

A Lifetime of Impact—Early Childhood Brain Development

We know that getting adequate nutrition is a key component of early childhood development that can have a lifelong impact.

Providing children with proper nutrition is an investment in our future too important to ignore.

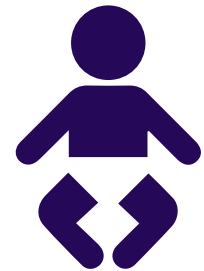
Over one-third of the people assisted through the DMARC Food Pantry Network are children age 17 and under. Last year, we assisted over 18,000 unique children in Greater Des Moines.



90% of a child's brain develops in the first five years of life.

Hungry students show poorer **focus**, more **behavioral issues**, and lower **academic performance** than their peers who get enough to eat.

Over 6,500 children age 5 and under were served by the DMARC Food Pantry Network in 2017.



Reducing Illness Through Access

The people we assist at our food pantries have higher rates of diabetes and heart disease than the general population. Some people may be dealing with obesity and malnutrition at the same time.

That's because food insecurity in our community doesn't often look like someone literally starving, it looks more like someone living off of convenience store foods because they don't have the money or the access to a grocery store to afford the healthy food their body needs to thrive.

Oftentimes, the most affordable and accessible food is highly processed, calorie-dense food products. While tasty and convenient, these foods are not meant to form the bedrock of someone's diet.

At the DMARC Food Pantry Network, we provide a healthy food supply low in sugar, fat, and salt, with fresh fruits and vegetables, and provide nutrition education resources to the people we assist.

Health for Our Seniors

It's not easy to live a productive life when you're dealing with food insecurity. Most of the seniors we assist are living on a fixed income, like Social Security. With rising medical costs, more and more seniors are looking for help in meeting the gap of their food budget.

Last year, DMARC provided food to nearly 9,000 older adults and seniors (age 55+), nearly 18% of all the people we assisted.



Food as Medicine

In 2007, Iowa State University Extension & Outreach conducted a research study at DMARC food pantries and found that the people we assisted were three times as likely to have diabetes than the general population of Polk County, and twice as likely to have heart disease. The research study truly was a game changer in both our food supply and how we talk about food insecurity and access to healthy food.

Since then, we have implemented healthy food guidelines and changed our food supply accordingly. We provide healthy food—fresh fruits and vegetables, and non-perishable items low in sugar, fat, and salt. It's not enough for us to just fill stomachs, we want to nourish the people we assist.

But how do we know that the healthy food we are providing is what people want? We tested this question 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 them more often, more than half of their food choices are fresh produce! Which is just the right recipe to help our clients get off the road toward diabetes. It also helps them 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 an anonymous donor has issued a matching challenge of \$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.