



# ALIVE! Wire

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Alexandria, Virginia



## TRANSFORMING CARE: ALIVE! HOUSE'S NEW APPROACH TO EMPOWERING WOMEN AND FAMILIES

By Grace Terlinden, Communications Associate

When most of us think about home, we imagine safety, privacy, and calm—a place where family life can unfold and where we can finally pause. For women and children arriving at ALIVE! House, that sense of home is often something they have not had for a long time. It must be rebuilt carefully, intentionally, and without judgment.

That belief guided ALIVE!'s recent renovation and reopening of ALIVE! House in partnership with Community Lodgings. Transitional housing is about creating a space—and a program— that helps women and their families take the first steps back toward stability, on their own terms.

### BEGINNING AT THE VERY START OF THE JOURNEY

For many residents, coming to ALIVE! House happens at one of the most complicated moments of their lives.

"ALIVE! House is there right at the beginning," said Reynard Eaglin, ALIVE!'s Assistant Executive Director. "Women arrive while they are actively disentangling from previous living situations. That can mean going to court to secure restraining orders, navigating custody issues, or needing support related to immigration status. Stability does not start with housing—it starts with helping someone feel safe enough to take the next step."

### A RENOVATION THAT CHOSE PEOPLE OVER CAPACITY

Before the renovation, ALIVE! House accommodated more residents, but at a cost. Two families shared each of the upper floors and had space on the first floor that could be redesigned to accommodate another resident. While the house provided a safer place to live, there was limited privacy and autonomy.

Today, the first floor has been redesigned to accommodate another family, and ALIVE! House can intentionally serve three families in total, for up to 24 months, a decision designed to provide privacy and autonomy. Each family now has its own dedicated floor with all the facilities one needs, including a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom(s), and laundry.

"We made a conscious decision to change space so that people could live better and be more comfortable," said Jennifer Ayers, Executive Director of ALIVE!. "Our goal isn't to report how many families stayed here. Our goal is to help women and their families get back on their path."

The impact of that decision is already being felt. One of the families currently living in ALIVE! House is a mother with two young children—children who spent much of their recent lives sharing crowded space and navigating uncertainty alongside their mom. Now, they have room to breathe.



ALIVE! staff decorating in the ALIVE! House during the holidays.

"Between the foundation of this house and its walls, there's a lot that people carry with them," said Debbie Stroud, ALIVE!'s Program Coordinator. "There's grief, fear, resilience, hope—and a lot of courage. Our work is about helping women and their families become whole again, at a pace that feels possible for them." The new children who live there have already shared how excited they are to have a space of their own and feel "normal" again - a thing many may take for granted.

## STRENGTHENING SUPPORT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

The reopening of ALIVE! House also marks a formal partnership with Community Lodgings, another Alexandrian nonprofit that has provided transitional shelter in Alexandria for many years. Together, the two organizations share one case manager who supports up to nine households total—three at ALIVE! House and six at Community Lodgings.

This shared staffing model allows for consistent, high-quality support while expanding peer connection opportunities among people navigating similar transitions. This enables both organizations to be more efficient and effective with their resources, while keeping the uniqueness of each of their programs. And, it allows clients from both locations to have better peer support networks.

## CLIENT-CENTERED PROGRAMMING BUILT AROUND INDIVIDUAL GOALS

Housing is only one part of the program offered by ALIVE! and Community Lodgings. At its core, the program is client-centered, meaning residents choose their own goals, and the Case Manager supports them in reaching those goals—by providing a clear structure that helps build stability.

"Our residents' goals can range widely," said Jasmine Castellon, Case Manager for ALIVE! House's and Community Lodgings' transitional housing residents. "For one woman, success might be getting her first job. For another, it might be rebuilding her credit, enrolling her kids in school, or even learning how to dance—something joyful that reminds her she's more than what she's been through."

"Structure matters," said Jasmine, the Case Manager for the joint program. "When you've lived through chaos or instability, having consistent expectations paired with real support can be grounding. We walk alongside residents as they work toward the goals, they have chosen for themselves."

Programming for the joint ALIVE! & Community Lodgings Program includes, but is not limited to:

- Individualized financial counseling and credit restoration
- Access to a financial advisor to untangle complex or damaged credit histories
- Coordination with social workers and trusted community partners
- Connections to childcare, healthcare, employment, and legal resources
- Regular group meetings
- Individualized meetings with a Case Manager



ALIVE! House Ribbon Cutting, From Left to Right: Alison Coleman Tokarz, Director of Office of Community Services at the City of Alexandria, Lynn Thomas, Executive Director at Community Lodgings, Kristyn Burr, CEO of HomeAID National Capital Region, Jennifer Ayers, Executive Director, ALIVE!

## CONTINUING A LEGACY—WITH INTENTION

ALIVE! House stands at the intersection of history and progress. Rooted in decades of volunteer-driven care, it has evolved into a program shaped by professional staffing, intentional design, and deep respect for autonomy.

"This house is a place to heal from the past, be present with your family, and move toward what's next," Debbie said.

As ALIVE! House moves forward, it does so with clarity and compassion—recognizing that the road to stability is not straight, healing takes time, and every person's path begins with a single, supported step.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Grace Terlinden joined ALIVE! as a Communications Associate in October 2025. She helps share the stories of the neighbors ALIVE! helps and highlights how ALIVE!'s programs provide stability and support for Alexandrians during challenging moments.

## ALIVE! LEADERSHIP

ALIVE! is governed by a Board of Directors, including a 15-member Executive Committee. The Board includes representatives from 50 member congregations of different faiths, program leaders, committee chairs, and past presidents. This body actively shapes our mission and work. Under the leadership of Executive Director, Jennifer Ayers, our staff members manage daily operations to serve the Alexandria community.

