in Herndon has grown into a fully mobilized team of energetic community members, schools, organizations, and businesses sharing their strengths and resources to make a difference. Today, with more than 3,000 food and toiletry donors, over 3,500 volunteers, and crucial community support, we're making a positive impact in the lives of some of our most vulnerable community members through two programs.

The **Red Bag Program** provides any storage units needed to establish school pantries and mobilizes community members to donate, collect, sort, and deliver food and toiletries to fill them. School staff identify students in need and connect them with snacks and small meals available throughout the school day and/or larger quantities of food for over weekends and holidays.

The **Grocery Gift Card Program** enables the most vulnerable students and their families to shop for key items, like fresh fruits and vegetables. The gift cards also allow families the flexibility to buy items that meet their religious, cultural, and situational needs. Gift cards are provided throughout the year, with higher quantities offered during the holiday season.



OUR IMPACT AND GROWTH

Thanks to steadfast support from the community, we have experienced significant growth and impacted more students every year. We anticipate this positive trend to continue for years to come.

Established 47 School Partnerships

More and more schools are reaching out to Food For Neighbors for student support. During our January to December 2023 fiscal year (FY 2023), we welcomed seven new schools, an increase of 20% over the previous year. By the close of the 2023-2024 school year, we added another five schools for a total of 47 partnering schools in Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties. This represents a 12% increase in just six months.

Served Over 8,300 Students in One School Year

More schools means more students receiving the supplemental nutrition they need to enjoy active, healthy lives. During the 2023-2024 school year, we helped over 8,300 students, most of whom received some type of support at least once a week.

Registered More Than 3,000

Food/Toiletry Donors and Over 3,500 Volunteers

We inspire and engage thousands of community members of all ages and backgrounds in meaningful service. In astonishing rates reflecting the giving spirit of our community, our Red Bag food/toiletry donors and volunteers rallied to meet the need of our growing number of participating students. During FY 2023, we increased their numbers by 33% and 61%, respectively, over FY 2022. At the close of the 2023-2024 school year, we had more than 3,000 food/toiletry donors and over 3,500 volunteers, an additional increase of 9% and 16% since the end of 2023. *Each* of our Red Bag collection events are now inspiring approximately 2,000 households to donate food and toiletries and over 800 volunteers to collect, sort, and deliver them to participating schools in just one morning!



Number of Students

8,300

11% Increase over 2023



Number of Schools

47

12% Increase over 2023



Number of Volunteers

3,500

16% Increase over 2023



Number of Red Bag Donors

3,000

9% Increase over 2023

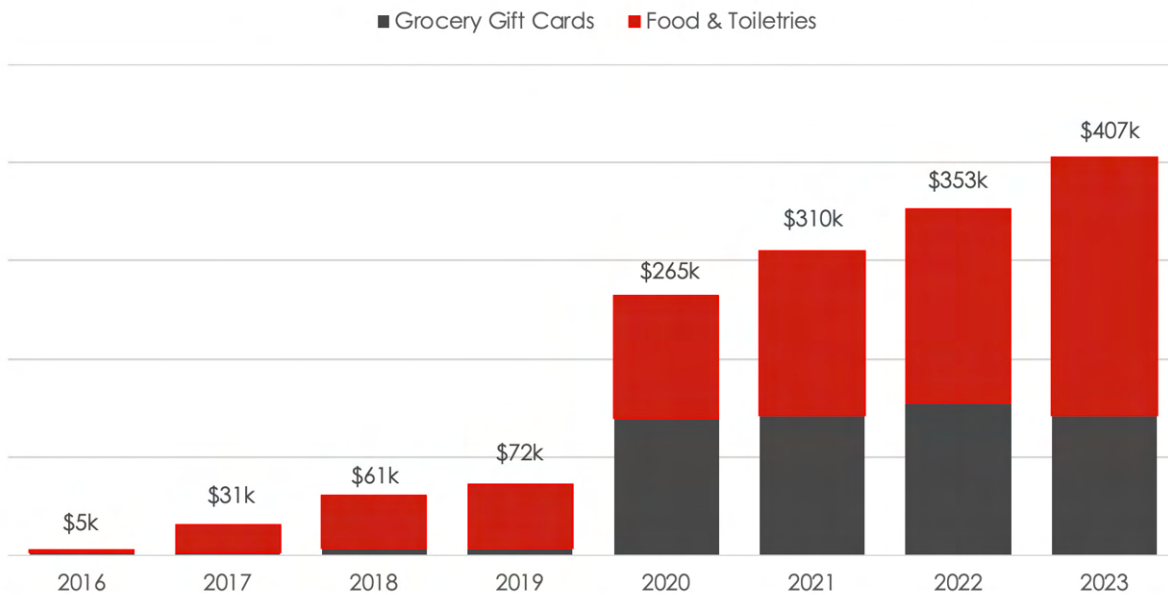


OUR IMPACT AND GROWTH (continued)

