



## Summer Food Drive Success

### Volunteer Alexandria Coordinates Successful Community Food Drive for ALIVE!

The need for food assistance is ongoing and ALIVE! seeks contributions throughout the year to provide food to people in the City of Alexandria. Food drives are usually held toward the end of the year around the Thanksgiving and Winter holidays, but this year 2023 Marion Brunken, Executive Director of Volunteer Alexandria, contacted ALIVE! about a summer food drive. Summer months also see the lowest levels of donations, so the timing of this drive was especially important. Vice Mayor Amy Jackson was also involved in conceptualizing this drive. What resulted was a wonderful City-wide response for those members of the community struggling with food insecurity.

Sponsors of the drive helped with promotional materials and funding collection boxes. A variety of local businesses, non-profit organizations, churches, libraries, and other sites agreed to serve as collection sites for food donations. Donors contributed about 34,000 pounds of food at 38 locations throughout the City from July 5-28. The

community's donations help ALIVE! to reduce its expenses and provide a variety of food to people who need food assistance and rely on ALIVE! to serve as a safety net.

Members of Volunteer Alexandria's Youth Program also helped the ALIVE! Food Program during the summer by bagging groceries, helping to

Donors contributed about 34,000 pounds of food at 38 locations throughout the City.

JULY 2023



clean up the food warehouse, and helping with a drive to collect reusable grocery bags. Volunteer Alexandria coordinated volunteers for the food drive, and regularly promotes ALIVE's various volunteer opportunities on their website. See if there's an opportunity that meets your schedule—no matter the time of year! And, if you would like to donate food items or if your organization would like to host a food drive, check out the ALIVE! website for helpful information.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The challenges of the last few years created immense obstacles for all of us, but they also illuminated the strength, generosity and compassion of our community

We have witnessed countless stories of resilience, hope, and the power of unity. Today, our food distribution programs reach families where they need it most, our housing assistance programs help individuals and families stay in their homes, and our housewares and furniture programs transform apartments into homes.

Even though the need for help has not waned, as we look to the future, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for how we respond to needs as a community. The lessons we've learned during the past year have strengthened our work in our mission to help people faced with emergency situations or long-term needs become capable of assuming self-reliant roles in the community. We are committed to continuing our work to alleviate the suffering caused by poverty by providing essential services and building a more equitable and resilient community.

In the coming year, we have ambitious goals and projects planned, and we invite each of you on our journey to help our community thrive. Your involvement in our organization not only changes lives, it transforms our community into a place of hope, compassion, and opportunity.

Yours in Service,



*Rolf Blank*

Rolf Blank  
*President*



*Jennifer Ayers*

Jennifer Ayers  
*Executive Director*



### ALIVE! FOOD HUB

510-F S Van Dorn St, Alexandria, VA 22304



### ALIVE! FOOD HUB

2601 Mt Vernon Ave, Alexandria, VA 22301

A small grocery store environment where families can choose their own food and get connected to additional services.





# DEL RAY WELCOMES NEW ALIVE! FOOD HUB

**A**LIVE!'s two Food Hubs provide food, personal items, cleaning supplies, school supplies, and referrals to other services for Alexandrians in need. On April 12, 2023, the second Food Hub opened at 2601 Mt Vernon Avenue (at the corner of Stewart Avenue). The Hub initially served about 200-300 people per month. The number has been increasing and as of August, about 450-500 people were being served.

Families are grateful for the food available to them because of the increasing cost of buying food. Those who indicate a higher need for groceries are referred to ALIVE!'s various food distribution events. Many Hub clients have incomes too high to receive any or sufficient SNAP benefits, or are anxious about providing information to obtain adequate food for their families and rely on ALIVE!'s food distribution to feed their families. ALIVE! only asks for some proof of residency and even those without are provided with food and a list of organizations near to where they live.



Client demographics of the new Food Hub are about 80% Hispanic/LatinX and 20% African American. Kathy Castro, the Hub Manager, is bilingual and Pedro Guerro-Qiuntanilla, the Assistant Manager, speaks Spanish and is learning English. For clients who primarily speak other languages, such as Ukrainian, Kathy uses a translation service.

Regular volunteers have developed a devotion to the Hub, helping clients feel comfortable, carrying heavy bags and boxes to cars or the bus stop, and signing up new volunteers. They also help with watering and weeding the garden where fresh produce such as tomatoes, peppers and squash are growing, to supplement the other fresh produce available. The community has been very welcoming, and most volunteers are City residents who live nearby. Some also offer donations from their home gardens.

The Hub space is small but comfortable and is like a mini grocery store. The artwork in the Hub adds color and provides a positive perspective. It appeals to the kids, reminding them of a classroom and a safe place. Books are available for kids to look at and to take home.

Please check the ALIVE! website, [alive-inc.org](http://alive-inc.org), for hours of operation.

# ALIVE! Furniture Program Growing in Popularity

**A**LIVE!'s Furniture Program started many years ago when ALIVE! volunteers noticed a need in the community for donated, basic, well-kept furniture for families in need. The Furniture Program re-opened in Fall 2022 after a hiatus related to COVID and is now in a rebuilding phase. Currently, on Saturday mornings ALIVE! operates one truck and sometimes, if there are enough volunteers it sends out two trucks to deliver furniture.