### Executive Committee FY2026-FY2027

Carlton Willis, President

Siobahn Mould, Vice President

Matt Zahn, Secretary

Larry Thompson, Treasurer, Chair Finance Committee

Rolf Blank, Past President & Nominations Committee Chair

Jennifer Ayers, MPA, Executive Director (ex-officio)

Kevin Metz, Audit Committee Chair

Ellen Brown, Governance Committee Chair

Gaynelle Bowden-Diaz

Bridget Gaddis

Suzanne Kratzok

Susan Pollack

Gayle Reuter

Patti Turner

Justin Wilson

Eric Winakur

**For a full list of all ALIVE!'s Board Members, Member Congregations and Staff Leadership visit: [alive-inc.org](http://alive-inc.org)**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Since beginning my tenure as ALIVE!'s Board President, I've seen our organization evolve by strengthening leadership, expanding housing capacity, and deepening community partnerships – all to meet Alexandria's changing needs.

The recent economic uncertainty has made it clear that ALIVE!'s work is important and as our community's needs expand, we rise to meet the need. That is what we have committed to doing, and ALIVE! has celebrated many new beginnings, making it clear that ALIVE! continues to be a leader in alleviating housing and food insecurity for Alexandrians.

The recent reopening of the ALIVE! House is a powerful example of ALIVE!'s reach expanding to meet the needs of Alexandrians. After undergoing renovation, the house can now accommodate three families for up to 24 months, offering a much-needed lifeline for those facing housing instability.

ALIVE! welcomed a new addition to our staff, the new Assistant Executive Director, Reynard Eaglin. His leadership will help us reach our strategic goals by making the best use of our resources and supporting our team of staff and volunteers to extend our capacity to help others.

The Alexandria community has stepped up to support ALIVE! during this period of growth. At this year's annual *StepALIVE!* event, we exceeded our fundraising goal! It is clear our neighbors show up for one another and want to help their neighbors facing basic needs insecurity.

I'm so proud of the work we've accomplished so far, and I know we will all continue to work together as neighbors helping neighbors.

With Heart and Hustle,

Carlton Willis  
Board President

# ALIVE! AT 57: GROWING INTO THE FUTURE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO OUR ROOTS

By Michelle M. Lockwood, Development Director



ALIVE! staff pictured with volunteers from the Sheriff Department in front of our Van Dorn Community Food Hub.

In nearly six decades since ALIVE! first opened its doors, one thing remained constant: neighbors helping neighbors. What began as a grassroots coalition of faith communities responding to the needs of their neighbors has grown into Alexandria's largest private safety-net provider—now supporting approximately 5,000 families every month, compared to 5,000 in an entire year just 6 years ago.

But as our city changes, ALIVE! is changing too. And 2026 marks a pivotal moment in that evolution.

## ROOTED IN COMMUNITY, SHAPING A STRONGER ALEXANDRIA

Executive Director, Jennifer Ayers, reflected on what growth means for an organization grounded in volunteer energy and compassion.

"ALIVE! has always adapted to meet the moment," she said. "We've grown because Alexandria needs us, but the heart has stayed the same. Volunteers and donors are still the lifeblood of this organization."

That growth is visible everywhere: two warehouses, two Community Food Hubs, five monthly food distributions including the Community Fresh Markets and partnerships with 17 pantry partners citywide. The ALIVE! Food Program's growth was a deliberate response to the most urgent community needs.

As Jenn puts it, "We learned to follow the data, but also to follow our neighbors' stories. When thousands of families turn to you every month, you know to listen so they can guide you to where your work is needed."

At the same time, Jenn's role has become increasingly outwardly facing. ALIVE! is now deeply involved in citywide efforts to address food insecurity, housing stability, and economic mobility. Staff and volunteers sit on multiple boards and collaborative workgroups, ensuring that ALIVE!'s on-the-ground experience informs broader conversations about poverty and resource allocation across Alexandria.

"As Alexandria's community and needs grow more complex," Jenn shared, "we're being called into more rooms and to sit at more tables. That's essential for our mission not just to serve families today, but to help shape a community where fewer people fall into crisis tomorrow."

## A FAMILY LEGACY, FIVE TRUCKS, AND A CITY THAT DEPENDS ON ALIVE!

Board President Carlton Willis knows that ALIVE!'s story is also a story of continuity.

"My Uncle William bought ALIVE! its first truck," he shared. "It was just one truck helping move food and furniture around this city. Today, we have five—Willis, Alfred, Premier, Reefer (as nicknamed by the ALIVE!

operations staff and volunteers using trucker language for a refrigerated truck) and our newest truck from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—plus a cargo van and a minivan. That growth tells a story.”

Carlton paused and added, “We’re still a grassroots organization at heart. What’s changed is the scale of the need and the size of the community supporting it.”

## PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Over the next year, ALIVE! expects the need for services to intensify:

- 3,000 Alexandria residents are expected to lose Medicaid coverage.
- Unemployment has already increased from 3.8% to 7%.
- Even before any federal government program changes, 1 in 3 families who came to ALIVE! already received benefits that didn’t cover their basic needs. We expect more people to lose their federal benefits and need basic assistance.
- The cost of ALIVE!’s food program has the potential to double due to inflation and demand.

These pressures require more than goodwill—they require leadership, coordination, and strategic capacity.

## WELCOMING ALIVE!’S FIRST ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In October, ALIVE! welcomed Reynard Eaglin as the organization’s first Assistant Executive Director, a role made possible through the generous support of the Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation.

Reynard has more than 20 years of experience serving children and families in the Greater Washington region. His focus is on strengthening coordination, improving staff workflows, and helping ALIVE! deliver services more efficiently and with greater dignity.

