



**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
2023

**Gaithersburg HELP**

*Neighbor Helping Neighbor Since 1968*





## A Note from Executive Director Margo Goldman and Assistant Executive Director Kevin Ramsey

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Gaithersburg HELP faced many challenges in 2023 in serving clients in Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village. The year began with a significant jump in client numbers, and those higher numbers were sustained throughout the year. Key drivers for these increased numbers were reductions in SNAP benefits and other government pandemic support programs as well as steadily increasing food costs driven by inflation. We assisted **6,219** households in 2023, representing **28,042** individuals. That was a 30 percent increase over 2022. We also found that demand for diapers and infant formula surged at the beginning of the year and stayed elevated throughout 2023. The cost of providing these services resulted in a large year-end deficit. We had enough



savings to cover the deficit, but the loss was not sustainable. When we developed our 2024 budget, we grappled with what service changes to make so that we could reasonably serve our clients

yet trim costs. After much deliberation, we made several budget cuts, but the most significant one was changing our Infant Needs program to stop providing diapers on January 1, 2024. Before doing so, we met with our partners at the Gaithersburg CARES Hub and were reassured that the hub could meet the diaper needs of our clients. Because our essential mission is to provide food for our neighbors in need, we decided to continue offering our clients formula and baby food. Although we know that we will face uncertainties, we feel better prepared to cope from a fiscal standpoint. As always, 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. We continue to foster essential collaborative relationships with staff and volunteers from many other 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.

### ***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.***

## **Program Highlights**

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The following pages summarize the activities, achievements, and challenges in Gaithersburg HELP's major programs during 2023.

- › Pantry and Infant Needs
- › Food / Infant Needs Coordinators
- › Spanish Language Services
- › Rx / Financial Program
- › Upper Montgomery Assistance Network (UMAN)
- › Transportation Program
- › Volunteer Program
- › 2023 Grants
- › Financial Review



## Pantry and Infant Needs

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As noted in the Introduction, the Pantry and Infant Needs Program experienced large increases in numbers of clients served in 2023. At year end, we had provided food to **6,219** households - a significant increase from the **4,794** households served in 2022. Our food coordinators ensured that clients knew they could supplement food from our pantry with food from Manna, the Gaithersburg CARES Hub, So What Else, Nourish Now, and other local food assistance organizations. Our partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank assisted us in feeding the increased number of families without cutbacks because we can order food at a lower cost than from commercial food vendors. We continued providing families with fresh fruit and produce.

Through our Infant Needs Program in 2023, we supplied diapers to **3,052** infants up to 3 years of age and formula to **1,200** babies. Although budget constraints compelled us to end the diaper program on January 1, 2024, we continue to offer formula and baby food to local families in need.



## Food / Infant Needs Coordinators

Food/Infant Needs Coordinators made appointments for English-speaking clients to pick up food at the Gaithersburg HELP pantry. While informing people about Gaithersburg HELP's various services, team members also referred them to additional sources of food and social services in Montgomery County.



Volunteers worked from home using their own telephone and computer. In 2023, we had **14** volunteers, but we continued to seek more volunteers for this important role, which imparts a new understanding of the needs of people in our community. Members of the Food Coordinators team supported the annual client survey in May 2023.



## Spanish Language Services

The Bilingual Coordinator (BC) team made appointments for food and infant needs and helped coordinate transportation and prescription requests for our Spanish-speaking clients. There were about 35 percent more Spanish speaking households scheduled for food in 2023 than in 2022, and about 6 percent more than in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. The BC team scheduled food for **4,174** households (compared to 3,097 households in 2022; 3,932 households in 2020; and 1,582 households in 2019). Approximately 82 percent of the total diaper requests were handled by the BC team. There were **423** new Spanish-speaking households in 2023 (compared to 292 new households in 2022, and over 800 new households in 2020). The BC team lost one long-time volunteer, and at the end of 2023 was down to eight regularly active BCs. Calls were managed with one morning volunteer daily and one afternoon volunteer, two or three times per week. We hope to recruit more volunteers in 2024. During 2023, the team continued to receive many calls from clients asking for help in paying rent and utilities. BCs referred clients to social service organizations, medical clinics, and other resources for food and diapers. Members of the BC team helped conduct the annual client survey and helped with translations of information provided to clients.



