



ALIVE! Joins the Effort to Reduce Evictions

Organizations Join Forces to Create Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership

You may have read that Alexandrians who lose their jobs are protected from eviction by local, state, or federal rules – but the reality is quite different. Unable to cover rent, many are removed from, or even

prematurely leave, their homes, simply because they do not know their rights or how to access emergency rental assistance.

Eviction moratoriums may halt an eviction, but they do not cancel rental debt owed by tenants. That is why funding to keep people in their homes is a lifeline for both renters and small property owners facing bankruptcy. Without widespread financial assistance and comprehensive education and outreach (for landlords and tenants alike), the future of affordable housing remains in jeopardy.

Recognizing this need, ALIVE!, supported by an ACT for Alexandria grant, partnered with Legal Services of Northern Virginia, Christ Church Lazarus Ministries, and the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance to create the Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership (AEPP). ALIVE! tapped ALIVE! House Director Danien Johnson and newcomer Case Manager Shelley Miller to manage this newly created partnership that works with government, faith, and community partners to prevent eviction and connect at-risk Alexandrians to rental assistance programs. Ms. Miller, with a background in state court administration, access to justice, and immigration issues, joined this effort in November 2020 when the partnership started.

Local charities, the City of Alexandria, and Virginia state government provide funds to Alexandrians facing housing instability. The relief money is provided directly to property owners on behalf of eligible tenants.

(Continued, page 3)

HOUSEWARES: *Home Sweet Home*

On February 6, 2021, the ALIVE! Housewares Program emerged from the hibernation imposed by pandemic restrictions. With safety protocols in place, it began to collect previously-owned utensils and appliances – items to help Alexandrians turn barren spaces into homes.

“When the first donor drove up an hour early, I thought, ‘This could be huge,’” shared a happy and immediately busy Victoria Hebert, ALIVE! Housewares Chair. Contributors’ cars, stuffed with boxes, queued up in the parking lot for two-and-a-half hours; more than 100 vehicles passed about five boxes each into the willing hands of 20 volunteers. The response was so overwhelming that Housewares is set with household furnishings until spring.

“Two of my granddaughters, in disbelief at the amount of donations, helped me make room for dishes, linens, microwaves, towels, pots, pans, pillows, bedding, comforters, and rugs that we hope to distribute later in February,” said Ms. Hebert.



Volunteer sorting donations at the Housewares Collection Day drive-through.

A Return to *Better*

As we look back at the disruptions caused by the pandemic, consider the vaccine rollout currently underway, and look forward to resuming more regular activities, it is tempting to want a return to normal.

Unfortunately, as an organization whose mission is to serve the underprivileged, we know that the “normal” of food insecurity, lack of shelter, or monthly struggle to pay rent is a reality for too many of our neighbors. Therefore, we need to keep in mind that what was normal for our clients before the pandemic is only a starting point. We must continue to strive for better outcomes that help families achieve self-sufficiency.

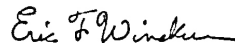
As ALIVE!, with your help, has responded to this crisis, there have been difficult and stressful decisions to make, changes in plans, and lost opportunities – such as closing the ALIVE! Child Development Center and suspending our Furniture Program. However, there have also been many lessons learned while rising to the challenge.

For example, we’ve found new flexibilities in our food distribution model and continue working to improve the tracking/sharing of data with other providers to more effectively meet client needs across the city. We are evaluating and considering changes, such as operating our own pantry, to help bring food more directly to underserved locations.

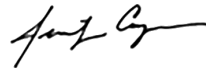
Further, we’ve reinforced existing relationships and formed new ones, including to help start the Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership. This program operates to connect people with information and other resources to navigate eviction proceedings, which are an increasing possibility for many affected economically by the pandemic. Also, we have stretched our influence through participation in City-organized meetings. By putting us on the City agenda, our voice and the voices of those we serve are a part of the larger discussion. We participate on committees with Northern Virginia non-profits which have services beyond our own, giving us useful information on how others are serving their communities while widening our area connections.