“ALIVE!’s mission is powerful because it’s practical,” Reynard said. “People come to us hungry, stressed, or uncertain. Our job is to make sure the systems behind the scenes are strong enough to support them with consistency and respect.”

Reynard will oversee ALIVE!’s internal operations, including the Operations Team, the Program & Volunteer Engagement Team, and the Client Services Team. His leadership allows Jenn to focus more directly on the growing external demands of ALIVE!’s work, including fundraising, communications, policy engagement, and community partnerships, while ensuring internal systems remain strong, coordinated, and client centered.

“This is an organization rooted in heart,” Reynard added. “My job is to make sure the structure matches that heart, so we can keep serving as the community evolves.”

## THE OPERATIONAL SHIFT: WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE NEIGHBORS WHO NEED ALIVE!

Program Director, Tim Enright, has seen firsthand how much ALIVE!’s operations have evolved.

“Five years ago, we were doing the same kind of work, but mostly reacting to rapidly growing needs,” Tim reflected. “We went from serving 5,000 families a year to 5,000 a month almost overnight. There’s no going



backwards at this point, not when people need us. We operate multiple warehouses and hubs, with a full fleet of trucks and vans. We’re partnering with schools, congregations, and community centers, and have more impact across the city than ever before. With this growth, we must be intentional and strategic in our approach, and less reactive.” In addition to his work on program data management, Tim oversees ALIVE!’s Volunteer Coordinator, Kathy Castro.

“ALIVE! is taking the next step in our volunteer engagement,” Tim said. “Volunteers do so much for ALIVE!, including running our Furniture Program, Housewares Program, and Family Assistance Program, which oversees our emergency financial assistance and home grocery delivery. We simply wouldn’t be able to accomplish what we do every day without them. And just as we want our monetary donors to feel connected and appreciated, we want the same for the people who donate their time.”

With Reynard in place, Tim sees tremendous opportunity. “Having someone focused on operations and coordination means we can strengthen what works and fix what doesn’t—faster. It’s going to make a meaningful difference for our clients.”

## HONORING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE

Even with more staff, and more partners, ALIVE! still holds tightly to its identity as a community-driven organization.

“We didn’t get here alone,” Carlton said. “We got here because people believed in us—volunteers, donors, congregations, partners. They’re still the foundation.”

Reynard echoed that sentiment. “Capacity isn’t about replacing the community; it’s about supporting it.”

And Jenn added, “The future of ALIVE! is strong because Alexandria is strong. This city shows up for each other. We’re here to make sure no one falls through the cracks.”

## LOOKING AHEAD

As ALIVE! enters its 57th year; the organization stands at a powerful intersection of history and possibility. The challenges ahead are real. But so is the community that has carried ALIVE! for five decades—and continues to propel it forward.

“We are still neighbors helping neighbors,” Carlton said. “We’re just learning how to do it at the scale Alexandria needs.”

And that is the story of ALIVE!—rooted in compassion, growing with purpose, and ready for whatever our community needs next.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Michelle M. Lockwood has served as ALIVE!’s Development Director since March 2024, guiding fundraising, donor engagement, and sponsorships. She brings a people-centered and data-minded approach that values the neighbors ALIVE! serves and the supporters who make this work possible.

# StepALIVE! '25: NEW ROUTES, STRONGER COMMUNITY

By Alex Rees, Development Associate



On October 19, 2025, over 350 walkers participated in ALIVE!'s annual walkathon, *StepALIVE!*. Now in its 44th year, *StepALIVE!* continues to grow as a true celebration of the supporters, community members, volunteers, and congregations at the heart of our work.

With George Washington Middle School as the new location, and two new routes through Del Ray and Old Town, this year's event was an exciting change of pace for even the most experienced *StepALIVE!* walkers.

Despite the windy weather, there was a strong sense of enthusiasm and togetherness in the air. As teams began gathering, crowds were entertained with live music from the Alexandria's Citizens Band and a large variety of activities, including mini golf, cornhole and face-painting. Walkers could also pick up complimentary step counters from Blaszkow Legal, enjoy a selection of refreshments provided by the United States Senate Federal Credit Union and purchase tickets ahead of the 50/50 raffle draw.

The event was held during the federal government shutdown. As Board Vice President and Team Captain for Community Praise Center Siobhan Mould shared, "With a government shutdown affecting thousands of Alexandria families, the sight of neighbors turning out anyway—families, congregations, businesses—underscored just how much this community shows up for each other."

*StepALIVE!* kicked off with Ben Fiore, Alexandria's very own Town Crier, giving out a loud "Oy ye, Oy ye", and Abby Francis, with Alloy Fitness leading a stretch and warm up. Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley offered opening remarks before Executive Director, Jennifer Ayers, sent everyone on either the 5-mile route through Old Town or the 5k route through Del Ray with one phrase: "Let's *StepALIVE!*!"



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2025 *StepALIVE!* COMPETITION WINNERS!

