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STILL STRUGGLING

BY LUKE ELZINGA, COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

“It would be a lot harder [without the food pantry],” says Lori*, a substitute teacher and divorced mother of two. She says the food pantry frees up some of her money to spend on other living essentials.

As for money in her savings account?

“Definitely a couple of hundred dollars,” she says.

**name changed to preserve anonymity*

Sadly, Lori’s story is not unique. In fact, for many central Iowans, Lori’s story sounds quite similar to their own.

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OUR FOUR PILLARS

BY REV. SARAI SCHNUCKER RICE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

You may not realize it, but there's more to food pantries than just distributing food, especially in a community the size of Greater Des Moines. For decades, our Food Pantry Network has been dedicated to four basic principles:

Equitable Access—DMARC believes that, if you need food, you should be able to get the same kind of food, the same quality, and the same amount, no matter where you live in the metropolitan area. Some parts of the metro, e.g., some of our wealthier suburbs, could support a pantry in their community without a lot of additional financial assistance, but some parts of Des Moines would really struggle to afford enough good food to feed all the hungry people in their census tract or ZIP code. By doing our fundraising throughout the metropolitan area and by being able to move food around the metro area, DMARC is able to ensure that people living in lower-income areas have the same access to good food as do people living in wealthier areas.

No Cost—The food we provide is free, not only to the clients but also to the pantries in our Network. We fundraise on a regional scale so that our pantries do not have to pay for the food they receive from DMARC.

Healthy—When we were told 10 years ago that our pantries' clients had almost three times the incidence of diabetes of the general population, we realized that we were contributing to the problem by distributing food that was high in sugar and fat. We made the radical decision to move to healthy food—low in sugar, fat, and salt, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. We realize the foods we distribute account for only a small portion of the total diet of our clients, but to the extent that we can, we want our clients to have access to the healthy food they need in order to lead productive lives.

Guaranteed Food—You will sometimes hear news stories about pantries whose shelves are bare. We work very hard to ensure that this will never be true of the pantries in DMARC's Network. Our bank accounts may run low, but we keep on fundraising in order to ensure that there is always food at our pantries. In fact, even though clients are able to receive the basic "box" of food once a month, there is also other food available every day. No one should ever have to walk away from a pantry with no food to eat.

The number of people needing food continues to rise, even in a period of low unemployment, because the cost of energy, housing, and medical care is rising faster than wages. DMARC will continue to try to meet this rising need, hopefully without needing to sacrifice any of our basic principles.

Rev. Sarai Schnucker Rice
Executive Director

GIVING THE FOOD INSECURE A SEAT AT THE TABLE

BY MATT STRAWN, BOARD MEMBER

“I am stunned to learn this many people in my district are hungry.”

“Our local economy is doing well, but the amount of hunger and pantry usage is rising, please explain why that’s happening.”

“Thank you for helping me become a better informed representative.”

These are but a sampling of the comments heard at DMARC over recent months as a stream of elected officials have been exposed to DMARC through public policy advocacy.



(L-R): DMARC Advocacy Committee members Rabbi David Kaufman, Matt Strawn, and Tom Chapman pose for a photo with Ambassador Kenneth Quinn of the World Food Prize at “A Decade of Meeting the Need,” Sarai Rice’s 10th Anniversary event on March 1, 2018.

Why advocacy? How is this central to the DMARC mission of uniting the meet the need?

Perhaps an old saying common in state capitols, given DMARC’s food-centric mission, is on-point in answering this question. When it comes to public policy debates, it is often quipped: “You’re either seated at the table or you’re on the menu.”

ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

Simply put, at a time of tight government budgets and increasing need in our community, DMARC needs to have a seat table. Being advocates for the food insecure in our community means being advocates for ourselves and the work we do.

Whether protecting key components of the SNAP program during Farm Bill negotiations in Congress or influencing state and county level spending debates, DMARC has a responsibility on behalf of the food insecure to have a credible and relevant voice with policymakers.

What does this mean in practice? It means strategic engagement by sharing the DMARC story with policymakers at all levels of government.