These lessons from our pandemic response will remain relevant as we continue to improve our services, even when the worst of the pandemic is behind us and society reopens.

We hope you will join with us, as we work to *Return to Better*,



Eric Winakur
President



Jennifer Ayers
Executive Director



ALIVE! Preschool Toy Drive

ALIVE!'s Child Development Center closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, but ALIVE!'s Early Childhood Committee knew that children's needs would not disappear with the preschool.

A plan was brainstormed to provide developmentally appropriate toys to preschoolers from low-income Alexandria families to add variety and texture to their virtual, at-home learning. Taking advantage of the "Amazon Wish List" feature, generous donors bought 410 toys – from musical instruments to puzzles and books – for 120 preschoolers, ages 3-5 years old. These treasures were delivered in December 2020 and January 2021.

To those young-at-heart who contributed to bring this joy into children's lives, many thanks. Even without a preschool, we can continue to prepare children to succeed.



"Believe it or not, but the blocks have been the toy most played with by my 5-year-old son and daughter out of all their Christmas gifts."

- A grateful mother

ALIVE! Joins the Effort to Reduce Evictions (Continued from page 1)

The need for this support is obvious: more than 450 tenants reached out for rental assistance between November 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021 – but numbers tell only part of the story. These individuals and families live in terror of the unknown. Instability is particularly damaging to children whose educational development and emotional well-being are impaired. The diminished mental and physical health suffered by adults can compromise their chances of landing another job.

The eviction process is overwhelming for those who face severely reduced income or other barriers, such as language or health concerns, during the pandemic. "I received this paper. What do I do?" John (name changed) asked as he handed an AEPP staffer a writ of eviction. After reviewing the writ, the staffer realized that, unbeknownst to John, he, his pregnant wife, and their small child were slated for eviction in the next 48 hours.

AEPP explained the CDC Eviction Moratorium Declaration to John and quickly sent his signed declaration to the Sheriff's Office. This delayed the family's eviction, allowing John, with the help of AEPP staff, to apply for rental assistance through city programs. With his own history of health issues and his wife's difficult pregnancy, eviction would have been devastating for this family.

For those who already have lost their shelter, AEPP works to find a safe space – either a homeless shelter or a family member's home – and helps with the logistics of storing their possessions.

Amy (name changed) is another Alexandrian getting back on her feet with the help of AEPP. Amy was facing what seemed like an insurmountable mountain of burdens. A single mother with her savings depleted eight months into the pandemic, Amy could not afford food, much less rent, during the holidays. At the same time, she was grieving for family members lost to COVID, all while trying to search for a job, help her son cope with Zoom school classes, and maintain day-to-day COVID safety.

AEPP staff met Amy at an outreach event hosted at her apartment complex. They referred her to a faith-based rental assistance program, connected her with food resources in the city, and discussed relevant job opportunities. Follow-up conversations empowered Amy to pursue the referrals and contact potential employers. Amy received generous rental and food assistance, enabling her to stay in her home and enjoy "a real Christmas dinner" with her son. Amy's message to AEPP? "Thank you for listening."



As this slow-motion tragedy continues, you can make a difference:

You can support AEPP by donating to ALIVE! or volunteer to help connect neighbors to housing assistance. ALIVE!'s AEPP volunteers are trained to complete short intake forms over the phone from their homes, working one 2-4 hour shift per week.

UPDATE: Food Insecurity Grows

“There was a spike in the amount of food distributed in October 2020, possibly since some unemployment benefits were not available at the end of September, so demand increased,” noted ALIVE! Food Program Director Ann Patterson, “and the numbers climbed again in December.”

The overall pattern is clear: the number of people facing hunger is rising. In December, over 210,000 pounds of shelf-stable and fresh groceries were provided through ALIVE!’s Food Program, with the help of approximately 80 volunteers. This translates into over 5,000 individual distributions of food to families, most of whom receive ALIVE! food multiple times each month.

