



ALIVE!Wire

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Alexandria, Virginia



HOUSING STABILITY, CLEARLY DEFINED:

WHY PREVENTION, DIGNITY, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT MATTERS FOR ALEXANDRIANS

By Dr. Reynard Eaglin, Assistant Executive Director



Teresa* works full time and lives in Alexandria with her two children. Under normal circumstances, she can cover her rent and bills, but when her work hours were unexpectedly reduced for a single month, her smaller paychecks quickly put her behind. Although her hours returned soon after, the missed portion of her rent and an overdue utility bill left her in a hole she couldn't climb out of on her own – especially without savings to absorb the setback. During this time, Teresa

began visiting one of ALIVE!'s Community Food Hubs each month. The supplemental groceries helped offset food costs, allowing her to direct limited income towards paying the overdue utility bill.

When Teresa came to the Hub, she was met with kindness – not judgment. Rather than being asked why she was struggling, she was asked what had changed. As trust built over the course of her visits, Teresa felt comfortable sharing more about life at home, including that she was a month behind on rent and that her children were sharing a bed while she slept on the couch after prioritizing rent and bills over basic furniture. With this full picture ALIVE! was able to step in with rental assistance from the Financial Assistance Program and connected to the Furniture Program that provided donated furniture, helping transform her apartment into the livable home. What could have become a long term crisis was resolved through small, meaningful steps – welcoming Teresa without judgment and providing timely support before a temporary setback became something more.

Teresa's story is one example of what housing stability means at ALIVE!. At its core, housing stability means ensuring every family in our community remains safely housed in a livable home, with access to the essentials many of us take for granted. ALIVE!'s approach is intentionally client centered: we listen first and shape our response around what people tell us they need. We work to address challenges such as overdue rent and utility shutoffs – issues that all too often push households toward crisis. Stabilizing housing means preventing displacement today while helping families build stability for tomorrow.

FIXING WHAT IS SMALL NOW LEADS TO A BETTER TOMORROW

When someone is living paycheck to paycheck, even a small disruption can quickly escalate into a serious problem. What starts as one missed payment can result in a late fee, then another unpaid bill, followed by an emergency car repair limiting the ability to work regularly and making it harder to pay another bill- starting a cycle and creating more debt. ALIVE! works directly with a network of supporters – including community partners, 50 member congregations, and the City of Alexandria – to intervene early, before challenges compound.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TODAY MEANS STABILITY TOMORROW

ALIVE!'s financial assistance initiative is designed to prevent emergencies before they escalate by helping families stay current on essential expenses such as rent, utilities, and medical bills. By stepping in at the right time, ALIVE! helps ensure a temporary setback does not become a long term crisis. This work is managed by the Financial Assistance Program – a dedicated group of trained volunteers who review each request with care, fairness, and respect. Committee members complete bias and civil rights training and evaluate each situation through a client centered lens, always focused on preventing displacement and stabilizing families whenever possible.

"Our volunteers see firsthand how quickly a family's situation can unravel from a single disruption," said Mary Eileen Dixon, Co-Chair of ALIVE!'s Family Financial Assistance Committee. "We approach every application with compassion and care, but at the end of the day, we are making decisions with finite resources. Knowing we can't help every family weighs heavily on us—but we remain deeply committed to using what we have in the most equitable and impactful way possible."

Her perspective reflects the reality behind ALIVE!'s housing stability work: a balance of empathy, responsibility, and urgency. It highlights the broader challenge the organization faces as demand for financial support continues to outpace available resources.

"Rising costs have required us to narrow our family assistance program, limiting how many people we can serve," said Jennifer Ayers, Executive Director. "Even so, our mission remains steadfast – to do what we can to meet every need and grow our capacity with community support."

FOOD SUPPORT BECOMES ONE LESS THING TO WORRY ABOUT

ALIVE!'s Food Program plays a quiet but meaningful role in housing stability. When families can reliably access groceries, they are better able to prioritize rent, utilities, and other housing costs during periods of financial strain. By reducing the pressure of choosing between food and paying a bill, food assistance helps families preserve limited resources, stabilize their budgets, and remain housed.

BASIC HOUSEHOLD ITEMS ADD DIGNITY AND STABILITY

For households on the edge of displacement or recovering from a major financial setback, even the most basic household items can be out of

reach. A family may move into a new apartment with nothing but their clothes, facing empty rooms and bare floors.

ALIVE!'s furniture and housewares programs transform these empty spaces into livable homes. Beds provide the rest children need to succeed in school. Tables create spaces for families to share meals and reconnect. Dressers, cookware, and basic household supplies bring comfort, order, and dignity to daily life. These items – small on their own – collectively help families settle in, rebuild routines, and begin living fully in their new environment.

