



Meeting Hunger Where It Lives

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As part of a Citywide response to alleviate hunger made worse by the pandemic, ALIVE! has been working collaboratively with many partners, including the City of Alexandria and Volunteer Alexandria. Since March, ALIVE! has transformed its Last Saturday Food Distribution Program into a Truck-to-Trunk drive-through food distribution to accommodate social distancing and serve more people. The locations are in the parking lots of two Last Saturday sites: Cora Kelly and John Adams Elementary schools. Clients stay in their cars, roll down the window to speak to a volunteer, and bags of groceries are loaded into the trunk. Of course, walk-ups are always welcome. Everyone maintains social distancing and wears masks. ALIVE! continues to support Last Saturday sites at senior apartments with an alternate distribution to keep everyone safe. In April, ALIVE! began providing groceries alongside meal distribution programs like World Central Kitchen and Hunger Free Alexandria, so people can take advantage of a one-stop food service: they receive meals and groceries to go. ALIVE! continues to stock local pantries and partners within the community to provide shelf-stable food, fresh bread, frozen meat, produce, and dairy. As need continues into the summer, more pop-up sites are planned for August.

"We really need a 16-foot truck with a lift gate since we deliver food to food pantries and other groups as well as personal delivery," according to Executive Director Jennifer Ayers.

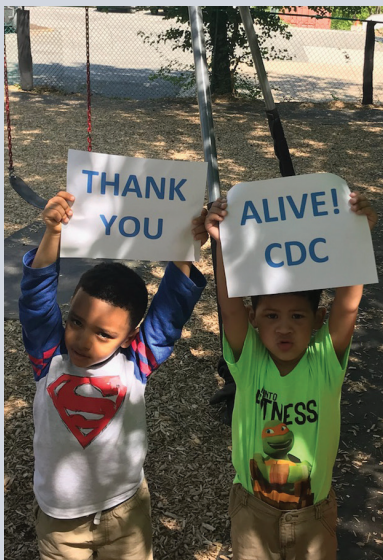
Manpower, funding, and logistics are challenges as is the breakdown in the food supply chain. While finding enough provisions to meet basic needs, ALIVE! runs into the same problems experienced by grocery stores with empty shelves. Initially panic buying ignited the scarcity, but shortages continue, with the homebound consuming

more store-bought items than ever before. Hardest to source are shelf-stable dry goods in a wide variety for well-rounded groceries. In May, ALIVE! volunteers and staff handed out more than 120,000 pounds of food, which is four times our monthly average. Thankfully, supply chains are improving and in June we began offering frozen meat, robust produce and more nutritious food to clients at additional distribution sites to meet demand. Tune into social media and the website to keep up-to-date.

Our Home Delivery Program offered as part of the ALIVE! Family Assistance program is needed now more than ever to deliver groceries to people homebound or relocated from homeless shelters to observe physical distancing. In early April, ALIVE! started working with the Alexandria Health Department to provide groceries to low-income quarantined households who have tested positive for COVID-19. Our Home Delivery Program continues to be available to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and single parents with very young children.

Thanks to all who have stepped up to support their neighbors, particularly those who are experiencing hunger, job loss, and inadequate access to health care.





AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

On May 11, the ALIVE! Executive Board made the unhappy decision to suspend operations of its Child Development Center indefinitely. Prior to the arrival of COVID-19, the CDC already faced enrollment and fiscal challenges due to demographic changes within the city. Those challenges, combined with the uncertainties and complications associated with trying to operate in a pandemic environment, really left the board no choice. We are hopeful, however, that once COVID-related difficulties have subsided, we will be able to re-evaluate the situation and determine how best ALIVE! can support early childhood education within Alexandria.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Different, *Yet the Same*

When we moved into our current roles last summer, we imagined we would begin implementing a new Strategic Plan designed to more efficiently help ALIVE! address issues of poverty in Alexandria, as ALIVE! has done for over 50 years. We accepted these roles knowing that there would be difficult discussions, never quite enough food or money or beds to help everyone, and too many emails to respond to quickly. We are largely doing what we imagined... just in circumstances that none of us envisioned.