In a January 31 article, *The Washington Post* reported that nearly 24 million adults said they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the past week, more than at any other time during the pandemic; meanwhile, the country’s food banks are expecting a 50% reduction in government-provided food in 2021.

Exacerbating this situation is the disruption of the food supply chain. The distributors that sell food in bulk to organizations like ALIVE! have not been able to deliver some items so, ALIVE! now goes shopping at grocery stores like everyone else. Try to avoid getting behind Ms. Patterson in the check-out line since ALIVE! purchases a thousand items in one spree.

How have grocery stores, and others, stepped up?

ALIVE! has had a long relationship with the **Alexandria Commons Giant**, store #0261. This Giant location has been a strong supporter of ALIVE!, collecting meat from the refrigerator case the day before the “sell-by date,” freezing it, and donating about 5-7 cases of meat a week. Due to the pandemic-related food insecurity, the store received special permission to allow ALIVE! to purchase chicken in bulk – i.e., the purchase of a 1,000 or more items at a time – at the weekly sale price, an act of philanthropy granted by Giant. Ms. Patterson takes advantage of this opportunity by buying approximately 2,500 packs of chicken each month.



Other food purveyors have stepped up as well:

- **Elizabeth’s Counter** supplies gift cards for its plant-based food.
- **Great Harvest Bread** provides 40 fresh-baked loaves each week.
- **Mom’s Organic Market** and **Trader Joe’s** donate unsold products at the “sell-by date” that are still perfectly safe to eat.
- **Safeway** has awarded grants to ALIVE! for a large new refrigerator unit, \$10,000 for hunger relief, and \$4,000 for a breakfast program.
- **Wegmans** sells to ALIVE! in bulk, an unusual practice for grocery stores.
- **ALDI, Walmart, and Whole Foods** have made donations of various amounts.

ALIVE! distributions generally include frozen meat, fresh produce, eggs, fresh bread, canned goods, dry beans, and rice; sometimes masks, hand sanitizer, and hygiene kits assembled by local donors are also tucked in. Earlier in this crisis, safety locks for guns and medicine lock boxes for suicide and depression prevention, provided by federal and city governments, were included in the food bags.

The extent of food insecurity is a humanitarian crisis.

How can you help those without a reliable source of food? Donate, conduct a virtual food drive, or volunteer.



To everyone who has contributed or volunteered, the ALIVE! Food Program simply would not happen without you.

Thank you!



(L to R) John Taylor Chapman, ALIVE! President Eric Winakur, Justin M. Wilson, Redella S. "Del" Pepper, Mohamed E. "Mo" Seifeldin, Amy B. Jackson, Canek Aguirre, ALIVE! Executive Director Jennifer Ayers, and Elizabeth B. Bennet-Parker.

Your City Council at Work Volunteering:

Alexandria City Council members volunteered to pack bags of food at the ALIVE! Food warehouse for Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

“Each year, the City Council works to find a way for the entire Council to give back to the community as part of the Martin Luther King Day of Service. This year, we knew that supporting ALIVE!’s efforts to address food insecurity was the place we could make an impact. While the arrival of vaccines gives us hope, we know that our City will need to be in the fight against food insecurity for a long time to come.”

- Alexandria Mayor Justin M. Wilson

“I’ve seen firsthand the importance of the work that ALIVE! is doing in our community from volunteering at the Truck-to-Trunk distributions, where cars and pedestrians are lined up more than an hour in advance of the event. ALIVE!’s work is crucial now more than ever.”

- Vice Mayor Elizabeth B. Bennett-Parker

“During the pandemic so many of our friends and neighbors have faced tremendous losses. As a City and a community, we need to be there to help catch people with our safety nets. Alexandria has been committed to providing resources to where they are needed most and our wonderful partners at ALIVE! are a perfect example of this.”