Most of this support comes through generous community donations, allowing families to turn empty apartments into functional homes. When essential items aren't available from community donations, ALIVE! steps in to purchase what a family needs – because stability can't wait.



"As a furniture volunteer, you see how much basic items matter," said Nancy Lopez, Chair of ALIVE!'s Furniture Program. "We recently helped a woman caring for six children after they lost all their belongings. Their town home was completely empty. Being able to provide twin beds and mattresses

for the children meant they finally had a safe, comfortable place to sleep. Mom also received a bed. We brought dressers where they could store their clothes, a kitchen table and chairs, and a big sofa for their living room. It wasn't just furniture – it was the first step toward restoring normalcy and security for that family."

AFTER THE INTERVENTION, ALIVE! OFFERS ONGOING SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

Once an immediate crisis is addressed, families are often left navigating complex systems – benefits applications, healthcare access, school enrollment, childcare, employment services, disability support, and more. Much of ALIVE!'s work happens quietly behind the scenes, as staff help families connect with programs supporting long-term stability by matching resources with personal requests and needs. Through warm handoffs to social workers and case managers whenever possible, ALIVE! helps ensure neighbors receive ongoing care rather than short-term fixes. This continuity allows families to stay on their feet after a bill is paid or furniture is delivered.

Housing stabilization is ultimately about *dignity* – supporting people not only in crisis, but throughout their journey toward stability. By combining direct assistance with long-term navigation services, ALIVE! surrounds families with the resources and relationships they need to thrive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Reynard Eaglin joined ALIVE! in October 2025 as the first Assistant Executive Director. He brings more than 20 years of experience serving children and families in the DMV area and has a doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of Maryland. He oversees the Operations, Volunteer and program, and Client Services teams. His leadership allows ALIVE! to strengthen our operational efficiency and to better serve our clients.

**Name has been changed to protect participant privacy*

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

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)

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Justin Wilson

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For a full list of all ALIVE!'s Board Members, Member Congregations, Program Chairs and Staff Leadership visit: alive-inc.org

STANDING WITH OUR YOUNGEST NEIGHBORS

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As summer arrives and the school year draws to a close, many Alexandrian families begin preparing for a familiar transition. For many children and teens in Alexandria, that may include adjusting to uncertainty without the additional support and stability school provides. When school doors close, so does most support that helps young people stay nourished, stable, and secure throughout the year.

While children and teens are often affected most directly by food insecurity and family instability, they are not always the ones who feel comfortable seeking support. Some worry about stigma or judgment; others simply don't know that organizations like ALIVE! are here to help them or their families. These invisible barriers can leave young people struggling silently during weekends, school breaks, and summer months.

ALIVE! is frequently asked to support students when school is not in session. This year, limited capacity has made it difficult to consistently meet those needs. At the same time, this reality highlights an important opportunity: meaningful support is often needed most not during the school day, but during long school closures, weekends, and afterschool hours – when safety nets are thinnest and community-based support is both most critical and most difficult to sustain.

It is deeply important to us that every young person feels welcomed, protected, and respected when seeking support – without fear or hesitation. That is why ALIVE! is working to create spaces and programs where children and teens feel included. From more inviting areas for children at our Community Food Hubs to partnerships that promote healthy childhood development such as being part of the Kids' First Year Collective, ALIVE! plays a role to strengthen family stability with the goal of ensuring no one is invisible when help is needed.

Support during the school year matters as well. ALIVE! is evaluating how to expand community partnerships to bring youth-focused resources directly to families – whether through schools or through organizations serving young people outside the classroom. Collaborations help children and teens feel connected to a community that believes in them and makes it easier to access support where they are.

Our work is guided by a simple truth: children and teens represent our future. They deserve not only food and shelter, but also the reassurance that their community stands behind them. When young people feel safe, supported, and valued, the entire city grows stronger.

I am deeply proud of what ALIVE! has accomplished alongside our supporters, congregations, partners, and neighbors. As funding landscapes shift, our mission remains steady. By standing with young people and families today – on weekends, during school breaks, and throughout the year – we build a more compassionate and resilient Alexandria for tomorrow.

Neighbors helping neighbors – especially our youngest – remains at the heart of ALIVE!'s mission.

With Heart and Hustle,

Carlton Willis
Board President

CHANGING OUTCOMES STARTS WITH US

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Across the country, major changes to programs like Medicaid and SNAP are reshaping how low-income households access essential support. These shifts are already being felt here in Alexandria.

