



SNAP WORKS

BY LUKE ELZINGA,
COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

A few months ago, in November 2019, DMARC broke its record for number of individuals assisted in a single month—22,632 people used a DMARC food pantry that month.

That number is less impressive when you compare it to the number of people who were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Iowa as Food Assistance. In Polk County, that same month, 58,979 people received SNAP benefits, over 2.5 times the amount of people assisted by DMARC food pantries.

SNAP is one of the most effective and efficient federal programs and lifts millions of Americans out of poverty every year.

But within the past few years, we've seen a trend of less people receiving SNAP benefits and more people using food pantries. In addition, SNAP is currently being targeted at both the state and federal level.

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HELP US CONTINUE TO MEET THE NEED

BY EMILY WEBB, PRESIDENT

2019 was a big year for DMARC. We launched our inaugural signature event, Spring Greens. We welcomed our new CEO, Matt Unger. And to top it all off, we assisted more people facing food insecurity in our community than ever before.

In 2019, DMARC assisted over 55,000 unique individuals, and the DMARC Food Pantry Network is now assisting an average of 19,038 people every single month.

DMARC projected a 5-6% increase in food pantry use this fiscal year. So far, in the first six months of the fiscal year, we have seen an average 11.4% increase in food pantry use—essentially double the increase for which we had planned.

Looking toward the future, it's clear there are a few things we must do to ensure our funding remains sustainable.

First, it is vitally important that we protect and enhance our federal nutrition programs and assist the people who use our food pantries in enrolling in such programs as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Helping people access the benefits they are eligible for will reduce the strain on food pantries in our community.

Second, we are exploring options of adjusting our food supply to make our dollars stretch further. If we can redirect product obtained from food rescue programs into our food supply, we can reduce food costs across our network.



However, our most immediate need is financial support to ensure our work continues unabated.

Your support is so vital in ensuring we have enough funds to keep providing our three-day supply of healthy food to tens of thousands of people facing food insecurity in our community.

Please consider making an additional financial contribution, hosting a fund or food drive, or giving of your time and talents to DMARC.

You can get creative with how you support DMARC, too! We've seen children hold lemonade sales to benefit DMARC, companies host friendly inter-office competitions to raise food and funds, and even a supporter who bakes bread to sell and donates the proceeds to DMARC.

We know that together, we can find creative solutions to some of our community's most complex problems. Please join us in this fight.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily M. Webb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Webb
President

SPRING GREENS

DMARC'S ANNUAL SIGNATURE EVENT

**Think Fresh. Think Spring.
Think Spring Greens 2020!**

Are you ready for spring? This year you can be with DMARC!

DMARC is excited to host its second annual signature event, Spring Greens, on Thursday, May 7th. Last year the event:

- Raised \$87,000 for DMARC's mission
- Featured 20 different food and beverage vendors
- Had nearly 200 attendees

The event was created to align with DMARC's focus on fresh and healthy food, and the participating food and beverage vendors are asked to get creative and to either "freshen up" or "green up" samples for the event. Attendees are able to sip and stroll and visit, experience or taste over 50 items from nearly 20 food or beverage vendors.

It also featured DMARC's inaugural **MEETING THE NEED AWARDS**, recognizing one outstanding volunteer, one outstanding organizational partner, and one outstanding faith partner at the event.



Spring Greens 2020 Chair Richard (Rich) Haberkamp.

The 2020 Spring Greens event goal is to raise \$125,000 and double both the number of vendors and attendees, and DMARC is lucky to have a tireless committee volunteer leading the event, Richard (Rich) Haberkamp. When asked why he is committed to DMARC and the event, Rich said,



"When you truly understand that children are in need every day in our community, and live with food insecurity, and all that that entails, the better question is, how can you not be? We are called to share what we have with those less fortunate than ourselves."

"And I am not alone. Our entire committee is committed to our mission and the success of this event. Last year, this was new to all of us, and we are creating an entirely new event together."

"This year, I'm excited to say, that our committee has also doubled and we continue to find new volunteers who want to help. This event is one that has tremendous opportunity and our hope is that it becomes one of the premier events of our community."

"And anyone can help. Whether you're part of a faith community, a business, or even part of an establishment that has food or beverage, you can play a role in our success."