Donated Over \$1,500,000 in Food, Toiletries, and Grocery Gift Card Resources

We provide significant, quantifiable support. We have given an astounding \$1,500,000+ in vital resources since our founding in 2016. During FY 2023, we provided our partnering schools with \$265,000 in food and toiletries and \$142,000 in grocery gift cards, for a total of \$407,000 in donations. Compared with FY 2022, this is a 15% increase, which is close to the annual increases seen each year since FY 2020.

Dollar Value of Resources Provided to Schools 2016 – 2023



Made Multiple Positive Impacts on Students

Every year, we receive heartfelt testimonials and survey feedback highlighting the significant impact that our food and grocery gift cards are making in students' lives. School staff have shared moving stories of student struggle, resilience, and gratitude, and they have attributed many positive outcomes to the provided support.

Among these are:

- improved focus,
- more alertness/energy,
- better mood,
- better behavior in school,
- better peer relationships,
- more regular school attendance,
- and improved grades.

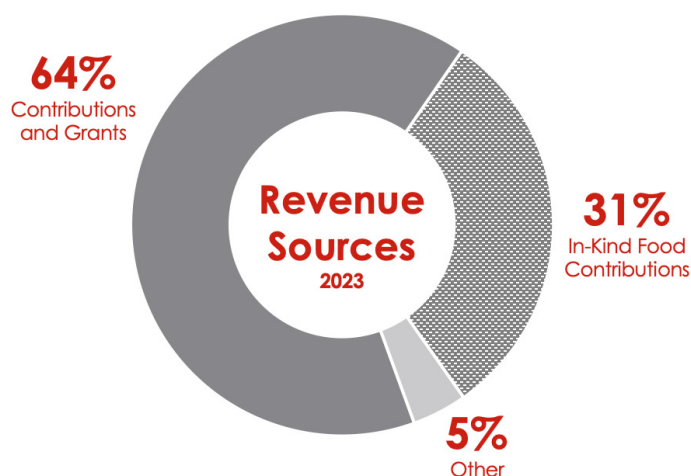
They also have noted that, through the connection over food, they grew meaningful relationships, which enabled them to identify any additional support students needed.

"My mom and dad work 2 jobs and always have and there's 3 of us kids so it's hard. Taking home those bags of the food I can pick for me and my family is the best. Plus when I bring home a gift card it helps out my parents a lot so if we're low on money they can still afford to go to the store. Once around Christmas when it was especially tight, we got two gift cards and it was real special because Food For Neighbors was nice enough to do that for our families and other ones too. Man it's a blessing for a lot of us out here struggling."

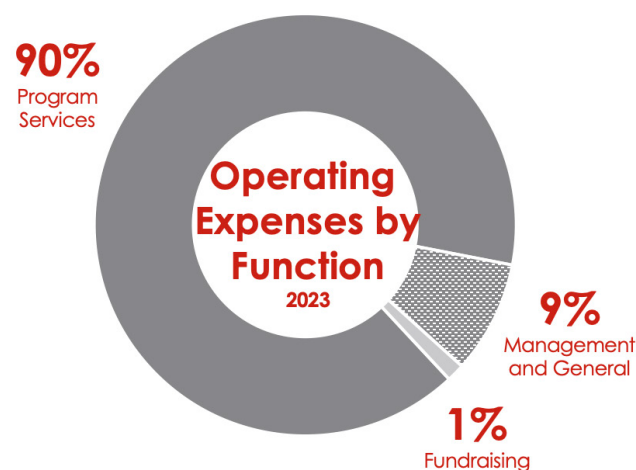
—Middle School Student via their School Social Worker

OUR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

We ensure excellent stewardship of the financial and in-kind gifts with which our community entrusts us. Since inception, 90%+ of our expenditures have directly supported our program services. In FY 2023, 55% of our expenses supported our Red Bag Program, 25% funded the Grocery Gift Card Program, and 10% went towards direct food purchases, provided in addition to the food and toiletries donated via our Red Bag Program. The remaining 10% of our expenses were used for management, general, and fundraising purposes.



