



ANNUAL REPORT 2021



A Note from Executive Director Margo Goldman

In 2021, HELP served 4,100 households with food and infant needs. As vaccines became available, and businesses began to reopen, we saw client numbers drop from midwinter to spring, then pick up again in the fall. We know that we must continue to be prepared to meet unforeseen client needs, but we have been buoyed by the generosity of so many individuals who donated throughout the year. We are also grateful for the steadfast support of our member congregations, which supplied food donations, financial assistance, and many volunteers. Another positive outcome of the pandemic has been opportunities to foster essential collaborative relationships with staff and volunteers from many organizations. Through these networking relationships, we are gaining a broader and deeper view across our service landscape. Those connections help us to avoid duplicative effort



and missed opportunities to support our community members. In October 2021, HELP leveraged an opportunity to support more local families by partnering

with Epworth United Methodist Church (a member congregation) in sustaining its community food assistance program by packing 20 boxes of food each week to be picked up and delivered to local families by volunteers from Asbury's Beloved Community.

We also welcomed a new Assistant Executive Director, Kevin Ramsey, who has strengthened our ability to respond to demands arising in a rapidly changing environment. As we entered 2022, we felt secure in knowing we had the resiliency necessary to meet challenges arising from many quarters.

Program Highlights

The following pages summarize the activities, achievements, and challenges in Gaithersburg HELP's major programs during 2021.

- Pantry and Infant Needs
- Food/Infant Needs Coordinators
- Spanish Language Services
- Rx Financial Program
- Upper Montgomery Assistance Network (UMAN)
- Transportation Program
- Volunteer Program
- Financial Review



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 experienced large fluctuations in numbers of clients served month to month in 2021. Clients had new options for food assistance through the Gaithersburg CARES Hub and local churches that had greatly expanded food assistance operations. Although the worst of



the food supply chain problems diminished throughout 2021, we still experience random supply chain problems with such items as rice, cut-up fruit, and cereal. Donations from member congregations that were only slowly returning to in-person services remained low. Fortunately, we continued to benefit from the County's US Department of Agriculture grant that has continued to enable us to receive about 400 pounds of fresh fruit and produce every Monday free of charge.

Through our Infant Needs Program in 2021, we supplied diapers to **1,714** infants up to 3 years of age, formula to **507** babies, and pull-ups for older children with special needs. As 2021 ended, the percentage of clients using the Spanish line for food and infant needs remained higher than in the pre-pandemic years.

There were 175 new households in 2021 compared to over 800 new households in 2020. The BC team was fortunate to retain all 13 morning and evening volunteers in 2021. At the start of the year, there were generally two BCs making calls each weekday. By the summer and fall months, calls were managed with one daily morning volunteer and one afternoon volunteer only two or three times a week. During 2021, the team continued to handle many calls from clients asking for help in paying rent and utilities. BCs referred clients to social services agencies and organizations, many other food resources, and providers of services for Covid-19 positive clients. Members of the BC team helped conduct the annual client survey and helped with translations of information provided to clients.

Rx/Financial Program

In 2021, the Rx/Financial Program funded 348 prescriptions as well as eye exams and glasses for 142 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 and address those needs.

At the end of 2021, Janet Neumann, who had been the Director for the Rx/Financial Program for the past 15 years, stepped down. The new Director is Irene Vangsness, a retired physician's assistant



who has been on the Rx/Financial team for 2 years. Janet will remain on the team as an Rx Coordinator and continue to guide Irene into her new role.

UMAN

Gaithersburg HELP continued its monthly funding and strong collaboration with UMAN to assist clients facing eviction or utility disconnection. As the pandemic continued into 2021, the program manager and volunteers continued to telework. Because of significant federal funding coming to the states and county, few referrals came from Health and Human Services (HHS) needing UMAN's additional funds. In addition, the moratoriums on evictions and utility disconnections were extended well into 2021. UMAN provided larger assistance funds to those clients who did not qualify for the federal funding and worked closely with the City of Gaithersburg Community Services staff to assist city residents as needed.

Transportation

In 2021 the Transportation Program provided 655 free rides to medical and social service appointments for seniors and adults with disabilities. This was only 68 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. However, since the provided ride count did



increase, it is assumed that more people feel comfortable going out now to their appointments especially with the large number of people vaccinated.