- Councilman Canek Aguirre

“As someone who grew up in the lower income bracket, I know that food insecurity is a real issue in our community, and ALIVE! is doing a tremendous job in helping families in our community stay healthy and not hungry!”

- Councilman John Taylor Chapman

“Volunteering allowed our renewed perspectives on the amount of time and energy, funding and program coordination needed (now more than ever) as ALIVE! has increased their food assistance from 300 to 3,000 families during this pandemic so far.”

- Councilwoman Amy B. Jackson

VOLUNTEERING: Anyone Who Can Serve Others Can Be a Hero

Liza “come and get involved” Feiler, ALIVE!’s new Volunteer Manager, is energetic and optimistic, but even she never expected this.

“Neighbor Helping Neighbor” has never been just a slogan as ALIVE! volunteers serving their neighbors have kept ALIVE! going for over 50 years. But when the pandemic started, many long-time supporters were suddenly unable to volunteer. Joining in October 2020, Ms. Feiler reached out to regular, long-time volunteers and began recruiting a new crop as well. She put out feelers everywhere: Volunteer Alexandria, ALIVE! member congregations, local universities, Nextdoor neighborhood blog, Patch e-newspaper, military spouses, and even the old-fashioned way of word of mouth. The response was gratifying. Today, Liza is delighted as new volunteers have joined those already on the job, working in COVID-safe ways to serve their neighbors in-need.

Why do people volunteer? “The people who show up to bag and share food can’t imagine being unable to provide food for their families,” Ms. Feiler notes.

Ms. Feiler’s greatest satisfaction so far? Decluttering and cleaning the ALIVE! House basement to prepare it for paint and the eventual transformation into a recreation space. She credits Tom Canning with Alexandria Little League and four lads from T.C. Williams and Bishop Ireton High Schools for their enthusiastic assistance.

Her “superpower” is putting people in the appropriate volunteer spot, supporting their efforts, and recognizing their unique contributions to ALIVE! and their community. “The volunteers are what make ALIVE! tick,” according to Ms. Feiler. “Honestly, it’s unparalleled in my experience to see this level of dedication by volunteers.”

Before joining ALIVE!, Ms. Feiler was the marketing relations coordinator at the Arthritis Foundation where she remains a Board Member to help build the Foundation’s volunteer base. At ALIVE!, Ms. Feiler has picked up the role from Pat Pasqual who coordinated volunteers for a number of years as a volunteer herself.



Liza Feiler (center in pink) with ALIVE! volunteers.

A Community Supporting ALIVE!

NEIGHBORS HELP NEIGHBORS IN CREATIVE & GENEROUS WAYS

Turkey Trot in Del Ray

The traditional thousands of runners did not throng Del Ray streets but the neighborhood did cheer on a couple hundred faithful sprinters who joined in the 45th Annual Del Ray Turkey Trot. The customary Thanksgiving Day event organized by the **Del Ray Business Association** (DRBA) and **DC Road Runners** – like everything else last year – had gone virtual.

Not only did 750 participants submit their running times for any five-mile run completed at a time and place of their choosing (between November 21-29), but they also generously dropped off 3,000 cans of food at **The Dog Store**, **Waxing the City**, and **Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza and Tap**, and the goods were sorted and bagged at **Del Ray Psych & Wellness**.

“Since we’ve been doing this for 45 years, three generations run together in this event,” according to DRBA Board member Gayle Reuter.

In addition to the food donated to ALIVE!, runners were asked to make online contributions directly to ALIVE!.

Giving Tuesday in Old Town

Only one thing beats a day of shopping and dining in Old Town Alexandria: the happy knowledge you are doing it for your community.

“Giving Tuesday” reminded Alexandrians that Old Town businesses are alive and kicking,” said Charlotte Hall, Managing Director of **Old Town Business Association**, which organized the event. “And it created awareness of worthy non-profits in our area that few had heard of.”