The goal of the program, which operates only in the City of Alexandria, is same-day delivery of donated furniture by making 8 stops between 8am and 1pm per truck. ALIVE! volunteers make 4 stops to pick up donated items that are clean and in good condition and 4 stops for delivery.

Clients must obtain a referral from a partner agency such as the City of Alexandria Department of Community & Human Services, an ALIVE! member congregation, government agency, or another social service nonprofit. These partner agencies screen applicants to verify their needs and then contact ALIVE! to request furniture for their clients.

The ALIVE! Furniture Program is completely managed by volunteers who strive to provide a prompt response. ALIVE! adds referred clients to its list of needs immediately. However, the program's capacity each Saturday is limited by time, number of volunteers, and the availability of needed items matched to donations at any given time.

Nancy Lopez, the new Chair of the Program, says "Donors don't want the furniture that helped make their home to end up in a dumpster; they want their donation to go to another family, and to imagine new people using it to create new memories. And the recipients are incredibly grateful. The program helps families go



from a camping-like atmosphere in a mostly empty space to having furniture which helps create a home."

Nancy indicates that the program is so popular, ALIVE! is missing out on donations because of limitations—mainly because more people are needed to operate a second truck. Volunteers needed are not just those with enough strength to lift large items like sofas and beds, but also to carry pillows, hold doors, etc.

Nancy is inspired by the generosity of the donors and the volunteers. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints musters volunteers the third Saturday of every a month. Maggie Haslam, member representative from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints says, "As committed followers of Jesus, our church members believe that "loving our neighbor" brings the greatest joys in life! ALIVE has set up the most wonderful opportunity to easily help those who need it most. Not only is it fun, and a great workout, but furniture delivery is a unique experience where we get to know first hand what our neighbors need and then help them immediately. Furniture delivery is a very inspired program!"

Many of the other ALIVE! interfaith member congregations coordinate volunteers on a quarterly or ad hoc basis. While trying to manage the supply and demand for furniture given the current volunteer limitations, Nancy notes little miracles of when things come together—such as people who show up on the sidewalk offering to help. The Furniture Program depends on volunteers to pick up and deliver donated items to families in need and Nancy knows that all she needs to do is call for help, and people will respond. Can she count you in? Sign up to volunteer at [alive-inc.org](http://alive-inc.org)





# Farewell Pedro Rivera

After six years with ALIVE!, Pedro Rivera bids farewell to his role on staff, leaving behind a legacy of service that has touched countless lives and woven tighter the fabric of community support.

Pedro's journey with ALIVE! began in 2017, when he stepped into the organization as a Warehouse Assistant with a heart full of empathy and a desire to make a difference. From the outset, it was clear that his commitment was not merely a job, but a calling to uplift those who needed it most.

As a core member of the ALIVE! team, Pedro's days were spent ensuring that the warehouse and food program ran smoothly by ensuring on-time pick-ups from donors and deliveries to pantries and distributions throughout the community. Pedro's impact extended far beyond the tasks on his to-do list. His genuine warmth and kindness was recognized by many of the people who interacted with him regularly. Whether it was a reassuring smile, a listening ear, or a comforting word, Pedro's presence was a testament to the power of compassion and his dedication to supporting his community.



Pedro Rivera

"Pedro's dedication has been a guiding light for all of us at ALIVE!," shared Jennifer Ayers, the Executive Director of ALIVE!. "His compassion, faith in a higher power, and commitment have been an inspiration to his colleagues and a source of comfort to the community we serve. We wish him the best in his next steps."

## IN MEMORIAM

*Gerry Hebert*



***ALIVE! remembers Gerry Hebert  
who died on September 7, 2023.***

Gerry Hebert, long-time champion of ALIVE!, passed away on September 7, 2023, surrounded by those closest to him. Gerry was an exceptional man, dedicating his entire life to uplifting others. He was a civil rights lawyer for more than 49 years, including more than 20 years with the US Department of Justice. Gerry was a guardian of Democracy, a guitar playing grandfather, and someone whose example of selfless service is a legacy that we all aspire to emulate.

Gerry was also a Past President of ALIVE! who dedicated many hours to delivering furniture and distributing food, and later led ALIVE!'s work as Development Chair, which are only a few of the duties Gerry took on that are too numerous to list here. Gerry was the heart of ALIVE! for almost 40 years and we are so grateful for all the hard work and dedication he demonstrated to ALIVE!'s mission, to the community, and to his neighbors. Gerry's passing is a profound loss, and we mourn with his family as we recognize the absence of someone who lived a life passionately advocating for justice and compassion.

