



THE VOICE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DES MOINES AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL • VOL. 20 • NO. 2 • MAY/JUN/JUL 2020

PROVIDING FOOD IN A PANDEMIC

BY LUKE ELZINGA,
COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

Before opening the door to welcome the first visitor of the day, DMARC Mobile Food Pantry Associate Patrick Minor (*pictured right*) sanitized their hands and put on a pair of gloves, goggles, and a mask.

This routine, unfamiliar at first, is now just another regular aspect of providing food to hundreds of people every week through DMARC's mobile food pantry locations.

"As this pandemic began to unfold," said DMARC CEO Matt Unger, "we asked ourselves how we could best balance providing food to those in need while taking care not to contribute to spreading the virus in our community."

DMARC has been committed to maintaining food distribution during the pandemic, but has been taking steps to promote the safety of staff, volunteers, and people visiting food pantries.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

PREPARING FOR WHAT TOMORROW MAY BRING

BY MATTHEW DURHAM, PRESIDENT

I don't think anyone was expecting 2020 to be the year of the global pandemic. This year has already brought far too many surprises, but it's good to know we can rely on one steadfast constant: the giving spirit of Iowa and Greater Des Moines.

The outpouring of support we have received from the community has been nothing short of awe-inspiring. So many of you have stepped up to help, whether it be through a monetary donation, volunteering time at a mobile food pantry or delivering food, or hosting a virtual drive to rally your community to support DMARC. We truly cannot thank you enough.

As I'm sure you will read on page 4, we have seen some slower weeks at DMARC food pantries, but are anticipating that once some temporary additional resources are no longer available, we will see more people turn to the DMARC Food Pantry Network for assistance than ever before.

We are taking steps to make sure we maintain an adequate food supply and are placing food orders now to prepare for what the summer months may bring. Like countless other businesses and organizations, our food supply chain is dealing with a tremendous amount of stress. While we have met the challenge of continuing to get food into our warehouse and out to our partner food pantries, we have seen a marked increase in the prices we are paying for that food.

Despite the challenges our community and nation are facing, we have witnessed incredible acts of service and philanthropy during this time, acts



which inspire us and provide hope and optimism for our community's shared future together.

DMARC is moving ahead in finding a new home as we have already outgrown our current facility at 1435 Mulberry Street we moved into at the start of 2014. Later this year, we will launch a capital campaign fundraiser for the new facility. We don't want to say too much right now, but are excited at the possibilities and opportunities a new space will bring the organization.

Looking ahead, none of us knows exactly what the future may hold. But we are preparing to see more people turn to our food pantries due to the extended economic impact from the pandemic for months, if not years, to come.

And we know that we can rely on the support of our community in times of need, because you have proven it over and over again.

The investments that you are making in our organization are preparing us to meet the needs of our community today and into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Durham".

Matthew Durham
President

YOUR SUPPORT IS INSPIRING!

DMARC has received an incredible outpouring of support from the greater Des Moines community, with donations coming in from over 900 different individuals, groups, congregations, businesses and foundations in the past two months.

We heard from a number of individuals who donated their Economic Impact Payment (stimulus check) in part or in whole to DMARC.

While we cannot personally thank everyone who has given here (the list would take up our entire issue—and then some), we wanted to share a few words of gratitude we heard from one of our donors.



Both Ann and I grew up in Iowa and have lots of family throughout the state. During this tough time we wanted to give back to a cause that would have direct impact to our community. I had learned about DMARC through high school, as we had our own food drives to support DMARC. We have also participated in food drives through our church. DMARC has given us a great opportunity to help our local community deal with these times. —Josh Otten, Waukee

We have also seen individuals, congregations, businesses, and other groups host virtual food drives for DMARC. Donating funds is an especially helpful way to give at this time, as we are facing rising food costs and cannot process in-kind food donations from traditional food drives in the manner that we usually do with volunteer groups.

Thank you to the following for hosting virtual food drives!