### **¿Necesita ayuda para pagar los medicamentos recetados?**

Hable al 301-216-2510  
y deje un mensaje  
en la **línea 3**

Pagaremos muchos  
medicamentos de forma  
limitada para usted y los  
miembros de su familia

También podemos ayudar  
con exámenes de la vista y  
anteojos

**Para más información, ir a**  
[www.gaithersburghelp.org](http://www.gaithersburghelp.org)



## Rx / Financial Program

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In 2023, the Rx/Financial Program funded prescriptions, eye exams, and glasses for **95** 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.

## UMAN

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UMAN accepts referrals from Emergency Services (ES) and City of Gaithersburg partners to assist families in Germantown and Gaithersburg. With Covid Rent Relief funds being exhausted, ES has resumed sending referrals to UMAN for households facing evictions and utility disconnections. UMAN's funds support assistance for 15 to 20 families per month, with a majority of our customers residing within the City of Gaithersburg.





## Transportation Program

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In 2023, the Transportation Program provided **878** rides to medical and social services appointments for seniors and adults with disabilities during the year. In 2022, we had provided **670** rides. The numbers for 2023 equaled a 31 percent increase over 2022. We need more volunteer drivers for the program. The increase in ride requests and a decrease in volunteer drivers were contributing factors to increased costs because we booked more taxi rides for our clients. Fortunately, the meter cost for taxi rides did not increase last year. The Transportation Program ended the year overbudget. Rides provided by taxi increased from 65 percent in 2022 to 70 percent in 2023. We hope to recruit more volunteers for the Transportation Program soon.



## Volunteer Program

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HELP's focused recruiting activities brought us numerous new volunteers during 2023. Through our website, [www.gaithersburghelp.org](http://www.gaithersburghelp.org), our participation in Montgomery County's Volunteer website and various other focused resources, we have attracted a steady stream of applicants. Our current hurdle seems to be volunteer retention. We have been fortunate in the past to have numerous long-time volunteers. We are trying to tackle the challenge with training and appropriate volunteer placement. We also struggle to fill volunteer jobs that require specific skill sets, such as Bilingual Coordinators. A potential goal for 2024 is to recruit more individuals from our member congregations for various volunteer positions. Students, full-time workers, congregations, and organizations that want to volunteer in groups or have time constraints have contributed greatly by sponsoring and staffing food drives.



## 2023 Grants

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Gaithersburg HELP has worked diligently to secure multiple sources of grant support, which in combination with our individual donations ensures a reliable base of funding for our programs. During 2023, we received grant awards from the following government agencies and private foundations, some of which will be spent over a two-year period, for our nutrition, transportation and pharmaceutical assistance programs:

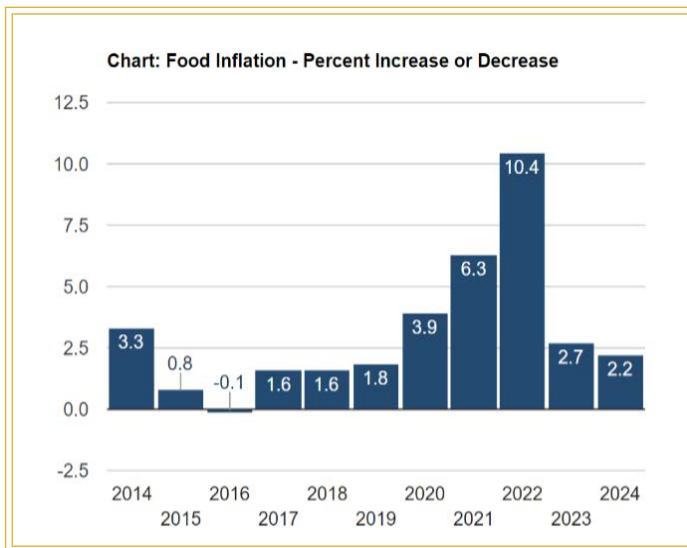
<b>2023 Grant Summary</b>	
<b>Adventist Healthcare Partnership Fund</b>	\$7,500
<b>Bob's Discount Furniture Foundation</b>	\$2,500
<b>Carl M. Freeman Foundation</b>	\$10,000
<b>City of Gaithersburg</b>	\$42,932
<b>Costco Wholesale</b>	\$1,500
<b>FEMA Emergency Food &amp; Shelter Program</b>	\$23,000
<b>Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation</b>	\$2,200
<b>Greater Washington Community Foundation</b>	\$1,000
<b>John Edward Fowler Memorial Foundation</b>	\$15,000
<b>Maryland Emergency Food Program</b>	\$15,000
<b>Montgomery County Government</b>	\$40,788
<b>Philip L. Graham Fund</b>	\$20,000
<b>Starbucks Foundation</b>	\$2,000
<b>WAWA Foundation</b>	\$1,500
<b>Thrivent Charitable</b>	\$1,000
<b>William S. Abell Foundation</b>	\$25,000

## Financial Review

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Food insecurity continues to be a significant problem in Montgomery County and Gaithersburg in particular. Food insecurity is being driven by the cumulative impact of inflation on the price of food; inflation in housing costs, which capture a larger portion of people's income; and the expiration of pandemic era assistance programs.

Food inflation in 2023 moderated from the highs during the pandemic; however, the cumulative impact of price increases continues to take a toll on people's ability to buy food. Overall food prices are up 23.3 percent from 2020 to 2023.



*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Food inflation affects Gaithersburg HELP in two ways. First, it drives up demand for services by reducing people's ability to buy food. Secondly, it directly increases Gaithersburg HELP's cost to serve our clients because a sizeable portion of the food we provide is purchased using monetary donations from grants, faith institutions, and individual donors.

## Financial Review (cont'd)

Gaithersburg HELP provided food assistance to **6,219** households in 2023. The increase in client numbers represents a significant increase in Gaithersburg HELP costs even if food inflation were not a factor.

Gaithersburg HELP continues striving to meet the needs of our clients. Expenses for all assistance categories, which are food, infant needs, transportation, and Rx assistance, totaled **\$747,315** in 2023. Income in 2023 from agencies providing grants, individuals, and our member congregation totaled **\$709,422**, leaving an annual operating deficit of **\$37,893**. At the end of 2023, Gaithersburg HELP had cash reserves of **\$371,138**.

<b>2023 Financial Summary</b>	
<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
<b>\$709,422</b>	<b>\$747,315</b>
<b>26% Government Agencies</b>	<b>79% Food</b>
<b>23% Individuals</b>	<b>8% Infant Needs</b>
<b>21% Donated Goods</b>	<b>6% Client Rent and Utilities</b>
<b>17% Foundations and Charities</b>	<b>3% Client Transportation</b>
<b>9% Supporting Congregations</b>	<b>2% Client Prescriptions</b>
<b>4% Community Fund Campaigns</b>	<b>2% Management and General</b>

The reserve enabled us to cover the deficit, but the loss threatened our ability to maintain the reserve. In creating the budget for 2024, the Gaithersburg HELP Executive Committee made some program changes to reduce operating deficits while allowing us to continue serving our clients' needs. We ended our diaper assistance program and made changes to our frozen meat offerings. These changes allowed every donated dollar to go further in providing basic food to more families.

## Contact Us

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### Write to Us

301 Muddy Branch Rd  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878



### Give Us a Call

301.216.2510



### Visit our Website

[gaithersburghelp.org](http://gaithersburghelp.org)

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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)









# Gaithersburg HELP

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