"You can help promote the event, sponsor the event, or even be a vendor for the event. We'd love to share all the details."

Want to learn more about this event and how to help? Contact Leslie Garman at (515) 277-6969 or LGarman@dmarcunited.org.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SNAP

...continued from cover

People who receive SNAP benefits are lazy.

More than half of SNAP recipients are children or seniors. The large majority of people enrolled in SNAP who can work, do work. Work requirements already exist for virtually all adults between the ages of 18 and 50 who are physically and mentally capable of working. Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) in Iowa may only receive three months of SNAP benefits every three years if they are not working at least 20 hours per week.

People just buy junk food with their benefits.

SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase cigarettes, alcohol, non-food items like diapers or personal care items, or hot prepared foods.

In 2016, one of our Red Barrel grocery stores shared with us a list of the foods most frequently purchased using SNAP benefits. The top items on the list were milk, meat (chicken drumsticks/wings and ground beef), and bananas. Of the top 100 items, 47 were meat/fish of some kind, 15 were fruits and vegetables, and 12 were dairy or egg products. Only 12 items were either soda or snack items.

Fraud and abuse of SNAP runs rampant.

According to the USDA, SNAP has a fraud rate of less than one percent. The state of Iowa uses a number of systems to verify the identity and income of people applying for SNAP benefits. Only U.S. citizens and certain lawfully-present non-citizens may receive SNAP benefits.

SNAP breeds reliance on the program.

The length of participation in SNAP is on average only seven to nine months. The SNAP Employment and Training Program helps participants gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to attain regular employment.

Since the start of 2017, participation in SNAP among people using the DMARC Food Pantry Network fell from 56% to 50%. This January, participation in SNAP by food pantry users fell below 50% for the first time since DMARC has tracked that data.

SNAP isn't just a lifeline for the people who rely on the program, it's an economic boon to our region. Nationally, SNAP redemptions account for approximately 10 percent of all expenditures on food for consumption at home. In December 2019, over \$6.7 million in SNAP benefits were distributed to residents of Polk County.

At face value, that number seems like a lot of money—and it is. But when you take a closer look, that only amounts to \$1.24 in SNAP benefits per meal for people who are enrolled in the program.

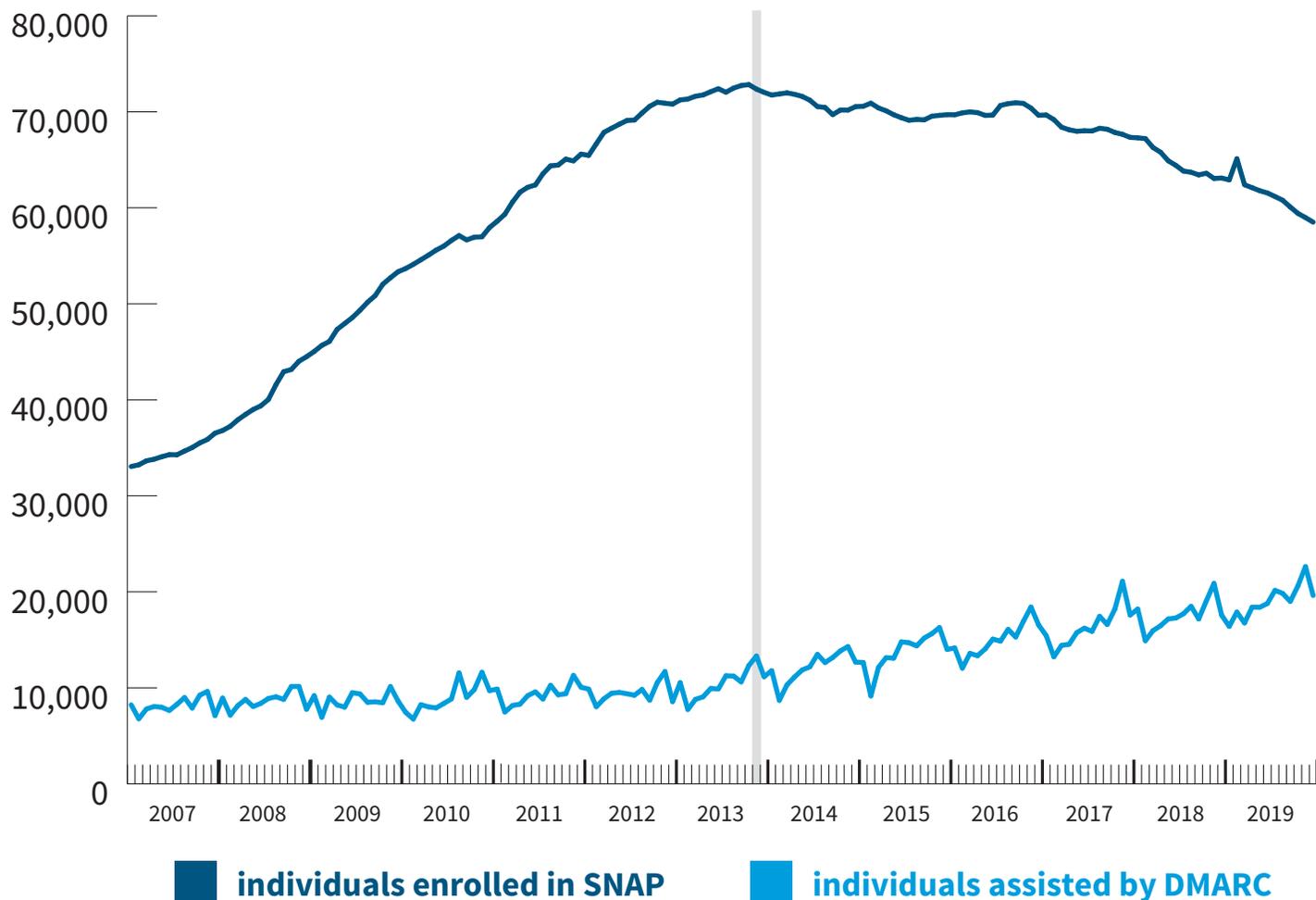
According to Bread for the World, federal nutrition programs deliver more than 19 times the amount of food assistance as private charitable sources. When people can no longer access SNAP or their benefits are reduced, many turn to food pantries and other nonprofit social services for help.