ALIVE! has long stepped in when benefits fall short. And in Alexandria – where a family of four needs about \$140,000 a year just to meet basic expenses – those gaps are significant. Many federal workers earn far below this and were turning to ALIVE! for help long before recent workforce reductions. In addition, most ALIVE! clients earn too much to qualify for government assistance or fall outside eligibility standards altogether. Those who do qualify are receiving less support while their need for support grows.

People who are older, younger, or new to the U.S. will face added hurdles, and their resilience inspires me. I often think of the one line from the Broadway show *Hamilton*, that proudly declares "Immigrants, we get the job done." Yet today, even families with strong work ethics and education feel the strain more quickly. Savings are harder to build, and unexpected setbacks hit harder. A recent Washington Post article highlighted that Generation X is now among the most financially burdened, often caring for both aging parents and young children while still paying off their own debts. One missed paycheck could have devastating consequences and ripple across older and younger generations.

ALIVE! was never designed to replace government programs like SNAP, but as an organization to fill the gaps to keep people stable. We provide supplemental food and support within an already strained safety net system. While we do well with what we have, we are stretching the limits of our capacity to serve. Only about one third of the households we serve receive SNAP benefits, and even with that support, they struggle to cover the true cost of living in Alexandria. If SNAP benefits are reduced or families lose access, nonprofits like ALIVE! cannot absorb additional need.

What ALIVE! will always do is respond with compassion, dignity, and practical support, working alongside the many nonprofits and neighbors who share this commitment. Our collective impact becomes even more important as we seek meaningful ways each of us can strengthen our community: checking on neighbors, donating food, volunteering, or giving financially. Every contribution helps us reach more people, more often.

As we look forward, let's do so with optimism and belief that when we work together great things can be accomplished. ALIVE! will always strive to continue to be a place where every person is met with respect, where no one is judged by their circumstances, and where the gaps – no matter the cause – are filled with care and community.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer Ayers".

Jennifer Ayers, MPA
Executive Director

October 18, 2026
SAVE THE DATE

ALIVE!
50 Years of Neighbors Helping Neighbors
ALIVE-inc.org

45th ANNUAL StepALIVE! WALKATHON
2026

Lace up and get moving for a great cause! StepALIVE! brings the Alexandria community together to take steps toward ending hunger in our city.

Registration and fundraising are open now.
The earlier you start, the more neighbors you can help.

alive-inc.org/stepalive

HOW CHILDREN AND TEENS CAN MAKE AN IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITY

By Grace Terlinden, Communications Associate

Kids and teens across Alexandria are already playing an essential role in helping ALIVE! support families facing food insecurity. With creativity, energy, and a willingness to take initiative, young people are helping strengthen our community in meaningful ways. Whether it's through school, a sports team, a youth group, or something started at home, young people can take the lead – and often inspire others to get involved along the way.

One of the most powerful ways children and teens can help is by organizing food drives. Working with classmates, teammates, or neighbors, they may collect non-perishable items to help stock ALIVE!'s Community Food Hubs and public distributions. Even small efforts can grow quickly when people work together, and these drives help ensure families have access to the groceries they need.

Volunteering is another way young people can get involved. Older teens (under 18) can help sort donations, pack groceries, or support distributions when accompanied by an adult. Younger children can contribute from home by assembling hygiene or school supply kits, or leading small projects with family or friends. These experiences offer a chance to better understand local needs and see how individual actions contribute to a larger community effort.

At the same time, youth involvement brings something unique. It builds confidence, encourages leadership, and helps create a culture where caring for neighbors becomes part of everyday life.

MORE WAYS KIDS AND TEENS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Beyond food drives and volunteering, there are many creative, age-appropriate ways for children and teens to support ALIVE! and learn about community service:

Neighborhood "Change for Change" Jar (Easy – Great for All Ages)

Students decorate a donation jar and ask neighbors or family members to contribute spare coins over a week or two. It's a simple way to practice talking about ALIVE!'s mission and how small acts add up.

Social Media Education Series (Challenging – High School)

Teens with an interest in media or advocacy can create short videos, infographics, or posts explaining food insecurity in Alexandria and how ALIVE! supports families. This builds research, communication, and digital storytelling skills.

School-Wide Donation Drive – needs some help from adults, easy to do at PTA events, afterschool programs or special events.

High schoolers can coordinate with administrators to host a week-long drive with collection bins, flyers, and morning announcements. It's a great leadership project that can bring in hundreds of items.



DIY Hygiene or Snack Kits (Moderate – Middle & High School)

Students assemble small kits with items like toothbrushes, soap, socks, or snacks for ALIVE!'s outreach efforts. High schoolers can research cost per kit and seek sponsors to help fund supplies.