<b>Congregational Cup (Most Non-Sponsorship Money Raised by a Congregation)</b>	Del Ray United Methodist Church Team Captain: Pastor Arum Kim
<b>Most Money Raised by a Community Team</b>	Mortgage Mavens Team Captain: Cheryl Malloy
<b>Largest Congregational Team</b>	Community Praise Church Team Captain: Siobhan Mould
<b>Largest Community Team</b>	Whitley's Wonderful Walking Friends Team Captain: Whitley Ng (age 10)
<b>Most Money Raised by an Individual</b>	Cheryl Malloy
<b>Most Gifts Raised by an Individual</b>	Scoti Albrecht

 **Thank you!** to our 2025 *StepALIVE!* Sponsors!

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- Del Ray United Methodist Church
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church
- Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
- Goodwin House Alexandria Memorial Chapel
- Grace Episcopal Church
- Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill
- New Life International at St. Andrews United Methodist Church
- Old Presbyterian Meeting House
- Russell Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Sixteenth Tabernacle Beth El
- The Church of South Washington Street
- Trinity United Methodist Church
- Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington
- Westminster Presbyterian Church

\*ALIVE! Member Congregation



While on route, the festivities continued with new, optional neighborhood scavenger hunts. Participants explored Alexandria's neighborhoods while engaging with ALIVE!'s mission, and the scavenger hunt winners were thrilled to receive cruise tickets generously donated by City Experiences. Nick Sablinksy, a winner of the tickets and former Congregational Representative from ALIVE! Member Congregation Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, shared, "I enjoy the walkathon because it adds a festive touch to an event that also shines a light on the hunger and housing challenges in our local community." Returning walkers were welcomed by cheering volunteers joyfully waving pom-poms in celebration. Highlights of the post-walk celebration included desserts from Goodies Frozen Custard & Treats, the blue grass melodies of the Pacemakers, and trophy and prize winner announcements.

Beyond the day's excitement, *StepALIVE!*'s impact continues long after the event ends by raising the critical funds needed to provide food, shelter, and financial assistance to thousands of Alexandrians. "ALIVE! does amazing work, and I'm proud to partner with them to help feed, house, and support our neighbors" said longtime ALIVE! supporter and *StepALIVE!* committee member, Joe Blaszkow. "Growing up, I volunteered with a local food bank, and I've carried that with me ever since."

Joe's firm, Blaszkow Legal, has been a long-time top sponsor of *StepALIVE!* and was joined this year by the McNeil Family Foundation. In total, more than 70 businesses, congregations, civic organizations, and individuals stepped forward as sponsors.

"With the ongoing economic uncertainty and then the shutdown, we were preparing for what a B Plan would be if we didn't reach our original goal of \$100,000," said Michelle Lockwood, Development Director. "We should know better by now to not underestimate the Alexandria

Community. The community showed up when COVID hit, and they showed up now when families are feeling financial stress more than ever. This community is one that catches each other when we stumble."

Against expectations, and thanks to the kindness and generosity of ALIVE!'s supporters, *StepALIVE!* 2025 raised a record-breaking \$125,000. Sponsors returned, even if they had to take a step back, and our community members stepped up their individual fundraising efforts to make a difference.

The impact of that generosity is powerful.

- \$40,000 can provide emergency financial assistance for more than 50 families.
- \$50,000 can provide a week's worth of groceries to 20,000 people.

As Jenn put it, "*StepALIVE!* shows what happens when Alexandria walks together for a shared purpose. Every step taken represents a neighbor who will have food on the table or the support needed to stay in their home."

The 45th annual *StepALIVE!* will take place in October 2026, and if this year is any sign, Alexandria will be ready to walk together once again.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Rees joined the ALIVE! Team in August 2025. As the Development Associate, she leads the execution of Empty Bowls and *StepALIVE!*, supports donor stewardship and represents ALIVE! among our local partners, ensuring ALIVE!'s connection within our community remains strong.

# DRIVING IMPACT: HOW ALIVE!'S FIRST TRUCK-A- PALOOZA DELIVERED STABILITY

By Nancy Lopez, Furniture Program Chair

Every day, ALIVE! helps neighbors move from instability towards stability—often starting with food on the table or a bed to sleep in. That mission was front and center on September 14, 2025, when ALIVE! hosted its first ever *Truck-A-Palooza*.

Twelve ALIVE! volunteers came together for a day of hands-on truck training designed to strengthen our capacity to deliver food and furniture safely and efficiently to Alexandria households. At four safety-focused stations, volunteers learned how to inspect trucks, operate pallet jacks, back up trucks safely, and even take a short spin behind the wheel.

By the end of the day, participants left more confident and better prepared to get essential goods to our neighbors in need by driving one of our trucks.

"I learned a lot," one participant said. Another added, "I feel much more comfortable driving after this training." That confidence translates directly into impact: more deliveries completed safely, more homes furnished, and more neighbors supported with dignity.

One of the most meaningful parts of the day was seeing experienced volunteers and staff step up to train new drivers. Having more trained drivers means more ALIVE! clients can receive food and furniture when they need it, benefiting directly from the generosity of the Alexandria community.

As we begin a new year, *Truck-A-Palooza* helped ensure ALIVE! is ready to meet neighbors where they are—one delivery at a time.

Do you want to help neighbors move toward stability and home? We're always looking for volunteers for our Furniture and Food Programs.

**Learn more and sign up at [alive-inc.org/volunteer](https://alive-inc.org/volunteer).**



Volunteers learning the ropes at Truck-A-Palooza.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Lopez is the Furniture Program Chair for ALIVE! since 2022. In her work as a volunteer leader she guides the furniture program, ensuring donated furniture is reused to bring comfort, stability, and practical support to Alexandria households.



## From Training to Home: The Impact Behind the Wheel

Since the Fall, ALIVE! has helped more than 30 families furnish their apartments—providing beds to sleep in, tables to gather around, and everyday essentials that help a space feel like home.

*Truck-A-Palooza* was designed to build skills and confidence so volunteers can safely drive ALIVE!'s delivery trucks and help make this impact possible for neighbors across Alexandria.

Volunteer driver, Peter Turner, who attended *Truck-A-Palooza* and has been driving since, shared, "Driving has been a great experience to see directly how donations make an instant impact and to meet new friends. I get back more than I give."

# WHEN NEIGHBORS SHOW UP: RESPONDING TO GROWING NEED ACROSS ALEXANDRIA

By Lynn Jordan, Volunteer Advisory Working Group Chair



Local Scout troops collect over 20,000 pounds of food.

