



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



A Note from Executive Director Margo Goldman

As everyone knows, 2020 was a year unlike any other. Worldwide, people struggled to cope with the challenges spawned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Locally, food assistance organizations, government entities, and nonprofits in general had to pivot quickly to address an overwhelming surge in needs of all kinds. Gaithersburg HELP was most challenged along two fronts—devising ways to serve our clients safely and coping with food supply chain shortages that led to major suppliers cutting off bulk orders. Additionally, our member congregations had to close their doors to in-person services, so the usual food donation system ceased operation.

To address safety, we quickly instituted strict pantry sanitation protocols and social distancing policy; and we enforced use of masks and gloves for anyone entering the pantry. We asked clients to line up outside 6 feet apart under the covered area of the walkway. Some volunteers filled a new position of pantry contact

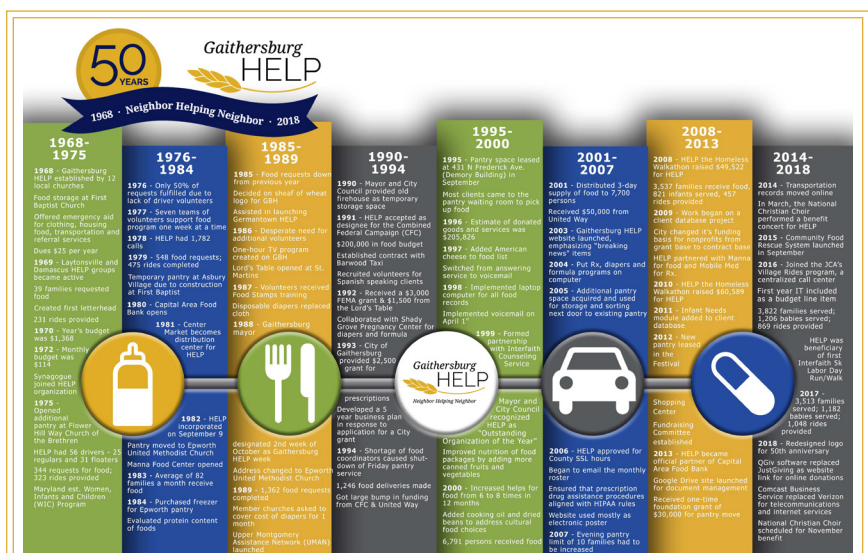
coordinator, remaining in the front room to review IDs, check off families against the current day's list, and take the bags from the late afternoon



volunteer staff and place them safely on the sidewalk for clients to pick up. All procedures were documented and shared in English and Spanish through pantry signage, emails, Web postings, and so on. We also coped with the need to quickly replace older volunteers who felt unsafe coming to the pantry no matter what safety protocols were in place.

Our regular volunteers serving the Food and Infant Needs Program stepped up to put in longer hours. We opened the pantry on several Saturdays over a couple of months to cope with long client waiting lists, especially within the Hispanic community. Our congregations found new ways to collect food for us. The County stood up a Food Security Task Force with the goals of increasing the volume of food in the food assistance system; improving access to food by building the capacity of the food assistance network; and communicating information to residents on available resources. Many individuals made generous donations that enabled us to stock the pantry at higher prices.

The challenges of 2020 were mitigated in many unforeseen ways. For one, we welcomed the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Gaithersburg as new members in 2020, and they immediately started to volunteer in essential ways. We're also buoyed by the essential collaborative relationships formed with staff and volunteers from many organizations, and we continue to benefit in tangible and intangible ways from the spirit of service and sacrifice of so many people. Gaithersburg HELP volunteers clearly demonstrated their commitment to our mission and their unceasing concern for others throughout this troubling year. Great challenges remain as we enter 2021, but we feel prepared.



Program Highlights

The following pages summarize the activities, achievements, and challenges in Gaithersburg HELP's major programs during 2020.