In FY19, DMARC's total expenses amounted to \$3.9 million. During that same period of time, over \$85.5 million in SNAP benefits were distributed in Polk County, Iowa—an amount over twenty times the budget of DMARC.

Simply put, it is inconceivable to think that the nonprofit sector could meet this need on its own without federal nutrition programs. We have seen examples that prove when people lose access to SNAP or see their benefits reduced, they turn to food pantries to help them get by.

In November 2013 (designated by the gray line in the graph on page five), two things happened that affected SNAP benefit amounts and enrollment that had an impact on the Food Pantry Network.

SNAP Enrollment and DMARC Food Pantry Use in Polk County, Iowa, 2007-2019



First, the expanded SNAP benefit amount that was part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 sunsetted, effectively decreasing SNAP benefits by 10% for everyone enrolled.

Second, the state of Iowa removed its time-limit waiver for work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). Under federal law, ABAWDs may only receive three months of SNAP benefits every three years if they are not working at least 20 hours per week.

In the year following those changes, the DMARC Food Pantry Network saw an average 20 percent monthly increase in use.

More recently, DMARC saw the impact from last year's federal government shutdown. In January 2019, the state of Iowa released February's SNAP

benefits early, on January 17. DMARC saw a significant drop in food pantry use that month, as people had their February benefits early to use to buy groceries. Then, in February 2019, we saw an increase in food pantry use of over 20 percent as those SNAP benefits ran out.

SNAP participation has a direct correlation to food pantry use. It's one of the reasons why we're committed to defending and enhancing SNAP. We know that the nonprofit sector simply cannot address hunger and food insecurity on its own.

Sign up to receive advocacy updates and get the facts on food insecurity in your area:

dmarcunited.org/advocacy

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Working Together to Meet
Basic Human Needs.

STAFF:

MATT UNGER,
Chief Executive Officer

LESLIE L. GARMAN, CFRE,
Director of Development & Outreach

REBECCA WHITLOW,
Food Pantry Network Director

DANIEL BECK
MONICA CURL
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LUKE ELZINGA
CRAIG ESTES
ANDREW FIRESTINE
CARRIE LA RUE
JOHN MCPHEE
PATRICK MINOR
SHOSHANA SALOWITZ
MICHAEL SIROIS
REV. SARAH TRONE GARRIOTT
LINDA VANDER HART
KEN WITMER

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REV. RACHEL MITHELMAN
CHRIST NAUMANN
STUART OXER
MATT STRAWN
RON BEANE (Advisory)



May 7, 2020

Spring Greens is DMARC's signature fundraising event featuring some of the area's best food and beverage purveyors! Sample and sip small bites and beverages and enjoy an auction, raffle, and entertainment.