## PROVIDING A HOLIDAY MEAL: ALIVE!'S 2025 TURKEY BASKET DISTRIBUTION

As the cost of food and necessities continue to rise, more Alexandria families are finding it difficult to make ends meet, especially during the holidays. ALIVE!'s annual Turkey Basket Distribution is one way our community comes together to meet that need with care, dignity, and compassion.

On November 25, the ALIVE! warehouse was a hub of activity as volunteers picked up food baskets, loaded them into their own vehicles, and received delivery routes for the day. This year, ALIVE! volunteers delivered more than 250 frozen turkeys and full bags of Thanksgiving groceries to more than 1,000 neighbors in need across Alexandria, including single parents balancing rising costs, seniors living on fixed incomes, and neighbors facing sudden financial strain.

That number represents nearly a 35% increase from the 163 dinner baskets delivered last year—reflecting the growing number of households turning to ALIVE! for support during an increasingly challenging time. Local unemployment has risen from 3.8% to 7%, and the costs of food, fuel, and rent continue to climb, and many families are stretching limited benefits that simply do not go far enough.

Volunteer Catherine Wood, who coordinated this year's distribution, was struck by the dedication and care shown by volunteers throughout the day.

"They were friendly, excited to help, and took their responsibility seriously," she shared. "They went to great lengths to make sure they had the right addresses and that each food basket reached the right family."

For many clients, these deliveries meant being able to gather around a holiday meal they weren't sure they could afford—easing stress during an already difficult season and allowing families to focus on being together. The holidays can be especially hard for households facing uncertainty, and even one additional expense can feel overwhelming.

ALIVE! staff often hear how meaningful it is for families to know they were remembered—that someone took the time to show up with care during a moment when resources felt stretched thin and the future felt uncertain.

These deliveries are about more than food. They bring warmth, dignity, and reassurance to families who might otherwise go without—reminding them that their community sees them, cares about them, and is willing to show up.

## SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE: 20,000 POUNDS OF FOOD COLLECTED FOR ALEXANDRIA NEIGHBORS

This November, ALIVE! took part in Scouting for Food, a Nationwide Food Drive through Scouting America, helping ensure local food shelves remained stocked for Alexandria families facing food insecurity. Scouts visited neighborhood homes to collect bags and boxes of donated food and delivered them to local food banks and food pantries.

This year more than 20,000 pounds of food collected helped ALIVE! strengthen its food supplies for Alexandria neighbors balancing tight budgets, rising costs, and limited access to healthy food. ALIVE! extends its sincere gratitude to the residents of Alexandria who donated food, the Scouts who collected it, and the volunteers who helped sort and distribute it—demonstrating the impact of neighbors helping neighbors. This year, the scouts nearly doubled what they collected the year before! Thank you to boys and girls involved in Scouting America for their work to pound the pavement nationwide to gather food for people in need.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn Jordan has been volunteering with ALIVE! since March 2020 and has served as the Volunteer Advisory Lead since Spring 2025.

# COMMUNITY IN ACTION

## Supporting Stability, Strengthening Community | September-December Update

By Timothy Enright, Program Director

As many in our community gathered around tables with family and friends this fall, thousands of Alexandria neighbors continued the daily work of keeping food on the table and stability in their homes. Rising costs, reduced benefits, and unexpected disruptions did not pause with the changing seasons.

Because of your support, ALIVE! remained a steady presence for families navigating these realities. From food access and housing stability to emergency financial assistance and advocacy, your generosity helped ensure neighbors were met with dignity, care, and timely support during a season when it mattered most.

### FOOD ACCESS IN ALEXANDRIA

Each month, thousands of Alexandria households receive groceries through ALIVE!'s two Community Food Hubs, five community partner distributions, daily home deliveries, and 17 partner pantries and youth programs. When budgets tighten, food access is often the first pressure point.

From September to December, 402,201 pounds of food were distributed, helping families prepare meals at home and gather. At Community Food Hubs, neighbors were welcomed with respect—whether visiting for the first time or returning for ongoing support.

Food access also opened doors to additional care. 693 individuals were connected to other services through the hubs, including 145 neighbors who joined healthy cooking demonstrations led by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, focused on practical, budget-friendly meals using food available at food hubs.



Each weekend, volunteers deliver essential furniture to local families who have recently moved out of transitional housing or are rebuilding after a crisis – helping them create safe, stable living spaces with dignity.



In October, during the federal government shutdown, ALIVE! partnered with the Department of Community and Human Services to respond quickly to increased need. Two emergency pop-up food distributions supported 1,343 people across 333 households, ensuring families did not face the holiday season with empty cupboards.

During November, ALIVE!'s annual Turkey Distribution took place across Community Fresh Markets, Food Hubs, and Family Assistance deliveries. Islamic Relief USA donated 400 halal turkeys, ensuring families from many cultural and faith traditions had access to food that honored their needs.

In addition, volunteers delivered more than 250 turkeys and full bags of Thanksgiving groceries to Family Assistance clients who face barriers to accessing food and may include seniors, single parents, and neighbors facing significant financial strain—helping many families gather around a holiday meal they were unsure they could afford.

ALIVE!'s Family Assistance Program in partnership with social workers and community organizations also leads home grocery delivery efforts for homebound neighbors, including seniors. We deliver 20 grocery orders each week with a total of 351 different households annually.

### HOUSING STABILITY THROUGH EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

When unexpected expenses or income disruptions occur, timely support can prevent a short-term challenge from becoming a long-term crisis.

This fall, the Family Assistance Program provided \$86,202 in emergency financial assistance aid to neighbors facing acute financial strain. This included 113 families who were able to remain safely in their homes as colder weather arrived, and household costs increased. For these households, assistance provided stability and breathing room during critical moments.