- Pantry and Infant Needs
- Rx & Upper Montgomery Assistance Network (UMAN)
- Food & Infant Coordinators
- Spanish Language Services
- Transportation
- Volunteer
- Resources and Financial Management



Our Vision

As a vital neighbor-helping-neighbor link in a county-wide network of providers, Gaithersburg HELP strives to assist clients with food and other basic needs.

Pantry and Infant Needs

The Pantry and Infant Needs Program has always been the heart of our mission, but never more so than throughout 2020. As schools and businesses shut down, leaving many families without income, our client numbers became overwhelming. In April and May, we served almost 6,000 individuals compared with an average of about 3,500 before Covid-19. At the same time, severe food supply chain shortages arose, making it difficult if not impossible to keep our



pantry stocked with basic items such as rice. We served Covid infected families either through drop-offs at their homes or by referring them to the Gaithersburg CARES Hub, one of the eight hubs launched in the County to support infected persons through delivery of food, drinks, infant needs, and health care aids.

In 2020, we served 25,971 individuals (17,052 in 2019), which included 10,722 children. Client numbers declined in the last few months of 2020 but remained about 15 percent higher than in previous years. Early in 2020, we also benefited by a generous grant that the US Department of Agriculture awarded the County. That grant has enabled us to receive about 500 pounds of fresh fruit and produce every Monday free of charge.

Pantry and Infant Needs (Cont'd)

Through our Infant Needs Program in 2020, we supplied diapers to **2,374** infants up to 3 years of age, formula to **687** babies, and pull-ups for older children with special needs. As 2020 was ending, we experienced a drop overall in client service numbers; yet the percentage of clients using the Spanish line for food and infant needs remained high. Diaper calls averaged about 87 percent in the months from April through December. Food calls on the Spanish line were about 65 percent versus the 45 or 50 percent in 2019.

Rx/Financial Program

The Rx/Financial Program was less affected than other HELP services during the pandemic. Both the number of total Rx individuals served and the total Rx's funded for 2020 ended up very close to the 2019 numbers despite a couple of unusually low request months. In 2020, we funded 377 prescriptions, eye exams, and glasses for 163 individuals. The Rx/Financial team fielded many calls from families needing information regarding rent and utility relief, unemployment, and many other needs. Appropriate referrals were given to help them navigate the system and address those needs.



UMAN

Gaithersburg HELP continues its monthly funding and strong collaboration with UMAN to assist clients facing eviction or utility disconnection. The pandemic brought many changes to UMAN. The program manager and volunteers began teleworking when the office was closed in mid-March. Beginning in April, the number of families assisted dropped by over 50 percent due to the state moratorium on evictions and utility cutoffs. With the County courts closed and Health and Human Services (HHS) offices closed, almost no referrals came from HHS. We instructed clients to get on the County waiting list for Covid Rent Relief assistance. The City of Gaithersburg does not require a court notice as a prerequisite for assistance, so most referrals to UMAN were in coordination with the city to provide as much assistance as possible to city residents. We anticipate that when the moratoriums expire in 2021, UMAN will experience a huge surge of requests, so we are trying to prepare for that situation.



Food Infant Coordinators (FIC)



The steadfast volunteers who serve English-speaking clients met the challenges posed by a growing number of calls during the pandemic. In addition to setting up pantry appointments and explaining Gaithersburg HELP's services, we informed clients about other food sources and social services agencies that might assist them. We scheduled families with Covid-19 for a food delivery and referred them to the Gaithersburg CARES Hub for additional deliveries. We maintained a roster of about 18 FICs in 2020. Several volunteers became inactive due to situations at home in this unusual year, but two new volunteers were trained. FICs also assisted in the annual client survey process, and they reached out to clients to inform them of the Census and urged them to participate.