STAMP OUT HUNGER®

On Saturday, May 9, 2020, the National Association of Letter Carriers will be holding their 28th annual Stamp Out Hunger® food drive. Once again, DMARC will be the recipient of tens of thousands of food items donated from the drive. We are organizing hundreds of volunteers to help us date-check, seal-check, and sort these food items the following week, May 11-15, 2020, at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Interesting in signing up your group to volunteer? Contact Shoshana Salowitz, (515) 277-6969 x18 or ssalowitz@dmarcunited.org.



SPRING DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

The DMARC spring delegate assembly will be held Tuesday, March 10, 7:00pm at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1627 Grand Avenue, West Des Moines, IA 50265. All are welcome to attend. RSVP to Rev. Sarah Trone Garriott, (515) 277-6969 x19 or stronegarriott@dmarcunited.org.

IOWA CUBS SUNDAY HOME GAMES

At every Iowa Cubs Sunday home game this summer, DMARC will be accepting three food items as a donation in exchange for one general admission ticket. Fans can also pay \$5 to upgrade to a Grand Stand seat.

Find a full list of the Iowa Cubs Sunday Home Games on our community calendar, located online at dmarcunited.org/events.





(ABOVE) Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp students and staff visit The Iowa Sikh Association Gurudwara in West Des Moines.

FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF INTERFAITH LEADERS

BY REV. SARAH TRONE GARRIOTT,
COORDINATOR OF INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT

The Des Moines Area Religious Council and The Comparison Project at Drake University are proud to co-host the fourth annual Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp, July 15-19.

Participants spend five days and four nights at Drake University, forming friendships with camp participants from diverse backgrounds. With the guidance of Drake University professors and student counselors, the camp participants learn strategies and skills to become interfaith leaders in their own communities.

Every day, the group visits diverse religious communities in the Des Moines metro for worship services, meals, or conversations. Over the past years, students have encountered their neighbors' religions in engaging ways: dancing with worshippers at a Nepali Hindu Bhajan, sitting side by side on the floor of the Sikh temple and enjoying a langar meal, meditating with a Buddhist monk, and viewing the handmade Torah scrolls in a synagogue.

Students also create a short digital storytelling project about their own faith traditions or values. Each of these digital stories is shown at a public screening on the last day of camp, and hosted on our website for a broader audience to appreciate.

Watch digital stories created by campers over the years: www.iowainterfaithexchange.com

Students do not need to be a member of a religious community to attend this camp, they just need to be interested in learning more about their religiously diverse neighbors. High school students and 2020 graduates are invited to apply by May 31.

Interfaith Youth Leaders will each receive an honorarium for their participation in the camp, and there is no cost to attend the camp. Entering first-year students at Drake University may receive additional compensation for joining an interfaith leadership cohort during their freshman year at Drake University.

Application materials are now available online: www.iowainterfaithexchange.com/youthcamp

Contact Coordinator of Interfaith Engagement Sarah Trone Garriott at (515) 277-6969 or stronegarriott@dmarcunited.org for more information about the Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp or our other interfaith opportunities.



UNITED TO MEET THE NEED

Des Moines Area Religious Council

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 **Des Moines Area Religious Council**
 **@DMARcunited**

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SORT DONATIONS

May 11-15

dmarcunited.org/volunteer

On Saturday, May 9, the National Association of Letter Carriers will hold their 28th annual Stamp Out Hunger® food drive.

For the fifth year in a row, DMARC will be the recipient of tens of thousands of food items donated from the drive. That's where we need your help! DMARC is organizing hundreds of volunteers to help us date-check, seal-check, and sort these food items into categories.

We are in need of 50 volunteers for every three-hour shift, three shifts per day, Monday through Friday (May 11-15), with an additional unloading and organizing shift on Saturday, May 9.

THE VOICE



UNITED TO MEET THE NEED