In just over a year since prioritizing advocacy, DMARC has shared its story with members of Congress, legislators and leaders from both parties in the Iowa General Assembly, and countless county and city officials throughout the greater Des Moines area.

Having spent my professional lifetime in and around government, I understand that our elected officials and their often overworked staff members are only as good as the information they receive from their constituents. That’s where DMARC’s advocacy program comes in. We are putting the right information, in the right people’s hands, to (hopefully) lead them to the right policy decisions.

These early efforts have begun to position DMARC as a trusted voice on public policy. Yes, much work remains to be accomplished on behalf of the food insecure, but securing a seat at the table through our advocacy efforts is an important start.

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For too many central lowans, the economic recovery has never arrived. Even as our state reaches “full employment,” nearly 40% of people in Polk County are struggling to make ends meet, according to the United Way’s most recent ALICE report.¹

And while wages are finally starting to see an increase after four decades of stagnation, they are not keeping up with inflation. Essentials like housing, child care, energy, transportation, and health care have all risen in cost at a pace that has not been matched by increasing wages.

As shown in the table below, a single adult living in Polk County in 2016 needed an hourly wage of \$10.85 to meet their household survival budget.

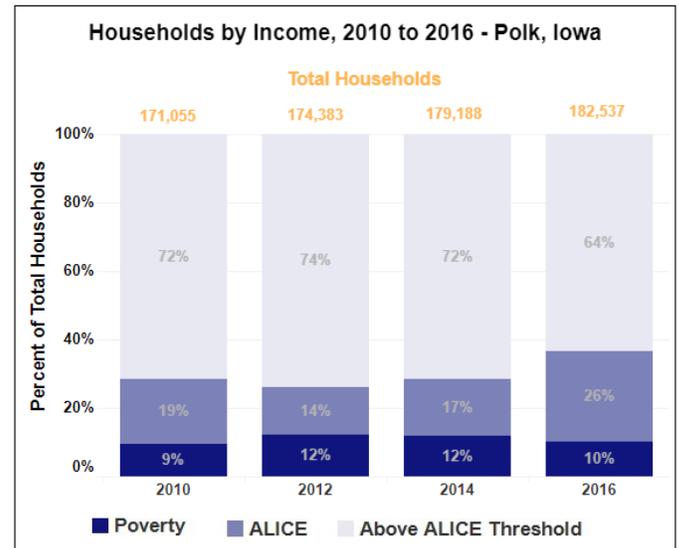
A family of four in Polk County with two working adults and two children in child care required a combined hourly wage of \$31.09 in 2016 to meet their household survival budget.

Household Survival Budget - Polk, Iowa, 2016		
	2 Adults, 1 Infant, 1 Preschooler	Single Adult
Housing	\$844	\$577
Child Care	\$1,143	\$0
Food	\$525	\$158
Transportation	\$697	\$349
Health Care	\$800	\$214
Technology	\$75	\$55
Miscellaneous	\$471	\$164
Taxes	\$626	\$291
Monthly Total	\$5,181	\$1,808
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$62,172	\$21,696
Hourly Wage	\$31.09	\$10.85

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Internal Revenue Service; Tax Foundation; and Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, 2016.

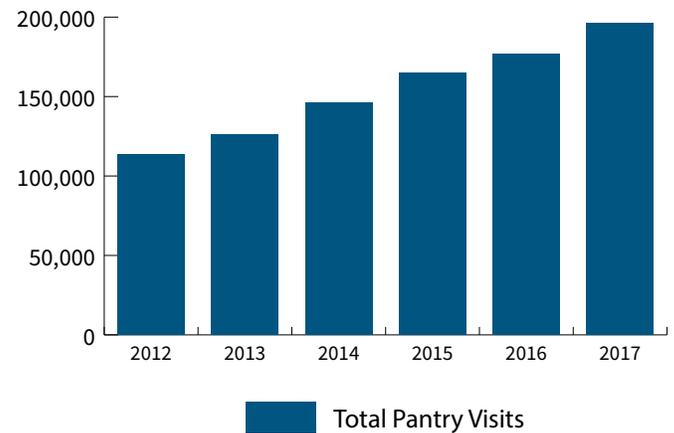
Iowa’s minimum wage currently sits at \$7.25, and has not seen an increase since 2008. For lowans who are facing increasing costs with no rising pay, the future looks uncertain.