Yet there are still some people who are not comfortable with in-person services, so telehealth appointments are still taking place but less frequently than in early 2021. Concurrently, about 70 percent of our volunteer drivers have declined to accept ride assignments due to Covid-19 risk, so 57 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, and we hope that our volunteers will feel safe enough to return to driving for our clients.

Volunteer Program

HELP's focused recruiting activities brought us numerous new volunteers during 2021 despite the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Through our website, www.gaithersburghelp.org, our participation in Montgomery County's Volunteer website, and various other focused resources, we have attracted a steady stream of applicants. New applicants were able to compensate for the loss of existing volunteers who were uncomfortable or at high risk and not able to volunteer during 2021. As we head into 2022, we have seen most volunteers returning after receiving the Covid vaccine and booster. A potential goal for 2022 would be to recruit more individuals from our member congregations for various volunteer positions. Students, full-time workers, faith organizations, and businesses that want to volunteer in groups or have time constraints have been able to contribute greatly by sponsoring and staffing food drives.



Financial Review

Not surprisingly, after the overwhelming level of community support HELP received during the pandemic year of 2020, our income declined significantly (~25%) during 2021. Nevertheless, HELP continued to receive significant funding from the City of Gaithersburg, the Montgomery County Government, and the State of Maryland. HELP also continued to receive approximately 400 pounds of fresh produce each week at no cost through a USDA-supported program. Continued strong financial support from nearly 300 unique individual donors and our supporting congregations enabled us to maintain a healthy financial situation. The generosity of so many institutions, individuals, and government entities enabled HELP to conclude the year with a \$93,000 profit. We are grateful for the continuing support provided by all our donors.

HELP's expenses for the year dropped by 11 percent from the levels of 2020; however, they remain 57 percent higher than they were in the pre-pandemic year of 2019. Decreased demand meant that both food and infant needs expenses dropped significantly—by 18 and 21 percent respectively. Transportation expenses returned to pre-pandemic levels as more clients were comfortable using our services. Our Client Rent/Utilities expenses were higher because of a one-time \$25,000 grant we made to UMAN to support their eviction prevention programs. Our overall Management expenses continued to increase, up 13 percent from 2020; however, as a percentage of our overall expenses they remain quite low at 4 percent. As an all-volunteer organization, HELP remains a low-cost provider of emergency services to the Gaithersburg community.

2021 Financial Summary

Income	Expense
\$630,800	\$537,700
35% Individuals	72% Food
34% Grants	14% Client Rent/Utilities
18% Donated Goods	5% Infant Needs
11% Congregations	4% Mgmt/General Fundraising
1% Businesses	3% Prescriptions
1% Other	2% Transportation

Contact Us



Write to Us

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Give Us a Call

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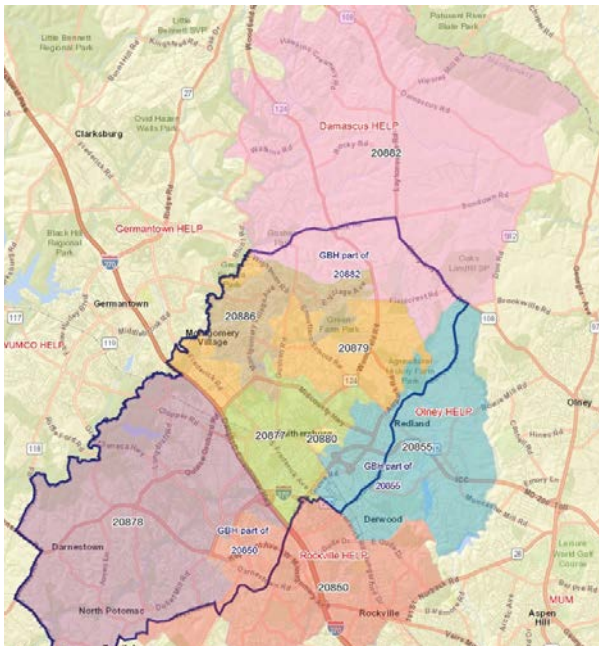


Visit our Website

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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