Young ALIVE! volunteers hand out fresh food at a community food distribution.

"Business Partnership" Give-Back Night (Expert – High School)

Students partner with a local business – like a pizza shop or ice cream parlor – to host a fundraising night where a portion of sales supports ALIVE!. This teaches professional communication, event planning, and community engagement.

LOOKING AHEAD

Whether it's collecting a few items, organizing a project, or simply inviting others to get involved, every action contributes to a stronger community. When young people take part, they're not only helping meet immediate needs – they're helping shape a future where neighbors continue to look out for one another.

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.

EVERYDAY MOMENTS AT THE COMMUNITY FOOD HUBS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

By Kathy Castro, Volunteer Coordinator & Client Services Assistant



ALIVE! staff member, Kathy, handing out backpacks with supplies to children in need.

My experiences working at both Community Food Hubs have helped me grow in my role and better understand the different families who walk through our doors each day. Each Hub presents a unique culture, rhythm, and story, and by having the opportunity to be a part of both locations, I have been able to make connections with families from a variety of backgrounds.

Through these experiences, I've learned how important it is to approach every interaction with respect, openness, and cultural awareness. I've enjoyed learning about different cultural needs, whether it's food preferences, traditions, or ways families care for one another.

Those people have opened my perspective in ways I didn't expect. I didn't expect people to trust me, but overtime, I've been able to build trust with families. What started as brief interactions have grown into familiar faces, conversations, and genuine relationships. Families start to recognize you, and even the kids get more comfortable – saying “hi,” waving, sometimes running over to show you a book they picked out.

I really enjoy making connections with the kids. While their families shop, the kids can spend time reading. At the Van Dorn Community Food Hub, there's space for them to sit and explore books together, and at the Mount Vernon Community Food Hub it's a smaller bookshelf they love picking from. Sometimes it's as simple as talking about a story or helping them choose a book, but my interaction with them as not just an ALIVE! Staff Member, but a friend makes it worth the extra minute or so to make a connection. One of the biggest things this work has taught me is even though families come from very different backgrounds, everyone is just trying to take care of the people they love. This connection transcends our languages and backgrounds.

This work is about so much more than handing out food. It's about creating a space where people feel comfortable, respected, and welcome as soon as they walk in. Being part of both Food Hubs has shown me that trust is really at the heart of everything we do. When families feel welcomed and understood, the work feels real – and that's what makes it worth it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathy Castro has been with ALIVE! since March 2023. She began as a Service Navigator at the Mount Vernon Food Hub and later helped lead operations at the West End Food Hub. In her current role as Volunteer Coordinator & Client Services Assistant, she supports more than 1,000 volunteers and helps ensure quality service for over 20,000 neighbors each year.



ALIVE! volunteers in our Mount Vernon Community Food Hub.

Sustaining the Mission: Workplace Giving That Goes Further

By Denise Taylor, Development Committee Chair

For many supporters, giving to ALIVE! begins as a personal choice. Workplace giving makes it easier to turn that choice into a consistent, sustained impact – while often increasing the value of each gift.

Many employers offer payroll deductions, matching gift programs, or employee giving campaigns through platforms like Benevity, YourCause, or United Way. These options allow you to contribute in smaller, recurring amounts that add up over time. Even more powerful, many companies will match your donation – sometimes doubling or tripling your impact at no additional cost.

For ALIVE!, this kind of steady support matters. Consistent funding helps ensure that groceries are available at our Community Food Hubs, that emergency financial assistance can be deployed quickly, and that families facing unexpected challenges have a place to turn. It allows us to plan and respond when needs arise.

Workplace giving also strengthens the connection between local businesses and the community. When employers and employees give together, it reflects a shared investment in ensuring neighbors across Alexandria have access to food, stable housing, and essential support.

If your employer offers a workplace giving program, getting started is simple:

- Check if your employer matches charitable gifts
- Designate ALIVE! through your workplace campaign
- Use our EIN: 54-0914017
- Notify our Development team at development@alive-inc.org or (703) 837-9300



You can also support ALIVE! through:

- Combined Federal Campaign (CFC): #44658
- United Way National Capital Area: #8352

Workplace giving is one of the most accessible ways to sustain ALIVE!'s mission. Together, these steady contributions ensure we can keep showing up day after day for our neighbors when it matters most.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Denise Taylor has served as ALIVE!'s Development Committee Chair since 2024. She is the Director of Mid-Level Giving at American Rivers and is passionate about building strong donor relationships and advancing mission-driven work. She is a member of ALIVE! Member congregation, Fairlington United Methodist Church.