The pandemic has simultaneously increased need and decreased our available options to address that need. We face the immediacy of the problem at hand, yet do not have enough information to understand its complete impact on our community. Physical distancing requirements mean there are no completely safe ways to set up a mass distribution site to provide food or to have a crew of volunteers pick up and deliver furniture. Supply chain issues require re-thinking of how and where to get nutritious food in an affordable manner. Even something as basic as providing safe shelter to a mother and child has been made more complex as we consider the constraints of shared living spaces.

Our staff, committee chairs, and wonderful volunteers have used their experience and creativity to address pandemic-related problems as best we can to provide services through our Food, Shelter, and Family Assistance programs. Although our processes are changed, we continue to meet our organizational mission: addressing poverty, hunger, and suffering in Alexandria.

While we are disappointed that our Furniture and Housewares programs are currently unable to operate, we look forward to an end to this crisis, when we can consider safely resuming their operations. Similarly, while we deeply regret the closing of the CDC, we hope the time will come when we can once again play a vital role in supporting early childhood education in the City of Alexandria.

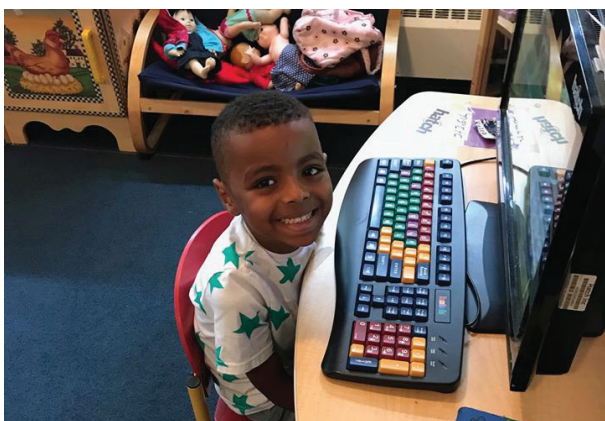
Your support during these difficult times is much needed and is greatly appreciated by those of us delivering services and by the community members we continue to help.

Thank you,

Eric Winakur
President

Jennifer Ayers
Executive Director





Every season is a special time for students at the CDC.

Through the Seasons at the ALIVE! CDC

By Kathie Boling, ALIVE! Child Development Center Director

Each season brings something special to the ALIVE! Child Development Center (CDC). In spring, warmer weather not only means new opportunities for outdoor learning and exploration, it is also a time to reflect on how much learning and development has taken place since the beginning of the school year. Relying on the skills learned throughout the year, the Blue Room (4-5 year olds) and Red Room (3-4 year olds) students explored building, counting and measuring, listening to story time, creating works of art, sounding out letters in their names, and sharing feelings with puppets Al and his Pals.

Summer is always a fun time at the CDC with less formal structure in place of normal classroom activities. Camping-related activities and water play feature prominently in the fun, and the Fourth of July is celebrated with enthusiasm.

In late October, the playground is filled with piles of different colored and sized leaves and bugs for our critter cages. We also had a new tire climbing tower built for us by an Eagle Scout with his fellow Scout members.

In winter, the children explore the animals in the forest, weather changes, and unique cultures of their families; there are a combined total of 8 different languages spoken at home, representing 12 different nations. Each winter, ALIVE! CDC gathers with the children and their families to celebrate our collective love of family and culture with music, dancing, craft making, and delicious aromatic food dishes. The highlight of the evening is the runway fashion show featuring children and families in traditional clothing reflective of their heritage and the celebration of their flags.

And then in spring, our world abruptly changed to focusing on how to make sure our children and their families were protected from a global virus we knew little about. We could not find a way to ensure the safety of all and continue to operate a high-quality program. We made the difficult decision to close the CDC and evaluate re-opening once the pandemic subsides.