Spanish Language Services

The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on our Spanish services team in 2020. For many months, calls to the Spanish line were three to five times higher than in previous years, with up to seven or eight times as many clients calling who were new to Gaithersburg HELP. During 2020, the Bilingual Coordinators (BCs) handled approximately 66 percent of household requests for food (about 40 percent in 2019), 71 percent of total individuals served (49 percent in 2019), and 83 percent of diaper requests (65 percent in 2019). The result was that the BC team scheduled food for 3,932 households representing 18,568 individuals (1,582 households and 8,336 individuals in 2019) and scheduled 1,983 diaper requests (1,030 diaper requests in 2019).

4 Cosas que Tienes Equivocadas Sobre el Censo

 MITO	 HECHO
Mito #1: Hay una pregunta de ciudadanía en el Censo.	No hay una pregunta sobre ciudadanía en el Censo del 2020 y no es necesario ser ciudadano para ser contado. El objetivo del Censo del 2020 es contar a todas las personas que viven en los Estados Unidos.
Mito #2: Mi respuesta será compartida.	La ley requiere que la Oficina del Censo mantenga la información confidencial . La Oficina del Censo solo puede producir datos resumidos que brinden una visión general de la población, pero nada que represente a individuos específicos.
Mito #3: Mi respuesta puede ser usada en mi contra.	La ley prohíbe que la Oficina del Censo comparta información con la policía o las agencias de inmigración bajo el Título 13. Sus respuestas tampoco pueden usarse para afectar su elegibilidad para beneficios del gobierno.
Mito #4: El Censo es como una encuesta – es opcional.	Equivocado, es la ley. El recuento de cada persona que vive en los Estados Unidos se realiza cada diez años siguiendo el Artículo 1, Sección 2 de la Constitución. Participando en el Censo es cómo obtenemos una imagen real de América y necesitamos que todos respondan.

www.rockvillemd.gov/RockvilleCounts



The BC Team adjusted to the increased volume in significant ways. For example, most BCs willingly extended their volunteer hours.

Spanish Language Services (Cont'd)

We also gained four new regular BCs who initially had specialty roles. We created a new position of temporary BC, whose primary role was to reach out to new clients within 1-2 days of their calls to get their intake information. Additionally, we changed our scheduling model from one BC per shift to having five or six BCs and temporary BCs making calls on any given day, with 2-3 working simultaneously mornings, afternoons, and evenings, seven days a week.

Even at the beginning of 2020, clients were increasingly asking for help in paying rent and utilities, and the number of requests grew. We helped create and update Spanish and English pages on the Gaithersburg HELP website titled "Covid-19 Updates and Referrals." We referred clients needing additional information to many other food resources, providers of services for Covid-19 positive clients, social service agencies and organizations. Members of the BC team helped conduct the annual client survey, provided information on filling out the Census, and helped with numerous translations of information provided to clients via email. By the end of 2020, temporary BCs were no longer needed, and the BC team consisted of 13 morning and evening volunteers.

Transportation

In 2020 the Transportation Program provided 483 free rides to medical and social service appointments for seniors and adults with disabilities. This number was only 53 percent of the number of rides completed in 2019. This decrease corresponded to a reduction in the number of rides requested. During the pandemic, medical and social service offices were reluctant to schedule non-essential, in-person appointments, and clients were being advised to stay home.

Transportation (Cont'd)

Concurrently, about 80 percent of our volunteer drivers declined to accept ride assignments due to Covid-19 risk, so 50 percent of the rides provided were by taxi versus 40 percent in 2019. Our taxi expenditures were still well under budget due to the reduced number of requests, and our completion rate remained at about 96 percent. We look forward to serving many more clients as volunteers receive their vaccinations.