WHAT OUR YOUNG NEIGHBORS ARE READING



Mount Vernon Community Food Hub Kid's Station with children's books.

While families shop for groceries at our Community Food Hubs, kids have space to slow down and enjoy a book – and even take one home with them. From picture books to early readers, these are some of the titles our young neighbors have been gravitating toward lately:

- *Dolphin Summer* by Catherine Hapka
- *Judy Moody Girl Detective* by Megan McDonald
- *Out of My Shell* by Jenny Goebel

Whether it's discovering a new favorite story or rereading a familiar one, these moments help make the Food Hubs feel welcoming for the whole family. We are so grateful to have these books donated by InspireLit, a fellow non-profit dedicated to increasing literacy across Alexandria.

COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Supporting Stability, Strengthening Community | January–March Update

By Timothy Enright, Program Director



Volunteers handing out feminine hygiene products that were donated to ALIVE!.

The year began with the familiar rhythm of post-holiday adjustment – paired with steady momentum across ALIVE!'s programs. January unfolded as a true reset month, shaped by winter weather and holiday observances briefly slowing operations without dampening progress. Community Food Hubs reopened on January 6 and weathered several short, weather-related closures along the way. Thankfully, city employees and volunteers helped ALIVE! open up quickly after the ice-storm allowing us to continue serving people who needed food.

Even with some closures, ALIVE! continued to respond with flexibility and care. From food access and emergency financial assistance to furniture deliveries and community partnerships, your support helped ensure Alexandria neighbors could still count on a steady source of help when they needed it most.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND SUPPORT

ALIVE!'s Community Food Hubs continue to serve as more than places to access groceries – they are vital spaces where neighbors connect to resources, services, and one another. Throughout the quarter, 641 neighbors engaged with trusted community partners through 47 partner-led events hosted directly at the hubs.

JANUARY

221 neighbors participated in 15 partner events, including HIV education sessions.

FEBRUARY

175 neighbors connected through 12 events, highlighted by healthy cooking demonstrations in partnership with the **Virginia Cooperative Extension**.

MARCH

245 neighbors participated across 20 events, including 58 neighbors who attended additional healthy cooking demonstrations.

These partnerships help ensure a visit for food can become a meaningful point of connection to health education, nutrition support, and other critical services.

ALIVE! expanded opportunities supporting longer-term stability for families. In partnership with **the United States Senate Federal Credit Union**, we hosted a financial workshop focused on practical tools for managing expenses and planning. For families with young children, partnerships with **Kids' First Years** supported a preschool initiative to promote early learning, and **the Center for Alexandria's Children** joined us to host a playgroup at the hubs.

Beyond the Food Hubs, ALIVE! strengthened community outreach by participating in a Community Resources Fair at George Washington Middle School, reaching 200 students with food and information about ongoing support available across Alexandria. These students – already engaged in the Commission on Youth's Child Youth Study – identified food access and affordability as two of the most significant challenges facing our community, reinforcing the importance of ALIVE!'s work.



IMPACT Snapshot:

Food Access in Alexandria

Across the first three months of the year, ALIVE! distributed 317,386 pounds of free groceries to Alexandrians facing food insecurity.

In January, 80,616 pounds of free groceries were distributed despite weather-related closures and scheduling delays. In February, that number rose to 104,037 pounds of free groceries, equivalent to 83,230 meals. March brought a significant increase, with 132,733 pounds of free groceries distributed, equivalent to 106,186 meals.

HOUSING STABILITY THROUGH EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

When a family is struggling to keep up with rent, utilities, or other urgent household costs, timely assistance can make the difference between stability and crisis.

In January, ALIVE! distributed \$20,791 in emergency financial assistance, including support for 19 households with gas or electric bills. In February, \$19,417.75 was distributed, including rent assistance that helped 24 households remain housed. In March, ALIVE! provided \$25,448.73 over the course of the month, helping 33 households stay in their homes.

These investments do more than cover bills. They help prevent eviction, reduce immediate stress, and give families breathing room to move forward.

LIVING IN STABILITY AND DIGNITY WITH FURNITURE & HOUSEWARES

A home is more than a roof – it is the space where families rest, gather, and rebuild.

In January, 40 households received essential furniture, including beds for families who previously did not have them. In February and March, continued deliveries ensured that families transitioning into stable housing had what they needed to live with dignity – places to sleep, eat, and come together.

In March, ALIVE! also hosted a housewares pop-up distribution at the Chick Armstrong Community Fresh Market, where 130 households received essential items to support daily living. These distributions help fill the gaps that often remain even after housing is secured.

Each delivery and distribution represents more than the items. It is a step toward stability, routine, and a sense of home.