On December 1, more than 20 restaurants and shops teamed up to donate a percentage of their sales to five local charities: ALIVE!, Alexandria Tutoring Consortium, Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation, and Neighborhood Health.

One inspired donor bypassed the middleman and dropped off a \$1,000 check to a non-profit. Giving Tuesday raised an estimated \$6,000 – but the fun and goodwill it created are impossible to quantify.

The Softer Side of Concrete

With a heart the size of a concrete mixer, the **National Ready Mixed Concrete Association** (NRMCA), which relocated to Alexandria in 2019, has jumped with both feet into charitable giving in the City.

For two years in a row, NRMCA has provided either Thanksgiving turkeys or meal kits with turkeys and pies to the hungry through ALIVE!.

In 2020, the association upped the ante by filling one gift request from each mother and each child in the three ALIVE! House families. The haul included household items, winter gear, a Nintendo Switch, and a build-a-bird house kit.



“ALIVE! House spoke to me because I know what it feels like to be displaced for the holidays, yet having others care enough to share the joy of Christmas,” says Heather Houck, organizer of NRMCA donations to ALIVE!. “It brings me happiness knowing that for one instant we are giving families a little bit of Christmas magic.”



DRBA Board member Pat Miller (L) and President Lauren Fisher (R) with the runners' donations destined for the ALIVE! warehouse.

Gleaning

Old Town North Farmers' Market (OTNFM) president Margaret Townsend has spearheaded food donations for the ALIVE! bin at the Community Table since the summer, donating about 20 boxes of fruits and vegetables to nearby Meade Memorial Food Pantry, an ALIVE! community partner.

“People feel so trapped, so helpless reading about their neighbors in distress. Donating food is a way to tangibly help and rekindle their sense of community,” noted Ms. Townsend.

An ancient practice known as gleaning has contributed to the bounty going to Meade Memorial. Described in the Hebrew Bible, gleaning requires that some crops be left for the poor, orphans, widows, and foreigners to gather at harvest time. This has been a standard operating procedure at the Old Town North Farmers' Market, thanks to Cindy Brack and other gleaning volunteers. The salvaged and donated produce gleaned after the farmers' market closes for the day is distributed to charities.

Farmers who contribute their unused food receive not only great personal satisfaction but tax deductions as well.

Namaste

Margaret Townsend, also the owner of **Alexandria's River's Edge Yoga**, held virtual yoga fundraisers for ALIVE! on Thanksgiving Day 2020, and New Year's Day 2021. Eight yogis contributed a total of \$200 to participate in these classes – passing along not only good “karma” – but also something more tangible to their community.

Vroom, Vroom

The **Wiygul Automotive Clinic** overflows with truck batteries and car lifts – not boxes of produce or canned goods. So how is this locally owned family business helping to feed Alexandria's hungry?

By doing something equally important: keeping ALIVE!'s trucks on the road to haul the food.

Dave Krukowski, Wiygul General Manager, estimates that the clinic has been maintaining and repairing ALIVE! food trucks at no-cost or minimal-cost for the last 12 years. “We are 100% behind ALIVE! – we know how many people ALIVE! helps, and we want to give back to the community,” he enthused.

CONGREGATION CORNER



Welcome Hill City Church and Oakland Baptist Church

ALIVE! welcomes its newest member congregations.

Hill City Church immediately got to work collecting 850 pounds of Thanksgiving food at the Potomac Yard parking lot. “We look after our community and will go out from there,” said Pastor Charlie Dawes. Since opening its virtual doors in October, Hill City Church, a non-denominational church for people of different backgrounds to follow Jesus, has been an online-only place of worship, streaming on Facebook and Instagram.

At **Oakland Baptist Church**, everyone knows where Pastor Don Hayes is from 4:00 to 9:00 pm every weekday: answering calls from church members and others in need of food or protection from eviction. Oakland distributes ALIVE! food bags every other Friday, serving about 150 people each time. For non-English speakers, the church also offers access to daily Zoom English-as-Second-Language classes.