On June 26th, we will celebrate our students and their families with a Drive Through Pre-K Graduation and Farewell Celebration. Through our cheers and tears, we will say goodbye to many years of loving, caring, and dedication to the children of Alexandria.

Reflections on the Closing of the CDC

By Mary Eileen Dixon,
ALIVE! Child Development Center
Committee Chair

As Chair of the ALIVE! Child Development Center (CDC) Committee since 2012, the Center has been a big part of my life for the past eight years and seeing it close is very distressing.

But rather than dwell on the pain, I would rather celebrate what the CDC has accomplished. ALIVE! has much to be proud of in the CDC's almost 50 year history. Since its establishment in 1972, the CDC has provided high quality, yet affordable, early care and education to several generations of children from low income working families in Alexandria. One of the first programs in the City of Alexandria to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, it has prepared its students for kindergarten both academically and socially, increasing their chances for success in school and in life. Their parents could participate in the work force, confident that their children were being cared for in a safe, nurturing environment where they would develop and thrive.

"The enthusiasm with which they explored the world around them, whether on a field trip, in the classroom, or on the playground, was guaranteed to give you hope for the future."

As I think about highlights at the CDC over the years, certain events stand out. Of course, there have been the signature annual events — the holiday parties which would hum with excitement as the children awaited the arrival of Santa; the multicultural festivals where the children and their families would share the food, dress, and customs of their diverse cultures; the graduation ceremonies for the 4-5 year olds as they prepared to leave the Center and head to kindergarten; and, the StepALIVE! Walkathons where CDC and ALIVE! supporters came together to raise funds for the program while enjoying fresh air, exercise, food, and music.



Thank you for your support of the ALIVE! Child Development Center!

What I will miss most, however, is something you could find every day at the CDC — the happy sounds and bright faces of children purposefully engaged in a variety of play and learning activities. The enthusiasm with which they explored the world around them, whether on a field trip, in the classroom, or on the playground, was guaranteed to give you hope for the future.

The accomplishments of the CDC, reflected in the high ratings earned from Virginia's quality improvement initiative program, would not have been possible without the devoted teachers and staff who served the Center over the years. Their professional skills, experience, and dedication to the children and their families made the Center a very special place.

In addition to its accomplished staff, the program from the outset benefitted from a corps of volunteers who supported it in various ways. Whether as CDC committee members, classroom volunteers, members of congregations who undertook maintenance projects, or fundraising organizers, all contributed to the well-being of the school and its students. All of us associated with the program fervently hope that, after the COVID-19 dust has settled, ALIVE! will once again find a way of supporting early childhood education within the City of Alexandria and that the legacy of the CDC will live on.

Social Distancing at ALIVE! House

How do you transform a house intended to serve four families into a space for two socially-distanced families so that they can stay healthy?

Enter one experienced Ms. Danien (Dee) Johnson, the new ALIVE! House Director as of January 2020. She is a qualified mental health professional with a Masters degree and working towards her clinical counseling license. When COVID-related restrictions went into effect in March, she hit the ground running. Following the Center for Disease Control guidelines, each family was confined to their respective floor, asked to text Danien their temperatures in the morning and evening, and urged to disinfect frequently.



To ensure the best possible stay-at-home experience for the two families, Danien has extended the inside to outside by setting up the back patio with outdoor bowling, cornhole games with tic-tac-toe options, hopscotch, and sidewalk chalk. A grill enables the families to make hamburgers and hotdogs outside. Morning and afternoon socially-distanced walks along the Potomac River are a favorite.

Using a grant from ACT for Alexandria, Danien purchased two Chromebooks so students could continue online learning. Since there are five school-age children (ages 7 to 17), the Wi-Fi was upgraded to handle the demand and avoid frozen screens. Also, both mothers enjoy using Zoom for yoga classes on Thursdays, which are offered by Christina Kauffman for free to residents.