# New Leadership and Continuity of Service:

## ALIVE Welcomes 2024 Board Members

July marked the commencement of a fresh chapter for ALIVE as it welcomed new Board Members to lead the organization. The spotlight now shines on Rolf Blank, who ascended to the role of Board President. Blank is no stranger to ALIVE's mission, having previously served as its Vice President. He is also an esteemed member of Fairlington United Methodist Church, a congregation among ALIVE's network of 50 participating religious institutions. Through his activity with the Fairlington UMC Men's organization Blank has been volunteering to glean produce from farmers markets for ALIVE! for many years. This longstanding commitment as a devoted volunteer has been instrumental in fostering the success of ALIVE! and extending a helping hand to fellow residents in Alexandria who are facing challenges.

Blank's appointment as Board President signifies the conclusion of Mary Eileen Dixon's tenure in this role. Jennifer Ayers, the Executive Director of ALIVE!, expressed heartfelt gratitude for Dixon's stewardship during her presidency from 2021 to 2023. Dixon's leadership proved invaluable as ALIVE! navigated the complexities of the pandemic and realigned its initiatives to address emergent community needs. Looking ahead, there's an air of anticipation as Blank takes the reins, continuing the legacy of community-driven service that ALIVE! was built upon and thinking about new ways to serve the community.

Reflecting on his new position, Blank shared, "For more than 20 years I've been amazed how ALIVE! works collaboratively with congregations of all faiths to support



the community. I am excited to be stepping into the role of Board President and look forward to the year ahead."

Mary Eileen Dixon's tenure as ALIVE!'s Board President was marked by significant achievements and impactful contributions to the community. One noteworthy accomplishment was overseeing the establishment of ALIVE's first two brick-and-mortar Food Hubs. This milestone marked a significant stride in ALIVE's capacity to provide essential nourishment and resources to community members experiencing food insecurity and seeking support services. Additionally, Dixon held the role of ALIVE! Child Development Center (CDC) Committee Chair from 2012 to 2020. Her leadership during the pandemic-induced closure of the center demonstrated adaptability and resilience, allowing ALIVE! to thrive despite the challenges posed by COVID-19.

"It has been an honor to lead ALIVE! during this eventful period. The organization's ability to stretch and grow to meet new demands has been awesome. I am confident that its committed staff and volunteer corps will continue to find new and better ways to help improve the lives of our struggling neighbors," remarked Dixon.

As ALIVE! enters a new phase under Rolf Blank's guidance, the organization remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing the lives of the community's most vulnerable members. With a history of collaboration and innovation, ALIVE! is poised to build upon its foundation of compassionate service, addressing the ever-evolving needs of Alexandria's residents.

---

"For more than 20 years I've been amazed how ALIVE! works collaboratively with congregations of all faiths to support the community."

ROLF BLANK



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES



## Accessing ALIVE! Food Distribution with DASH

**M**ost Food Hubs and Walk-Up Food Distribution Centers are located within short walking distance of DASH bus service. All DASH buses are 100% free to ride for all passengers at all times.

The lists below summarize the closest DASH routes for each food distribution location. If an ALIVE! food distribution is scheduled at a location not listed on this page, use the DASH Trip Planner to determine the best route for you.

### FOOD HUBS

- 510-F South Van Dorn St (DASH Line 30, 32 & 35)
- 2601 Mount Vernon Ave (DASH Line 33, Metrobus 10A/B)

### WALK-UP FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

- Cora Kelly Elementary School at 3600 Commonwealth Ave (DASH Line 33 & 36A/B)
- William Ramsay Rec Center at 5650 Sanger Ave (DASH Line 35)

### POP-UPS

- Old Town Community Church at 212 S. Washington St (DASH Line 30, 31, 34 & King St Trolley, Metrobus 10A/B)
- Fairlington United Methodist Church at 3900 King St (DASH Line 31 & 36A/B)
- UNCUT Youth at 1501 Cameron St (DASH Line 30, 31 & King Street Trolley)
- Hammond Middle School at 4646 Seminary Rd (DASH Line 36A/B & 102, Metrobus 28A)

### FOOD PANTRIES

- West End Food Pantry at 5150 Fillmore Ave (DASH Line 31, Metrobus 28A)
- Christ House Food Pantry at 131 S. West St (DASH Line 30, 31 & King Street Trolley)
- Meade Memorial Episcopal at 322 N. Alfred St (DASH Line 30, 31 & King Street Trolley)
- Oakland Baptist Church at 3408 King St (DASH Line 31 & 36A/B)
- Ruby Tucker Family Center Food Pantry at 322 Tancil Ct (DASH Line 30, 31 & 34)
- Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church Food Pantry at 317 N. Payne St (DASH Line 30, 31 & King Street Trolley)



# ALIVE! *Wire*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



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

Founded In 1969, ALIVE! is comprised of **49 faith organizations** and thousands of volunteers, partners and supporters.

703-837-9300  
info@alive-inc.org

[www.alive-inc.org](http://www.alive-inc.org)

   @alive4alexandria  
 @alive4alexVA

ALIVE!  
2723 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22302

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



## StepALIVE!

2023

# WALKATHON

OCTOBER 15, 2023

Please help support our Alexandria neighbors  
in need by joining us for the  
**42<sup>nd</sup> Annual StepALIVE! Walkathon.**

**Start a team, register as a walker, or donate!**  
Register online at **[stepalive.org](http://stepalive.org)**.