O Come, All Ye Faithful, to the Grove at Virginia Theological Seminary

“It was the perfect combination of fellowship, outreach, and evangelism,” observed **Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill’s** ALIVE! representative Lisa Clausen. “It provided everyone an opportunity to get out of their homes during the pandemic and into the Christmas spirit.”

During the afternoon and early evening of December 13, Immanuel Church on-the-Hill held its first Christmas Walk and Living Nativity. Parishioners and friends either drove through or walked the eight stations designed by church volunteers. The stations’ offerings ranged from Bible readings to a “festival of light” and music. Some were contemplative, some humorous. Such thoughtful presentations inspired many visitors to remark that they hoped this starts a new tradition.

ALIVE! was the beneficiary of donations during this magical evening: more than \$1,080 was raised, with the promise of continued online donations.



Parishioners at Immanuel Church on-the-Hill reenact the Nativity at The Virginia Theological Seminary.

Truck Donation

Alfred Street Baptist Church donated a brand new 2021 refrigerated truck with a lift gate to assist ALIVE! with the increase in food demand and expenses due to the nationwide pandemic. This was a result of a partnership initially formed by Deacon Emeritus Will Willis who first purchased a truck for ALIVE! over 30 years ago. Presented in a surprise ceremony at the Bus Barn on February 8, the truck arrived with logos already in place and a big red ribbon in the front. This generous gift will be well-appreciated!



Stocking Stuffers

Every year, seekers after non-traditional Christmas presents have gravitated to the Alternative Giving Christmas Market run by **Old Presbyterian Meeting House (OPMH)**. But how to continue this tradition during a pandemic?

That was a puzzler – but OPMH found a solution: “contactless shopping.” From December 7-31, shoppers could browse OPMH’s website for creative and meaningful gifts not available at the mall.

Givers might choose a handmade item created by OPMH knitters, or perhaps a donation in the recipient’s name to a charity or cause. Among these were local organizations like ALIVE!, Christ House Meals, and Senior Services of Alexandria, as well as advocacy groups (e.g., Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) and international OPMH mission partners.

“I found it interesting to see how the focus of the donations changed a bit this year, with more gifts directed to local organizations like ALIVE! and Family to Family, which provide direct support to local neighbors,” noted the event organizer Lois Rawson.

The results of this first-time online market? More than \$22,000, a 50% increase above most recent years. “An historic response!” Lois exulted.

Westminster Presbyterian Church also hosted an online Alternative Giving Bazaar. An in-person marketplace was a venture launched 20 years ago to help fund the United Orphanage & Academy in Kenya. This idea expanded, and soon Westminster was adding representatives from local and national charities to the event.

The resulting Christmas-time bazaar offered the purchase of fair-trade coffee, chocolate, and tea (through the Presbyterian Coffee Project) and the opportunity to donate to charitable organizations in the name of friends and family, who receive information on how their gifts touch the lives of others. For example, a gift of \$35 to ALIVE! provides 150 pounds of meat and cheese for food-insecure families.

In moving the event online, there were concerns about “Zoom fatigue,” but Westminster raised over \$78,000, an increase from last year, for local organizations like Carpenter’s Shelter and Friends of Guest House, national partners like the Appalachia Service Project and the Spirit Lake Indian Reservation in North Dakota, and the Orphanage. Participants this year received a bookmark embedded with seeds, symbolizing the new growth inspired by giving.

ALIVE! *Wire*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



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

Founded In 1969, ALIVE! is comprised of **47 faith organizations** and thousands of volunteers, partners and supporters.

703-837-9300

info@alive-inc.org

www.alive-inc.org

@alive4alexandria

@alive4alexVA

ALIVE!
2723 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22302

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Alexandria, VA
Permit Number 567



Spring2ACTION

Alexandria's Giving Day
Presented by ACT for Alexandria

You can support ALIVE!
during Spring2ACTION on
APRIL 28, 2021