Ankeny Centennial High School

Capitol Hill Christian Church

Capitol Region Republican Women

Central Presbyterian Church

Curry Friends and Family

Des Moines Kiwanis Club

DMARC Board of Directors

Drake University

Farmers Mutual Hail

Insurance of Iowa

Feed Our Community – Virtual

Hugs to Neighbors in Need

Homesteaders Life Insurance

Jennifer's CozYoga

Johnston High School

Junior League of Des Moines

Life 107.1

Marsh and McLennan Companies

Moms Demand Action for

Gun Sense in America

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart

Catholic Church

Saint Pius X Catholic Church

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

SCIFL AFL-CIO

Shazam

Umble Family and Friends

Unity Center of Des Moines

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

DONOR HONOR ROLL

Thank you for the following donors for providing leadership giving support to DMARC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

Bruce and Susan Kelley

C. Dean and Sandra Carlson

Christ Community Church

Community Foundation of
Greater Des Moines

Delta Dental Foundation

Ernest & Florence Sargent
Family Foundation

Global Atlantic
Financial Group

Gupta Family Foundation

Jay and Julie Jacobi

Kyle and Sharon Krause
Family Foundation

MH Equipment

Michael and Diane Heid

MidAmerican Energy
Foundation

Mid-Iowa Health Foundation

Principal Charity Classic -
Birdies for Charity

Sarabeth and William
Anderson

St. Mark Lutheran Church

The Ralph & Sylvia G. Green
Charitable Foundation

Wendy Henry

Visit dmarcunited.org/donate/virtual-drive/ to host your own today!

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Partner pantries have stayed flexible to adapt to public health guidelines and implement alternative food pantry distribution methods.

Rather than giving visitors the opportunity to physically walk through the food pantry and select the items they would like, pantries have shifted to providing limited choice and pre-packed bags of food to limit contact and mass gathering.

Other practices being implemented by food pantries include call-ahead ordering, curbside pick-up, pick-up by proxy, and deliveries.

DMARC also launched a food pantry delivery service to provide food to those who cannot visit a pantry due to health concerns, transportation issues, or other mitigating circumstances.

Delivery requests are placed via telephone and the food is dropped off the next day. In addition to help from volunteers, DART and Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Iowa have both provided drivers to assist with no-contact food pantry deliveries.

DMARC has also altered other aspects of its operations, including remote working options for staff, suspending the Red Barrel program, and cancelling large volunteer groups and gatherings.

ATYPICAL TRENDS AT FOOD PANTRIES

The first half of March followed the general trend DMARC had been seeing at food pantries in 2020: double-digit increases in use.

Starting the week of Monday, March 16, things began to look very different at the DMARC Food Pantry Network. As the week began, food pantries saw a surge in individuals seeking assistance. But by Friday, food pantries were seeing less traffic.

"I think we have also seen evidence of the impact made by removing barriers to the Food Assistance program and increasing benefit amounts for many Iowans."

As April approached, food pantries braced for another surge in use. But it never arrived. In April, the DMARC Food Pantry Network assisted just two-thirds the amount of people than in a typical month. Nearly 4,000 people who used a DMARC food pantry in each January, February, and March, did not do so in April. Lower food pantry use continued into May.

And while food pantry traffic dropped or remained the same at permanent food pantries, DMARC did see a marked increase in the number of people assisted at mobile food pantry locations.

DMARC notes a number of factors contributing to the slow down at food pantries, including people staying at home, additional food resources available in the community, increases to Food Assistance (SNAP) benefits, and people receiving their Economic Impact Payments.

"We have seen a lot of great food relief efforts by private companies, faith communities, nonprofit organizations and others spring up," said Unger. "And I think we have also seen evidence of the impact made by removing barriers to the Food Assistance program and increasing benefit amounts for many Iowans."