According to the ALICE report, Polk County has seen an increase in households struggling to meet their basic needs, from 26% of the population in 2012 to 36% of the population in 2016.



Source: American Community Survey, 2016, and the ALICE Threshold, 2016.

It’s something we’ve been seeing first-hand at DMARC. Since 2012, total visits to the DMARC Food Pantry Network have increased by 73%.



If the issues of rising costs of basic essentials and slow-growing wages are left unaddressed, those struggling economically in our community have a bleak future ahead of them.

And the DMARC Food Pantry Network will continue to see more and more people using food pantries to help feed their families.

“Nothing is fast,” said Lori, “but [the food pantry] definitely helps me get back on my feet.”

Robert Roberson contributed to this piece.

¹United Way ALICE Report 2018, Iowa. <https://www.unitedwayalice.org/iowa>

GET FRESH WITH US

BY LESLIE L. GARMAN, CFRE,
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & OUTREACH

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “food?” Do you think of health? Or maybe comfort, thinking back to a time when life was simpler or when someone cared for you? Or do you remember a time when you were with family to celebrate a special occasion and enjoyed a favorite dish from your culture or ancestry?

Food can bring these thoughts and others to mind. For an organization like DMARC, which was founded to meet our community’s needs, we know how important food is. We also know it has varying meanings to those we serve and to those who support our mission.

Which is why, for us, food is not a simple subject. How do you best feed a population that is food insecure? Do you give them the cheapest options available so everyone gets the most food possible? What is the best way?

The answer came to us about a decade ago when we learned from an ISU Extension & Outreach study that our pantry clients had nearly three times the incidence of diabetes than the general population of Polk County. But it all made sense. The food we were supplying our clients with was filling their stomachs, but not providing adequate nutrition. The research study truly was a game changer in both our food supply and how we talk about hunger.

So how do we meet the need and help people lead healthier lives at the same time? We provide healthy food—fresh fruits and vegetables, and non-perishable items low in sugar, fat, and salt.

But people sometime tell us that they “don’t want healthy.” We tested that theory through a pilot program which we like to think of as the “food pantry of the future,” or Food Pantry 2.0.



Since piloting this program, we have learned that when people have the opportunity to select fresh, more than half of their choice are fresh produce! Which is just the right recipe to help our clients get off the road toward diabetes. It also helps them (bonus!) to work, live and play more happily (something pretty important when 36% of those we serve are under 18 years old!).

We know that fresh and healthy food is expensive. Which is why DMARC recently launched the “Fresh Fund,” a special fund to help DMARC purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

We’re excited to announce that we have an anonymous donor who has issued a matching challenge and donated over \$10,000 to DMARC for the Fresh Fund.

Give a gift of \$100 or a recurring monthly gift of \$10 in support of DMARC’s Fresh Fund and you will receive a “Get Fresh With Us” t-shirt for your help in launching the Fresh Fund this year. Wearing the shirt will help DMARC share the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables and hopefully be a conversation starter!

Want to do more? You, your organization, club or faith community can also sponsor items on our fresh list—bananas, apples, or oranges for a day, month or year, with sponsorships as low as \$157 up to an annual sponsorship of \$57,000.

Want to learn more about how you can help DMARC’s Fresh Fund? Contact Leslie Garman, Director of Development & Outreach at (515) 277-6969 or lgarman@dmarcunited.org.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



DMARC'S MISSION:

Working Together to Meet Basic Human Needs.

STAFF:

REV. SARAI SCHNUCKER RICE,

Executive Director

LESLIE L. GARMAN, CFRE,

Director of Development & Outreach

REBECCA WHITLOW,

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DIANE ALTON (Advisory)

RON BEANE (Advisory)

SAVE THE DATE: FALL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

The DMARC fall delegate assembly will be held on Tuesday, October 16, from 7:00-8:30pm at First United Methodist Church in Ankeny, 206 SW Walnut Street, Ankeny, IA 50023.