**Mark your calendars! The 9<sup>th</sup> annual Empty Bowls Alexandria 2026 will take place on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>.**

**Join us for an unforgettable evening as we raise funds to support ALIVE!'s critical programs.**

Empty Bowls is a global movement to support non-profits that work to prevent food insecurity. Since 2017, ALIVE! has hosted Empty Bowls Alexandria, bringing our community together to ensure nobody faces crisis alone.

✦ Beth El Hebrew Congregation

📅 Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> 2026

🕒 7:00pm–9:00pm (Doors Open at 6:30pm)



## LIVING IN STABILITY AND DIGNITY THROUGH FURNITURE & HOUSEWARES

A stable home requires more than shelter alone—it also requires the essentials that make daily life possible.

This fall, ALIVE!'s Furniture and Housewares Program delivered 570 pieces of essential furniture to 112 households, including beds, tables, seating, and storage. These items supported rest, routines, and shared family space.

This work complements ALIVE!'s broader housing stability efforts, including eviction prevention and short-term financial assistance. Your generosity makes this possible by supporting delivery logistics, truck maintenance, and the careful coordination required to place donated furniture with families who need it.

## CLIENT SERVICES, AND CLIENT ADVOCACY

Part of our work is helping neighbors navigate assistance systems that are often complex, fragmented, and difficult to access. Connecting people to services and standing alongside our neighbors as allies and advocates is essential to their long-term stability.

Throughout the fall, ALIVE! staff and volunteers connected neighbors to healthcare, public benefits, education, and other community resources. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but it plays a critical role

in helping families move forward. Sometimes support happens through trusted partnerships at our Community Food Hubs and distributions. For example, the Animal Welfare League consistently provides pet food and supplies at Community Fresh Market distributions, helping families care for every member of their household.

Advocacy also means making sure the experiences of the people we serve are understood by those who can help remove barriers and create solutions. Many of our clients are underrepresented, and ALIVE! works to ensure their voices and lived realities are reflected in community conversations.

To that end, ALIVE! engages with local leaders to share what we see every day and what it takes to meet growing needs. This fall, that included separate tours of our facilities with Congressman Don Beyer and Councilmember Abdel Elnoubi. While ALIVE! is a nonpartisan nonprofit, it is vital that we share our work with our government and community leaders so that people can see our programs firsthand and learn directly from staff and volunteers about the challenges facing Alexandrians.

Behind the scenes, ALIVE! remains engaged in city, state, and regional coalitions and works closely with nearly 100 partner organizations including nonprofits, communities of faith, and local government. Together, we strengthen coordination, reduce gaps in services, and help ensure community needs are understood and addressed.

# ACTS OF KINDNESS: NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

None of this work happens alone. From food drives and fundraising to furniture deliveries and volunteer service, the impact of ALIVE!'s activities this fall reflects a community that continues to show up for one another.

The following section recognizes the many congregations, schools, businesses, volunteers, and partners whose generosity and service made this work possible through the quarter ending December 31<sup>st</sup>.



ALIVE! Staff and Volunteers attend the November City Council meeting alongside representatives from the Del Ray Turkey Trot Declaration

## FOOD & FUND DRIVES:

- Agudas Achim Congregation\*
- Beth El Hebrew Congregation\*
- Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church\*
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church\*
- First Baptist Church Of Alexandria\*
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church\*
- Trinity United Methodist Church\*
- Old Presbyterian Meeting House\*

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Excel Preparatory Elementary School raised funds for ALIVE! by selling decorated pumpkins—thank you for turning creativity into care!
- Common Hearth Bakery nourished our community by donating fresh bread to ALIVE!—perfect for those cold days when a warm meal matters most.
- Queens for a Cause and Del Ray Pizzeria combined entertainment and generosity to raise funds and collect food donations for neighbors in need.

## CONGREGATION & COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER FURNITURE TEAMS

- Bookstore Movers
- Christ Church Alexandria\*
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church\*
- First Christian Church\*
- Fairlington United Methodist Church\*
- Homeless Outreach team from South County High School
- Rotary Club Alexandria Central

## OTHER SERVICE & VOLUNTEERISM

- Alfred Street Baptist Church - Discipleship Group 27
- CIGIC, Dominion NOVA – Outreach Team
- Girl Scouts Troop 60241
- United Bank
- Chi Upsilon Sigma National Latin Sorority Inc.
- American Red Cross - Northern Virginia Chapter
- Community Praise Church
- West End Wellness Center at Alexandria CSB
- Agape Embassy Ministries - Hands of Hope
- Flatiron Dragados
- Washington DC South Missionaries
- Troop 53163
- Villanova University Alumni Club of Greater Washington DC
- Theta Rho Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- APSU USA Inc
- AIHA Future Leaders Institute
- NAVFAC Washington
- Empowered Anchor
- NMRTC Fort Belvoir First Class Petty Officer Association
- Contempo Nova Apartments/Sage Ventures
- Mason At Van Dorn

**Note:** This is just a small peek at the kindness ALIVE! receives every day. Follow us on social media to see even more! If we missed your group by accident, please email [commsmg@alive-inc.org](mailto:commsmg@alive-inc.org) and we'll be sure to feature you in the next *ALIVE!Wire*.



# GET INVOLVED

Your actions make a difference. Whether it is organizing a food drive, volunteering your time, or donating, every effort helps ensure our neighbors have the support they need. Here's how you can join us:



## Start a Food & Fund Drive

Organize a drive and help stock ALIVE!'s shelves. Learn more at [alive-inc.org/foodandfunddrive](https://alive-inc.org/foodandfunddrive).



## Volunteer Your Time

Lend a hand and make a difference. Sign up at [alive-inc.org/volunteer](https://alive-inc.org/volunteer).