Contributions and Grants	\$436,277
In-Kind Food Contributions	207,615
Other	33,432
Total	\$677,324



Program Services	\$525,619
Management and General	50,074
Fundraising	7,985
Total	\$583,678

We seek donations through fundraising campaigns, grant opportunities, and business partnerships, and we receive contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, nonprofits, and government sources. In addition to having a four-star rating with Charity Navigator, we have our nonprofit profile on Candid's Guidestar, where donors will find our Platinum Seal of Transparency and the information they need to support our work with trust and confidence.

We enjoy celebrating the many businesses and organizations that make donations, and we recognize them on our website and in our social media, newsletter, and other ways outlined in our partner program. We also offer businesses and organizations multiple ways to enjoy team building through service. These include holding in-house fundraisers, sponsoring food/toiletry drives or food packing projects, and receiving and sorting donations together during our popular Red Bag Events.

OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Food For Neighbors has a Board of Directors, an Executive Team, Area Management teams, and additional volunteers.

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors provides help and guidance on growth, program development, fundraising, and strategic planning.

Executive Team: The Executive Team manages overall operations and development. This includes, among other things, raising awareness and funding, mobilizing and training volunteer leadership, developing school and other community partners, and leveraging technology and communications. It also includes addressing resource distribution, logistics, supplies, accounting, and planning.

Volunteer Area Management Teams: We organize schools served and their nearby donors and volunteers into areas. Leading these are Area Managers, who maintain ongoing communications with schools and the Executive Team and who ensure Red Bag food and toiletry collection events, planned and organized by the Executive Team, run smoothly at the local level.

Other Volunteers: Additional volunteers include Red Bag food and toiletry donors and donation collection drivers, sorters, and deliverers. Businesses, organizations, and other groups also often have teams supporting our Red Bag Events, holding food/toiletry drives, hosting food packing projects, running fundraisers, and more!



OUR HISTORY

When serving as a local PTA President, Karen Joseph learned that several students were facing hunger every day, and, as a result, could be struggling to get the basic nutrition they needed to grow and learn. Many of these children relied on free and reduced price school meals. Realizing that this left students vulnerable to hunger when they weren't at school, several elementary schools had initiated weekend food programs. The organizations supporting these, however, had not taken on the secondary schools. In 2016, Karen founded Food For Neighbors to fill the weekend and holiday food gap for the older students.

OUR PARTNERS

Our work is truly a community effort. We are extremely grateful for the school staff, food and toiletry donors, volunteers, and financial contributors who support our mission to end childhood hunger in Northern Virginia. Their gifts of time, talent, vital resources, and monetary support make a big impact on our small, grassroots nonprofit and the students we serve.

We celebrate our community partners who supported our mission with \$2,500 or more in financial and/or in-kind gifts during the December 2022 to July 2024 time period. Together, we really do make a difference!



We also thank the many additional businesses and organizations that donated time, talent, food/toiletries, and funding. Among these are additional partners and allies that provided \$1,000+ of in-kind or financial gifts. They include Crestline Homes & Resorts, Faith Church Kingstowne, Herndon Friends Meeting, Mount Vernon Rotary Club, Salesforce, Silver Shield Consulting, Stanley Martin Homes, Starbucks, and Sterling Virginia Smiles as well as the many large individual donors, family foundations, and grantors who gave generously and wish to remain anonymous.



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Contact Renee Maxwell to learn more about becoming a community partner. There are opportunities to make financial contributions and to provide hands-on service.
Renee@FoodForNeighbors.org | www.FoodForNeighbors.org

July 1, 2024



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"I am writing this testimonial with an overflowing heart to express our gratitude for the invaluable support that the Food for Neighbors program has provided to our students and families. The provision of food through this program has not only addressed the immediate concerns of hunger but has also contributed to the overall well-being of our students. The dedication and compassion demonstrated by the Food for Neighbors organizers and volunteers have truly made a difference in the lives of our students and their families."

– High School Counselor



NOTES

- (1) "VDOE National School Lunch Program Free and Reduced Price Eligibility Reports," Virginia Department of Education, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/program-statistics-reports>.
- (2) "Get the Facts about Hunger in Virginia," Feeding America, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/virginia>.
- (3) "Arlington County Food Security Strategic Plan," Arlington County Department of Human Services, October 2022, page 10, <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/DHS/Food-Security-Coalition>.
- (4) "VDOE National School Lunch Program Free and Reduced Price Eligibility Reports."
- (5) "Hunger and Food Insecurity," Feeding America, accessed August 5, 2024, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>.
- (6) Lindsay Smith Rogers, "Hidden Food Insecurity: The Adolescents Who Aren't Getting Enough to Eat," John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, March 12, 2024, <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2024/tackling-adolescent-food-insecurity>.

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