Together these efforts, alongside the daily work of staff, partners, and volunteers, reflect what makes ALIVE! possible. When systems fall short or challenges arise, this community continues to show up – ensuring that neighbors are met with care, consistency, and support.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tim Enright began volunteering with ALIVE! in 2020 and joined the staff later that year. He became Program Director in July 2025, leading performance tracking, data efficiency, program coordination, and strategic volunteer engagement.



March Volunteer of the Month, Rich Walker, poses in front of ALIVE! Truck.



ALIVE! Staff, Volunteers, and Donors, pose in front of mattresses donated by the Rotary Club.

Congrats to Volunteer Alexandria 55+ Awardees: Ellen Balis and Pam Goodell

By Lynn Jordan, Volunteer Advisory Working Group Chair



The work of two ALIVE! outstanding volunteers was publicly recognized at the 45th anniversary of Volunteer Alexandria's annual volunteer celebration: Ellen Balis, a volunteer with the Housewares Program and Pam Goodell, a volunteer with the Furniture Program each received the 55+ Award.

ELLEN BALIS, ALIVE! HOUSEWARES PROGRAM VOLUNTEER

Ellen has volunteered for ALIVE!'s Housewares Program since she retired in 2021. Ellen is committed to helping families in need and making their experience with ALIVE! welcoming and positive. Ellen says some people are moving into empty apartments with kids and are very appreciative to have help to make the new space into a home. When possible, the housewares deliveries are timed to coincide with when people are moving into their new space. Basic household supplies, such as dishes, pots and pans, utensils, bed linens, etc., are common types of housewares provided.

Ellen says working in the Housewares Program allows her to meet neighbors who need help and that it makes her feel good knowing she has the power to do good in her neighborhood. "Volunteering with the ALIVE Housewares Program is meaningful work and I'm very happy doing it."

The ALIVE Housewares Program uses closet space at Fairlington United Methodist Church to store donations, which are accepted on Wednesday and Saturday mornings by appointment. Ellen says some donations come from people downsizing to smaller homes or couples who are consolidating households and don't need more than one of many common items. In general, donated items should be practical, in good condition, or gently used. Ellen notes that items such as can openers, shower curtain rings, trash cans, etc. are useful donations.



One of Ellen's most impactful experiences was when a woman gave her a hug after receiving a pot, because she could now cook.



PAM GOODELL, ALIVE! FURNITURE PROGRAM VOLUNTEER

Pam started volunteering with the Furniture Program in 2021. Pam says she likes the Furniture Program because it involves taking items which are in good shape that current owners don't need any more and giving them to people who do need them, rather than sending them to going into the trash or landfill. The Furniture Program provides an opportunity for Pam to use her organizational skills while helping other people.

Pam's thoughtful attention to the needs of families and other volunteers has strengthened the program, making a meaningful difference in their lives. Pam says, "the miracle of ALIVE! is that it not only takes the time donated by volunteers to improve the community, it also gives volunteers the opportunity to grow their skill sets and gain experience. For people interested in finding out who they are, and in shaping their identity in good ways, ALIVE! allows volunteers to spend as few or as many hours as they wish, which is part of what makes ALIVE! great. It helps volunteers to nourish themselves in a tangible way to help people."

Pam thinks everyone in Alexandria should have the experience of helping others. The clients often remark how kind the Furniture Program volunteers are and appreciate them not being judgmental. Pam says the feeling she gets when helping people can't be matched. When kids who have been sleeping on the floor are given beds or a kitchen table for a place to do their homework, you know you're helping to make their lives better. She also notes how grateful the families are who have overcome their pride to ask for help, and she has gone to homes where they've had tea and cookies prepared for the Furniture Program volunteers at the delivery time. Pam says she loves it so much, if she could work at ALIVE full-time she would.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