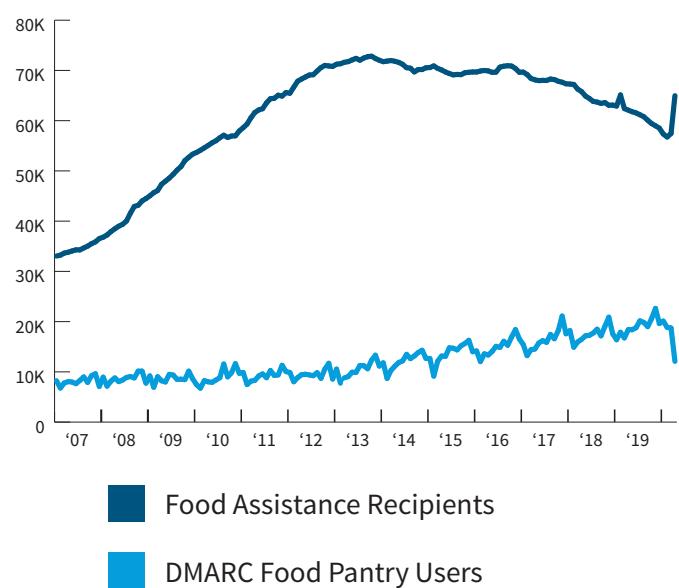
In April and May, all recipients of Food Assistance (SNAP) were issued the maximum benefit amount, increasing benefits for many participants. How long these temporary increases will continue is uncertain.

"We have also heard from some regular food pantry users that they are forgoing using the pantry or taking less food because they do not want anyone else to go without," said Unger. "We appreciate the sentiment but want everyone to know that DMARC's food supply is sound and if you need food, we are here to help."

DMARC has been successful in maintaining its supply of food during the pandemic, but much of the food it purchases has increased in cost due to high demand.

FOOD ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS AND DMARC FOOD PANTRY USERS, POLK COUNTY

JANUARY 2007-APRIL 2020



64,973 people received Food Assistance benefits in Polk County in April, an increase of 7,500 people (13%) from March.

\$11,151,568 in Food Assistance benefits were distributed in Polk County in April, an increase of 77% from March, as program participants all received the maximum benefit amount in April.



NEW FACES AT FOOD PANTRIES

In March and April, DMARC saw 2,614 individuals use a DMARC food pantry for the first time ever.

When compared to everyone who has visited a DMARC food pantry so far in 2020, these 2,614 new individuals were:

- twice as likely to be unemployed
- one-third as likely to receive Food Assistance
- twice as likely to identify as Hispanic/Latinx

These new pantry visitors were also more likely to use a mobile food pantry, more likely to identify as male, and tend to have a smaller average household size.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Thank you to all the individuals, congregations, businesses, organizations, and groups who have stepped up to support DMARC during this time.

"It's important to remember that we were seeing double-digit increases in food pantry use before the pandemic began," said Unger. "We remain ready to meet the need, and anticipate that once some of these additional resources are no longer available, we will see large increases in use throughout the DMARC Food Pantry Network for the extended future. DMARC will continue to rely on our generous community to meet that need."

Your investment ensures DMARC's ability to meet the needs of Greater Des Moines, now and into the uncertain future.

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

JOE DOLACK

LUKE ELZINGA

ANDREW FIRESTINE

CARRIE LA RUE

JOHN MCPHEE

PATRICK MINOR

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JUST *One* SOCIETY

Your Legacy. Our Community.

JOIN DMARC'S JUST ONE SOCIETY

These are difficult times for everyone. In order to keep fulfilling our mission of meeting basic human needs in our community, we need your help today—and tomorrow. One way to do that is through legacy or planned giving through DMARC.

The Just One Society is DMARC's legacy society. It is comprised of individuals—both living and past—who believe so much in our mission that they have made a financial commitment to our organization which will help us not just today—but tomorrow. Only through planning is this possible.

With the pandemic, many are evaluating their estates. One of the simplest way to make a legacy gift is through your will. You can leave all or a percentage of your estate to DMARC, ensuring that DMARC is here for those in need far into the future. You can also give a gift through your life insurance policy or a gift of property.

Whichever way you elect to give, DMARC will ensure that your legacy continues through our mission. Learn more today by visiting dmarcunited.org/planned-giving/.

CARES ACT IMPACT ON CHARITABLE GIVING

As many of our donors give through an IRA by making their required minimum distribution, it is important to know that the new CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act temporarily suspends the requirements for required minimum distributions (RMD) for the 2020 tax year.

The new law also expands charitable giving incentives and allows taxpayers who take the standard deduction to make up to \$300 of charitable cash contributions to qualified charities this year.

For those who do itemize their deductions, the new law allows for cash contributions to qualified charities such as ours to be deducted up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for the 2020 calendar year.

INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

BY REV. SARAH TRONE GARRIOTT,
COORDINATOR OF INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT

Because we haven't been able to gather in the usual ways, we are finding opportunities to do interfaith engagement online!

Over the past several years, DMARC has worked with community partners to create opportunities for our neighbors to build relationship across the religious spectrum.

Due to COVID-19, we have had to cancel some of our planned interfaith events, including the monthly "Meet My Religious Neighbor" open house series in collaboration with the Comparison Project at Drake University, CultureAll, and Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. Unfortunately, the celebration of Holi at the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Iowa on March 8 would be the last in-person event for the season. Due to the pandemic, the New Year's celebration with the Laotian Buddhist community in April and an Iftar meal with the Bosnian Muslim community in May were canceled.

But despite the new limitations, we did not give up on finding ways to connect with our neighbors. Like so many other institutions, we scrambled to come up with alternative programming that would work in our new circumstances. So far, we've been pretty excited about the results!

Our first effort was the "Meet Your Neighbor" series. Each Wednesday at 3pm, our friends at CultureAll brought in their network of Ambassadors to share some aspect of their culture. Over the series we have learned how to spice up our ramen noodles with Gurwinder Kapur, learned about Klezmer music while Abe Goldstien played tunes on his accordion, and stretched with Shweta Agrahari as she led us through yoga poses we could do from our chairs.

Another project that came out of this time was the "Faithfully Community" panel series. The first panel brought together leaders from different religious communities to share about the challenges and opportunities they are experiencing in this time. Ihsan Yaseen from the Muslim community joined Pr. Fred Gaddy from St. Paul AME Church and Som Acharya from the Nepali Hindu community for this first panel.

One of our favorite things about panels is the opportunity to introduce the panelists to one another. Even though these panelists come from very different religious and cultural backgrounds, there were so many points of connection in the conversation.



Our most recent panel featured three Muslim women from the community sharing about Ramadan and how their observances of the Holy Month have changed due to the pandemic. Even though COVID-19 is preventing Muslims from gathering with others to break the fast, Denira Valjevcic, Sabriya Khan, Ayah Billbeisi welcomed us into their homes and shared a little bit of Ramadan with us!

We haven't yet determined if these series will continue into the summer, but we will continue to work with our interfaith partners to help our community connect despite the physical distance. All of the previous sessions will continue to be available as videos on the Iowa Interfaith Exchange Facebook page—check them out!



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Warehouse: 515.282.2026
Fax: 515.274.8389
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Des Moines Area Religious Council
 @DMARCUntied

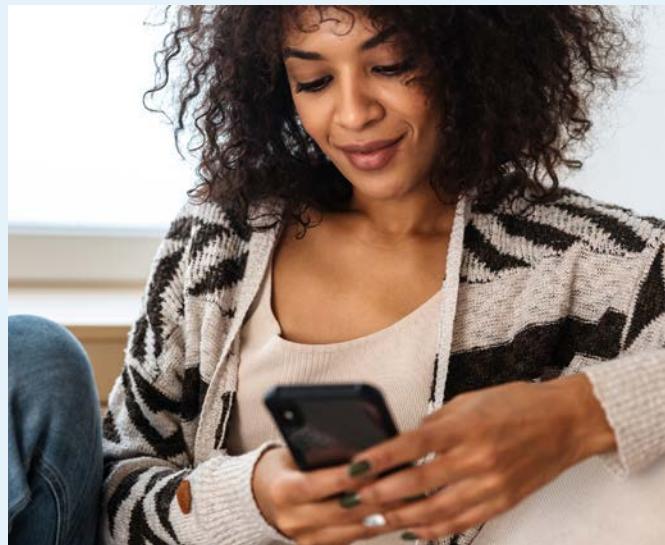
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VOICE

SUSTAIN YOUR SUPPORT WITH A MONTHLY DONATION TO DMARC

We are in unexpected times.
It's hard for any of us to plan
much for anything right now.

But there is one thing you
can do to make sure the basic
needs of our community
continue to be met.

When you set up a monthly
recurring donation to DMARC,
it lets us know we can rely on
your support now and into the
future, whatever it may hold.



Show your support and set up a monthly recurring gift today!

dmarcunited.org/donate/

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