## Donate Today

Your gift provides food, housing, and hope. Give now at [alive-inc.org/donate](https://alive-inc.org/donate).



United States Senate Federal Credit Union presents ALIVE! with a 10,000 check donation.

## ALIVE! MISSION POSSIBLE PARTNERS SPOTLIGHT

Through *Mission Possible Partners*, ALIVE!'s Corporate Supporters Program, local businesses play a vital role in caring for Alexandria neighbors. Here are just a few highlights from this fall:

- HRP Group donated \$2,500 to provide pies for Community Food Hub participants and Family Assistance clients from ARHA.
- ALIVE! continued as the anchor charity of the Old Town Festival of Speed and Style, which raised \$15,000 for our work.
- United States Senate Federal Credit Union paired a community food drive with a \$10,000 donation.
- The Del Ray Business Association supported ALIVE! through the +Del Ray Turkey Trot, contributing \$15,000 from this year's race, and named ALIVE! as the 2025 beneficiary of the Del Ray Candy Cane Bar Crawl.

Businesses and organizations interested in joining *Mission Possible Partners* can learn more at [alive-inc.org/corporatesupport](https://alive-inc.org/corporatesupport) or contact [development@alive-inc.org](mailto:development@alive-inc.org) or (703) 837-9300.

# TALES FROM THE HUB

## GETTING TO KNOW THE COMMUNITY

By Guillermo Cuellar, Client Services and Outreach Coordinator



While working with ALIVE!, I have had the privilege of meeting families from so many different places, from Philadelphia to Argentina to Ukraine. Each person carries a whole world of stories with them. Sitting with them, talking with them, even for a few minutes, feels like getting a small piece of their culture right there in one spot.

Because of that closeness, I sometimes hear stories that echo my own family's past—especially my grandfather's. He left home at just 13 years old, moving from one place to another to give his family a better life. When I listen to the people here talk about their journeys, I see that same determination in their eyes: tireless work, sacrifices, dreams for their children.

Growing up, food was never something we lacked, but in my family, we always lived by one saying: food is something you never turn away from anyone. That value stays with me, especially in this work.

At the front desk, when I hear an accent or see an ID, I can't help but ask about their culture. If it's a Honduran ID, I know from the numbers which part they're from, and soon we're swapping stories. One time, I met someone who had lived just two blocks from where my grandparents once lived. The world can feel so small in those moments.

I see familiar traits everywhere—in their work ethic, in the way they fight for the best future possible for their families.

I wish people outside of ALIVE! could see what I see: that the people we serve are not defined by their hardships, but by their humanity. They feel the same joys, frustrations, and hopes we all do. Right now, they may be facing challenges that others have never had to face, but that's only part of their story. Our role is to walk alongside them, to help them navigate those challenges, and to show them that kindness, dignity, and opportunity can open doors to a different future.

Community, in one or two sentences, would be: *a place where people meet each other with kindness first, where stories and cultures are shared, and where we lift each other up so that no one has to face life's challenges alone.*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guillermo Cuellar is a Client Services and Outreach Coordinator at the Del Ray Food Hub, supporting neighbors with food, and access to other resources, as well as managing daily operations. He is committed to building trust and providing compassionate, culturally responsive support for Alexandria families.

### Our Services



#### Community Food Hubs:

Free mini-market style storefronts where people can select groceries based on their household size and preferences. While there, people can connect with ALIVE! Service Navigators or Volunteers to access additional support or information.



#### Family Assistance:

Emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical bills, and other essential needs to prevent homelessness.

*Referral Required*



#### Furniture:

Essential furniture items for families transitioning into stable housing.

*Referral Required*



#### Housewares:

Kitchen supplies, linens, and household necessities to help families outfit their homes.

*Referral Required*



#### ALIVE! House:

Transitional housing and support services for women and families experiencing homelessness in Alexandria.

*Referral Required*



**Save the Date**  
**April 22, 2026**

Stand with our Alexandria neighbors and help ensure families have the essential support they need to build stability and live with dignity.

Your action creates change.

Your generosity strengthens our community.

Visit [spring2action.org](http://spring2action.org) to start your own fundraiser to support ALIVE! or make a gift.

# SUSTAINING THE MISSION

## PUTTING DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS TO WORK

By Denise Taylor, Development Committee Chair



ALIVE! staff collect food from a Navy Federal Credit Union food drive.



Young neighbors received free vision screenings from our community partner, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington.

As the new year begins, many ALIVE! supporters are deciding how to put their donor-advised funds (DAFs) to work—often funded at the end of last year and activated now to support neighbors.

"Our synagogue participates in ALIVE!, so we'd see food drives," shared Rosemarie Meyers. "That's how we became aware of the organization. It's a great idea—it supports your community."

"ALIVE!'s work is so local," she added. "We really wanted to support the community—people who were here, and suddenly the rug was pulled out from under them."

For Rosemarie and Bob Meyers, using a donor-advised fund made regular giving simple.

"You can program it, and you know the support gets done," Rosemarie explained. "It makes it easier to give regularly rather than trying to remember one-off donations."

Bob reflected on the value of local action. "Local organizations are on the ground. They see where the needs are in ways larger systems just can't."

Another ALIVE! supporter, Kristin Stephen, uses her donor-advised fund to align her values with consistent support.

"Once the fund is set up, it's easy to make grants throughout the year," she shared. "I choose to support ALIVE! because I know what good work and critical support they provide."

Donor-advised funds offer a flexible way to give with intention—helping ensure ALIVE! can respond quickly when neighbors need food, housing stability, or emergency assistance.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Denise Taylor has served as ALIVE!'s Development Committee Chair since 2024. She is also the Director of Mid-Level Giving at American Rivers and is passionate about building strong donor relationships that advance mission-driven work.