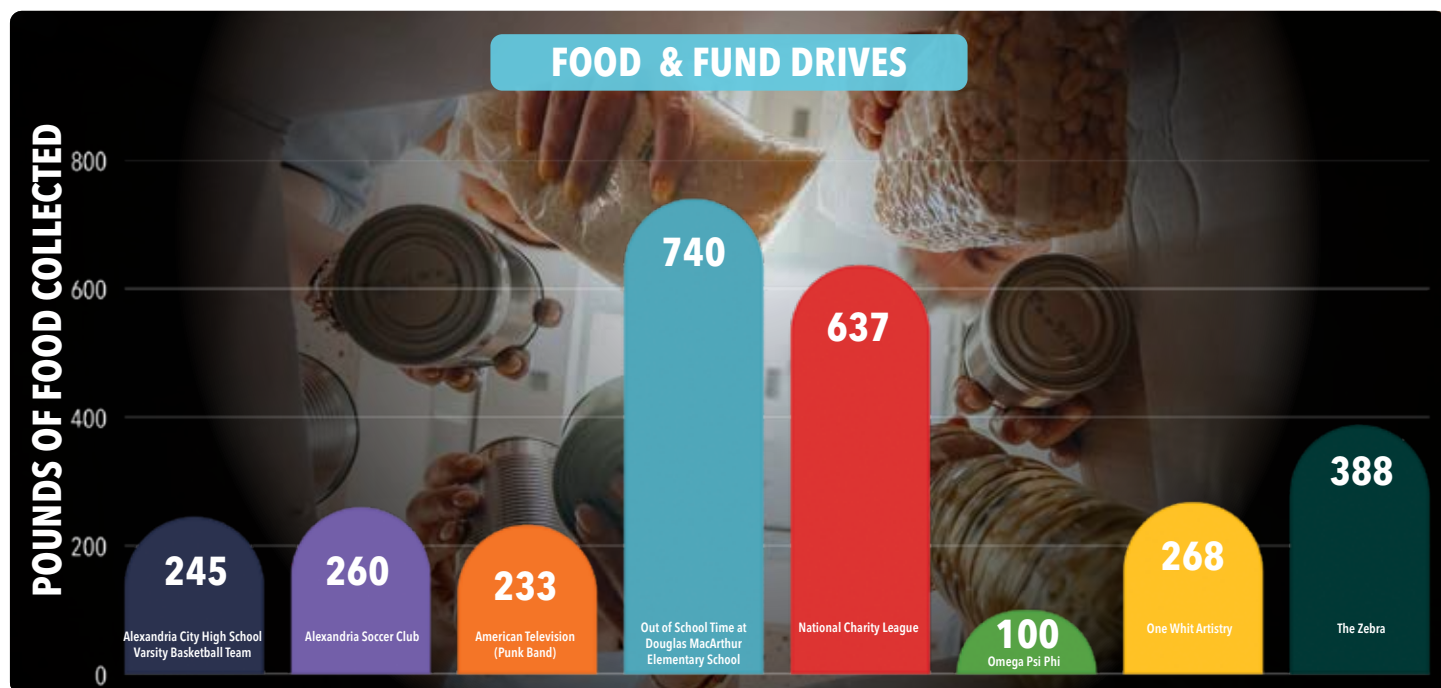
Lynn Jordan has been volunteering with ALIVE! since March 2020 and has served as the Volunteer Advisory Group Lead since Spring 2025.

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 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 March 31st.

These groups collectively gathered over 3,000 pounds of food for Alexandrians!



VOLUNTEER FURNITURE TEAMS

- Fairlington United Methodist Church
- Grace Community Church – Arlington
- King's Church – DC
- University of Michigan Alumni Group
- Zion Baptist Church

OTHER SERVICE & VOLUNTEERISM

- Burgundy Farm School
- Dominion NOVA Church's Outreach Team
- Community Praise Church
- Empowered Anchor
- Girl Scout Troup 4215
- Life Church – DC Metro
- PenFed Group
- People First Services
- Theta Rho Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- United Bank
- Washington DC South Mission



ALIVE! Volunteer handing out bread at a Community Fresh Market Distribution.



ALIVE! Volunteers handing out fresh veggies on a Saturday morning Fresh Market Distribution.



ALIVE! Volunteers handing out fresh veggies on a Saturday morning Fresh Market Distribution.



EMPTY BOWLS Alexandria 2026

By Alex Rees, Development Associate



At its heart, *Empty Bowls Alexandria* is about ensuring that neighbors across our city don't have to worry about where their next meal will come from. Before the event even began, the Alexandria community had already met – and exceeded – our fundraising goal of \$75,000. *Empty Bowls* sponsorships alone raised \$57,500, helping ensure that at least 75 Alexandria families will have reliable access to food for the next six months. By the end of the evening, a record setting \$81,979 had been raised in support of ALIVE!'s programs.

At the end of February, ALIVE! hosted the 9th Annual *Empty Bowls Alexandria*, our highly anticipated fundraising dinner. After weeks of wintery weather, guests were greeted by an unseasonably sunny Saturday and a sneak peek of spring as they gathered at Beth El Hebrew Congregation to enjoy delicious food from several of Alexandria's top restaurants. Over 214 attendees, 39 sponsors, 26 restaurant partners, and 30 volunteers were a part of this year's event at Beth El Hebrew Congregation.

The room was filled with joy, and the enthusiasm was felt all around. From the moment attendees walked in, they could admire and select their own beautiful handmade bowls crafted by artists at Alexandria Clay Coop, Scope Gallery, and Del Ray Artisans, along with bowls generously donated by individual potters.