Delegates and other participants will have the chance to tour a Mobile Food Pantry and learn of the new opportunities they create. Refreshments will be provided. Please RSVP to Rev. Sarah Trone Garriott, (515) 277-6969 x19 or strongearriott@dmarcunited.org.

VOLUNTEER AT MEALS FROM THE MARKET

Each Saturday morning during the summer, the Meals from the Market program collects donations from vendors at the Des Moines Downtown Farmers' Market.

DMARC is currently seeking volunteers to collect donations during the Downtown Farmers' Market. If you are interested, please contact Shoshana Salowitz, ssalowitz@dmarcunited.org or (515) 277-6969 x18.



SET UP A PLANNED GIFT TO DMARC TODAY

Planned gifts come in different forms, but they share a common trait: they are all contemplated by an individual during their lifetime to take effect at or after their passing. There are many types of planned gifts, with the most common example being a simple bequest in a will, trust or within an estate plan. Learn more about leaving a legacy for DMARC:



We believe...

www.dmarcunited.org/planned-giving/

Note: in all cases it is recommended you consult your tax professionals.

SIGN UP FOR ADVOCACY ACTION ALERTS

Did you know DMARC now has an email newsletter with monthly advocacy updates and action alerts? If you would like to be added to this email list, please contact Luke Elzinga at lelzinga@dmarcunited.org.

HOST YOUR OWN HUNGER SIMULATION

BY LUKE ELZINGA, COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER



Hosting a Hunger Simulation with your workplace, congregation, or other group is a great way to experience what it means to live with food insecurity as an interactive part of a fund or food drive, special offering, or other support of DMARC.

When we better understand the everyday realities of the people who use food pantries, it makes us more empathetic and understanding of the daily struggles of living in poverty—from budgeting time and money to not knowing what financial crisis your family may be facing next—all while trying to maintain a healthy diet.

We hope the Hunger Simulation can be an eye-opening experience for participants and further engage them in the fight against food insecurity in our community. The Hunger Simulation also intends to start conversations around food insecurity in our community, and how we can come together to meet the need.

DMARC's Hunger Simulation is an immersive interactive experience for you to learn what it's like to live with food insecurity. In the Hunger Simulation, you take on the identity of a real person experiencing food insecurity.

You have 15 minutes to determine your food budget and get the recommended USDA MyPlate servings of fruit, vegetables, protein, grains, and dairy. You can do this by shopping at the grocery store, visiting the food pantry, and applying for SNAP benefits at the DHS office. Once the 15 minutes are up, you will reflect on your experience and share with the rest of the group.

DMARC can either facilitate the Hunger Simulation for your group, or we can get you the resources you need to run a Hunger Simulation yourself!

Will you be able to feed your family this week?

- *Determine your family food budget*
- *Get the proper nutrition for your family*
- *Visit the food pantry, DHS, and grocery store*
- *Encounter random "Life Happens" events*

To learn more about hosting your own Hunger Simulation, please contact communications and advocacy manager Luke Elzinga, (515) 277-6969 x10 or lelzinga@dmarcunited.org.



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Des Moines Area Religious Council

1435 Mulberry Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

515.277.6969
dmarcunited.org

Warehouse: 515.282.2026
Fax: 515.274.8389
Email: info@dmarcunited.org

 **Des Moines Area Religious Council**
 **@dmreligious**

CELEBRATE WITH A FUNDRAISER FOR DMARC

Do you have an upcoming birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion that you want to celebrate with a fundraiser for DMARC?

You can now host an online fundraiser for DMARC one of two ways: through our Facebook page, or through the Virtual Drive option on our website.

Whichever option you choose, you will be able to recruit your friends, family, and coworkers to give toward your fundraiser. Set a personal fundraising goal to give your supporters an achievable end to work toward!



Interested in hosting a fundraiser for DMARC but still not sure how? Contact Shoshana Salowitz, ssalowitz@dmarcunited.org or (515) 277-6969 x18.

THE VOICE