The mothers are provided online classes on budgeting, spending, and saving to achieve the goal of setting aside 70% of their take-home pay. (Pre-pandemic, volunteers provided these classes in-person at the House.) This savings goal is particularly difficult in the pandemic. One mother is called in sporadically to work as a childcare worker. The other mother has been without a job since her employer closed its store in March.

After a year working at the Alexandria Community Shelter, Danien was attracted to ALIVE! House by the opportunity to use greater creativity to prepare women and children facing poverty and homelessness to become resilient. Programs receiving state and federal money many times must follow a cookie-cutter approach, according to Danien, resulting in less ability to individualize assistance to meet specific needs. When the pandemic is behind us, she would like to restart “Tea with Aunties” to allow adult conversations among the House mothers and wise women from the Sixteenth Tabernacle Beth El to candidly discuss overcoming the barriers to sustaining a place on one’s own.

In the meantime, Danien accomplishes her work while listening to the soundtrack of an 8 year old resident jumping and singing on the reserved-for-staff first floor.

ALIVE! House Graduations

Openings in Alexandria's limited supply of affordable housing are rare, and the chances of finding accommodations in below-market rate apartments are slim. Luckily, two ALIVE! House families, with a nudge from then-House Director Betsy Sciavolino, applied for and were accepted to two below-market rental properties owned by the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation, a non-profit developer of affordable housing.

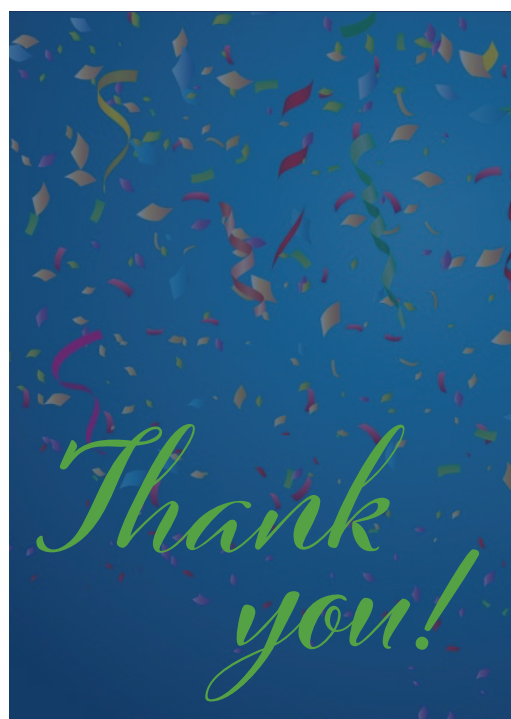
One family moved in late December 2019 into an affordable three-bedroom apartment. Mom worked in local food service for several years, learned financial literacy after work, and worked on GED prep at ALIVE! House. Her young children attended the House's weekly reading group, and her two older children transitioned to independent living prior to the family's graduation from ALIVE! House.

The family received quite a warm welcome with the ALIVE! Furniture Program supplying furniture and mattresses, ALIVE! Food Program filling the pantry with food, and ALIVE! Housewares Program adding the finishing touches of pots and pans, glassware, dishes, and other kitchen supplies. This homecoming was a very successful "all hands on deck" effort on the part of ALIVE! volunteers and staff who moved the family's belongings from ALIVE! House. The Sixteenth Tabernacle Beth El also generously provided new sheets, comforters, and towels for the family.



The second family was set to move to another AHDC property, but instead chose to relocate to Texas. The mother was offered a promotion and raise at her hotel job to transfer to the Lone Star State. The family also has relatives nearby in Texas, which made the decision to move even easier.

ALIVE! House directors and social workers, as well as the Food, Furniture and Housewares Program staff, donors, and volunteers were very proud to help two hard-working families make their dreams of a home a reality.