Beyond being a true piece of craftsmanship and a souvenir of the evening, the bowls served as a powerful reminder of an often unseen need in our community.

"Every bowl here reminds us of the children who will be hungry tonight," shared Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins in her remarks to the crowd. "It also reminds us of the important role ALIVE! plays in the community to fill those empty bowls."

This sentiment resonated throughout the room and was reflected by many who attended *Empty Bowls*. When asked about the highlights of the evening, most shared that they enjoyed the lively atmosphere and the opportunity to connect with others who care deeply about ALIVE!'s mission and their neighbors.

"Although the bowls may have been empty, we left with full hearts and stomachs," shared Dan Roth, *Empty Bowls* Honorary Co-Chair and Del Ray Business Association Vice President.

Another highlight was the variety of food generously donated by local restaurant partners. Returning favorites included, shepherd's pie, from Daniel O'Connell's, avgolemono soup from Taverna Cretekou and chouquettes from Del Ray Café – just a few examples of how the restaurant community came together to support the cause.

Throughout the evening, guests could browse the many silent auction tables, all filled with delightful treats, gift cards to local businesses, and unique experiences, all kindly donated by community partners and ALIVE! member congregations.

Some of the most competitive bidding surrounded the two Del Ray baskets, comprised of gift cards kindly donated by the neighborhood's businesses.



Adding even more fun to the evening, bidders were delightfully surprised to learn that the decision to choose the T-shirt color for *StepALIVE!* 2026 and a selection of embroidered ALIVE! clothing and accessories, designed and donated by Board President Carlton Willis, were up for auction.

The Jen Walker Team returned as our presenting sponsor and other top event sponsors included Hoffman Town Center, Fairlington United Methodist Church, Micheline Eyraud, Adventures & Inspiration for Life Travel, Beth El Hebrew Congregation, Blaszkow Legal, Don Melman & Elizabeth Margosches, Patricia Sheetz and Tracy Rickett & Wendy Wysong.

This year's event welcomed nine honorary Co-Chairs from the Alexandria Community recognized for their leadership and expertise. From the restaurant community, Bill Blackburn, Scott Shaw and both Mike and Donna Anderson served. Business leaders included Charlotte Hall, Dan Roth, Joseph Haggerty, Mary Ann Burstein and Morgan Babcock.

Looking ahead, 2027 will mark the 10th annual Empty Bowl's Alexandria, a significant milestone for ALIVE!. "We have been organizing *Empty Bowls Alexandria* since 2015, pausing the event for the pandemic between 2020 and 2023" shared Jenn Ayers, Executive Director. "In that time, as a community, we have raised more than a hundred thousand that we wouldn't have otherwise for our neighbors across the city."

Tickets and sponsorships for the 10th Annual *Empty Bowls Alexandria* will be available at the end of 2026.

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.



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BOWL ARTISTS

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MUSIC

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Lois Kebe

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- Beeline Diner
- Bread & Water Company
- Cameron Cafe
- Chadwicks
- Daniel O'Connell's
- Del Ray Café
- Del Ray Pizzeria
- Effingham Winery
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- Hank's Pasta Bar
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- Mia's Italian Kitchen
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- Spice Kraft
- Sweet Fire Donna's
- Taqueria Picoso
- Taqueria Poblano

- Taverna Cretekou
- The Dairy Godmother
- UnWined
- Vola's Dockside Grill

THANK YOU TO OUR EMPTY BOWL'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY HONORARY CO-CHAIRS!

- Charlotte Hall, *Charlotte Hall Connections*
- Dan Roth, *Del Ray Business Association*
- Joseph Haggerty, *Alexandria Chamber of Commerce*
- Mary Ann Burstein, *West End Business Association*
- Morgan Babcock, *Carlyle Council*

THANK YOU TO OUR EMPTY BOWL'S RESTAURANT COMMUNITY HONORARY CO-CHAIRS!

- Bill Blackburn, *Homegrown Restaurant Group*
- Donna Anderson, *Homegrown Restaurant Group*
- Mike Anderson, *Homegrown Restaurant Group*
- Scott Shaw, *Alexandria Restaurant Partners*

THANK YOU TO OUR EMPTY BOWL'S EVENT COMMITTEE!

- Suzanne Kratzok*, Co-Chair, *Community Partnerships*
- Gayle Reuter*, Co-Chair, *Community Partnerships*
- Denise Taylor*, Co-Chair, *Silent Auction*
- Donald Cohen*, Co-Chair, *Logistics*
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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.

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