### Already Have a Donor-Advised Fund?

#### What you'll need to support ALIVE!:

- **Legal name:** Alive, Inc.
- **EIN:** 54-0914017
- **Address:** 2723 King St., Alexandria, VA 22302
- **Status:** 501(c)(3) public charity

#### Giving options:

One-time or recurring grants (monthly, quarterly, or annually)

#### Planning ahead:

You can name ALIVE! as a DAF beneficiary to support neighbors well into the future.

#### Help us say thank you:

DAF gifts often arrive without contact info. Please let us know when you recommend a grant.

#### Learn more

development@alive-inc.org  
(703) 837-9300

# Welcome

## OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS

ALIVE! welcomes four full-time staff members who are strengthening our capacity to serve Alexandrians facing food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs. Each brings unique skills, energy, and commitment to our mission—and we're excited to introduce them to you.



### ALICIA BELTRAN, SERVICE NAVIGATOR

Alicia helps the neighbors we serve navigate local and government systems, providing direct support at ALIVE!'s Community Food Hubs and monthly Community Fresh Market distribution events. Her work ensures neighbors can access food and services with dignity and care.

*"I enjoy working at ALIVE! because I love helping people that are directly in my community. It makes my day when I can see the positive impact I have on people's lives!"*

♥ **Fun Fact:** She enjoys practicing yoga in her free time.



### REYNARD EAGLIN, ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reynard oversees ALIVE!'s operations, client services, and programming teams, helping ensure that our programs run smoothly and effectively in support of Alexandrians facing food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs.

*"I love working for ALIVE! because of its mission and people. ALIVE! fills a vital need in our community and exemplifies neighbors helping neighbors to improve lives in Alexandria. The leadership, staff, and volunteers put the mission into action every day, and it feels good to work alongside such a dedicated and passionate team. I take pride in knowing my work supports basic human needs and creates meaningful impact. I'm also leaving a legacy behind that is bigger than me."*

♥ **Fun Fact:** He loves unwinding by being silly and playing with his two-year-old daughter, getting to do all the things he did—and didn't get to do—as a child.



### ALEXANDRA (ALEX) REES, DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

Alex supports ALIVE!'s fundraising events, including *Empty Bowls Alexandria* and *StepALIVE!*, and helps strengthen community partnerships. Her work includes supporting ALIVE!'s new corporate recognition program, *Mission Possible Partners*, which connects local businesses and organizations to our mission.

*"I love working for ALIVE! because the team is committed to and works hard to ensure everyone in our community has access to food, housing, and stability. The dedication of the staff, board members, committee members, and volunteers always inspire me!"*

♥ **Fun Fact:** She's a stationery enthusiast and avid crafter who loves embroidery, knitting, and paper crafts.



### GRACE TERLINDEN, COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE

Grace supports ALIVE!'s communications and storytelling efforts by helping share the experiences of neighbors facing hardship and illustrating how ALIVE!'s programs provide stability and connection. She assists with content for newsletters, emails, the website, and social media, helping ensure that information about ALIVE!'s services, programs, and impact is clear, timely, and community centered.

*"I love working for ALIVE! because I'm surrounded by people dedicated to making an impact in their community by providing essential services for Alexandrians facing basic needs insecurity."*

♥ **Fun Fact:** She loves reading memoirs and classic literature—and read more than 60 books in 2025.

**Together, these new team members are helping ALIVE! expand our reach and deepen our impact across Alexandria.**





Photo Credit: Lois Kebe



Founded in 1969, ALIVE! is the oldest and largest nonprofit serving Alexandrians facing food and housing insecurity. With support from 50 member congregations of different faiths, thousands of volunteers, and caring neighbors like you, ALIVE! helps more than 20,000 people each month access groceries, financial assistance, and other essential support.

Together, we're neighbors helping neighbors, and building a more compassionate and connected Alexandria—where no one has to face crisis alone.

703-837-9300 | [info@alive-inc.org](mailto:info@alive-inc.org) | [www.alive-inc.org](http://www.alive-inc.org)



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*A newly renovated space designed for privacy, dignity, and stability for women and families rebuilding their lives.*
- **ALIVE! at 57:** Growing Into the Future While Staying True to Our Roots (Page 4)  
*From serving 5,000 families a year to 5,000 a month—how ALIVE! is strengthening systems to meet rising need.*
- **StepALIVE! '25:** New Routes, Stronger Community (Page 6)  
*A new route, a government shutdown—and a community that still showed up. See how Alexandria raised \$125,000 together.*
- **Driving Impact:** How ALIVE!'s First Truck-A-Palooza Delivered Stability (Page 9)  
*See how ALIVE!'s first Truck-A-Palooza helped volunteers gain confidence behind the wheel—so more families could receive beds, tables, and everyday essentials when they need them most.*
- **When Neighbors Show Up:** Responding to Growing Need Across Alexandria (Page 10)  
*ALIVE! Turkey deliveries to local families increased 35% this year. What rising costs mean for our community—and how volunteers responded.*
- **Community in Action:** Supporting Stability, Strengthening Community (Page 11)  
*From food access and emergency financial assistance to housing stability, ALIVE! Program Director Tim Enright shares how ALIVE! supported hundreds of households this past fall—and what growing demand means for Alexandria neighbors.*
- **Tales from the Hub:** Getting to Know the Community (Page 15)  
*A personal reflection from an ALIVE! Service Navigator on culture, connection, and seeing neighbors beyond their hardship.*
- **Sustaining the Mission:** Putting Donor-Advised Funds to Work (Page 16)  
*How supporters are using donor-advised funds and recurring gifts to ensure ALIVE! can respond when it matters most.*