Volunteer

HELP's focused recruiting activities brought us numerous new volunteers during 2020 despite the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Through our website, gaithersburghelp.org, our participation in Montgomery County's Volunteer Center website, and various other focused resources, we have attracted a steady stream of applicants. New volunteers compensated for the loss of existing volunteers who were uncomfortable leaving their homes or at high risk and not able to volunteer during 2020. As we head into 2021, we have welcomed several volunteers returning after receiving the Covid vaccine. A challenge for the coming year is to find more ways to recruit and train individuals who would be willing to take on leadership roles in the future. Students, full-time workers, congregations, and organizations that want to volunteer in groups or have time constraints have been able to contribute greatly by sponsoring and staffing food drives.

Resources & Financial Management

The change in HELP's operations and the level of community support experienced during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic had major ramifications for HELP's financial situation. HELP continued to receive significant funding from the City of Gaithersburg, the Montgomery County Government, and the State of Maryland. For the first time, HELP also received support through the Federal Government in the form of two Covid-related financial grants and a USDA-supported program that provided between 400 and 500 pounds of free fresh produce each week. Continued strong financial support from over 725 unique individual donors and our supporting congregations—many of which continued to give generously although not able to meet in person due to Covid restrictions—enabled us to maintain a healthy financial situation even though we had significant increases in demand. The generosity of so many institutions, individuals, and government entities enabled HELP to conclude the year with a \$266,500 profit. We are grateful for the continuing support provided by all our donors.



HELP's increased expenses in 2020 over 2019 were due to two key factors: 1. We had a 50 percent increase in total individuals served in our food and infant needs programs, including a 100 percent increase in requests for infant formula. 2. Many of our lower cost providers, such as Aldi, Dollar Tree, and at times even Giant Food, were unable to provide us with food due to supply chain issues related to the pandemic. As a result, we needed to purchase 50-100 percent more food and infant needs items at prices often much higher than prior to the pandemic. The decrease in our Transportation Program expenses was due to a 50 percent decrease in demand for rides stemming from the pandemic. Our overall Management expenses increased due to the costs associated with increased automation; however, as a percentage of our overall expenses they decreased to 3 percent. As an all-volunteer organization, HELP remains a low-cost provider of emergency services to the Gaithersburg community.

<i>2020 Financial Summary</i>	
Income	Expense
\$870,300	\$603,800
44% Individuals	79% Food
28% Grants	9% Client Rent/Utilities
17% Donated Goods	5% Infant Needs
8% Congregations	3% Mgmt/General and Fundraising
2% Businesses	3% Prescriptions
1% Other	1% Transportation

Contact Us



Write to Us

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Give Us a Call

301.216.2510

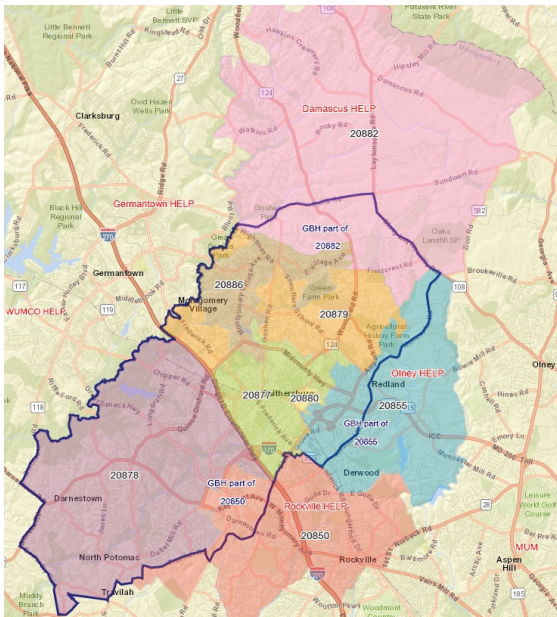


Visit our Website

gaithersburghelp.org

Our service area includes all of zip codes 20877, 20878, 20879, 20880, and 20886, plus parts of:

- 20850 (west of Shady Grove Rd and north of Piney Meetinghouse Rd)
- 20855 (west of Redland Rd/Muncaster Rd)
- 20882 (south of Brink Rd and west of Olney-Laytonsville Rd)



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