Cheers to These Fun-Raisers:

- GoFundMe fundraiser by **Alexandria Little League**. Instead of raising money for a cancelled baseball season, Little League parents and the community pitched in to raise money for ALIVE! and Feed the Fight. Go team!
- **Shane Greer** ran 48 miles and raised \$1,300 for ALIVE!. He gets the ALIVE! Gold Medal!
- Masks were donated by **Yates Dry Cleaning**, the Million Mask Challenge, and other nonprofits willing to share. Keep healthy!
- **Senior Services** and **Carpenters Shelter** volunteers helped ALIVE! regulars sort food, make home deliveries, and distribute food.
- Bubble gum chewing fundraiser by **John Adams Elementary School** students to raise awareness and support ALIVE!. They donated \$1 for every piece of gum chewed and posted a video on YouTube of the kids popping their bubbles!
- Gift cards for people in need donated to ALIVE! by **Elizabeth's Counter** in Alexandria
- Signs in multiple languages printed for ALIVE! by **Minuteman Press of Alexandria**
- MLK Day of Service food collections for ALIVE! by **Burgundy Farm Country Day School**, **Douglas MacArthur Elementary School**, **Cub Scout Pack 801**, and **Northern Virginia Community College**

The Finishing Touches

When a request for housewares is made, the team swings into action. Rawles Jones from Christ Church receives the contact information from a church adopting a family or from Alexandria Social Services. He follows up with the client to see exactly what they need. Patty Gamby, an engineer volunteering at the Housewares Program, housed in Fairlington United Methodist Church, gathers the requested household items or puts together a starter kit of dishes, pots and pans, and linens for the family. Housewares delivery is scheduled within 1-2 weeks with an assist from schoolteacher and volunteer Carli Elligan.

PROGRAM NOTE:

The Housewares Program stopped deliveries in March and will resume when it is safe to do so.

Once when Patty made a delivery, she recalled: “This woman had next to nothing, she was so happy to get a box of housewares with something special that I included. Before I could turn the ignition key to leave her driveway, she texted: ‘Thank you so much. I love everything. You are a gift from God.’”

Housewares are also offered in conjunction with food pick-up at the Last Saturday Food Distributions at the “Chick” Armstrong Rec Center at 25 West Reed Avenue. Retired college administrator Al Ross from FUMC makes the Saturday housewares drop-off with the assistance of volunteers.

In addition to this current team of stellar household helpers, this program has had many caring stewards over the years, none more memorable than Addie Hebert who retired in 2017 from her reign as queen of housewares. In 2003, Addie Hebert had an eureka moment and began creating housewares starter kits — or as Addie pronounced it in her Boston accent a “staahter” kits — to accompany furniture distributions so utensils were ready to use with the ALIVE!-provided table and sheets were provided to cover the beds. She made a house a place to come home to.



Al Ross has overseen the ALIVE! Housewares Program for more than two years.

CONGREGATION CORNER:

Our 45 congregations are cornerstones supporting ALIVE! and serving the community. Here's a peek at what some of our faith-based partners are doing:

- Food and meal distribution organized by Pastor Thomas James of **Washington Street United Methodist Church** in coordination with Royal Restaurant, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the City of Alexandria
- Interfaith prayers posted on the ALIVE! website from Rabbi Steven Rein and Hazzan Elisheva Dienstfrey of **Agudas Achim Congregation**
- Interfaith prayers posted on the ALIVE! website from the **Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is of Alexandria**
- Interfaith prayer posted on the ALIVE! website from Reverend Juli Wilson-Black of **Fairlington Presbyterian Church**
- \$10,000 donation to ALIVE! from the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints** in response to the pandemic
- \$8,000 donation from **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church** to support our ALIVE! House and our ongoing work in the community during the pandemic
- SOUPperbowl Sunday Donation to ALIVE! from **First Christian Church of Alexandria**
- \$5,000 match by **Del Ray United Methodist Church of Alexandria** of the Little League's GoFundMe campaign which raised over \$15,000 for the community and \$7,500 for ALIVE!. Thanks Little League Parents!
- MLK Day of Service food collection for ALIVE! by the **Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is of Alexandria**
- Great Day of Service reading to children and packing gift bags for mothers at ALIVE! House by **Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington Street United Methodist Church, Beulah Baptist Church, and Old Town Community Church** (formerly Downtown Baptist Church)
- \$20,000 in support for ALIVE! for food from plate offerings at **Alfred Street Baptist Church**
- 750 masks to distribute to 750 members of the public in honor of its 75th Anniversary from **Fairlington United Methodist Church**
- Steps walked by members of **Church of the Resurrection** to raise support for ALIVE!
- Personal contributions to ALIVE! from individual members called to action by each congregation
- Member congregations handing out ALIVE! food or working to get food out to people in need: **Washington Street United Methodist Church, Old Town Community Church** (formerly Downtown Baptist Church), **Grace Episcopal Church, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Meade Memorial Episcopal Church.**

... and the list goes on!

ALIVE! *Wire*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



The oldest and largest private safety net for Alexandrians living in poverty and with hunger, ALIVE! serves more than 3,500 individuals each month by providing **Food, Shelter, Emergency Help** and **Education**.

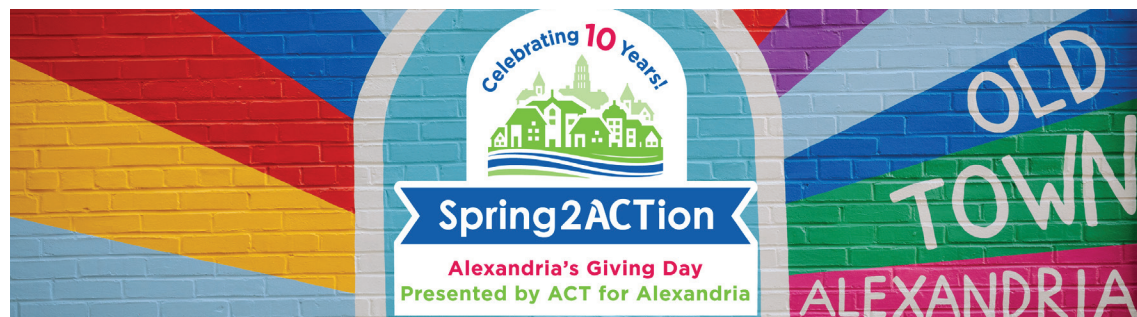
Founded In 1969, ALIVE! is comprised of **45 faith organizations** and thousands of volunteers, partners and supporters.

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Spring2ACTION 2020 raised over \$145,000 for ALIVE! with nearly 500 donors as of April 15th.

This is a record breaker that more than doubled our original fundraising goal. ALIVE! also received an additional \$500 award from ACT for the Early Giving Most Dollars prize. An *Alexandria Living* article shows ALIVE! as the #1 ranked nonprofit for the most funds raised at Spring2ACTION 2020. Also, ACT will keep the Spring2ACTION website open for online donations for the entirety of 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Your Spring2ACTION donations will alleviate suffering now for the thousands who come to us each week looking for food or financial assistance to make it through another week or for a step on a path toward a brighter future.

Further, ALIVE! continues to work with ACT by distributing food to the City of Alexandria's most vulnerable populations. We were one of the first recipients of the ACT Now COVID-19 Response Fund, a grant established by ACT and the City of Alexandria to provide emergency funding to local nonprofits delivering critical services and programs.

ALIVE! expects that when the pandemic is over, the need for financial assistance, shelter, and food — the basic supports we provide every day — will be dramatically increased. The incredible burst of generosity in April has sustained many with the hope that this spirit of sharing will continue. Learn more here:

www.spring2action.org/organizations/alive4alexandria