



FOOD PANTRIES ADAPT TO MEET THE NEED

BY LUKE ELZINGA, COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

When news of COVID-19's arrival in Iowa first broke in March, the DMARC Food Pantry Network responded quickly to implement new ways of meeting the needs of our community while ensuring the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and people who use food pantries.

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REFLECTING ON THE POSITIVE

BY MATT DURHAM, PRESIDENT

2020 brought with it an abundance of challenges: from staying flexible to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, to rising food costs and supply chain delays, to the tragic loss of our dear friend and colleague Linda Vander Hart.

But this past year has also seen some rays of light, and it is important to reflect on the positive, too.

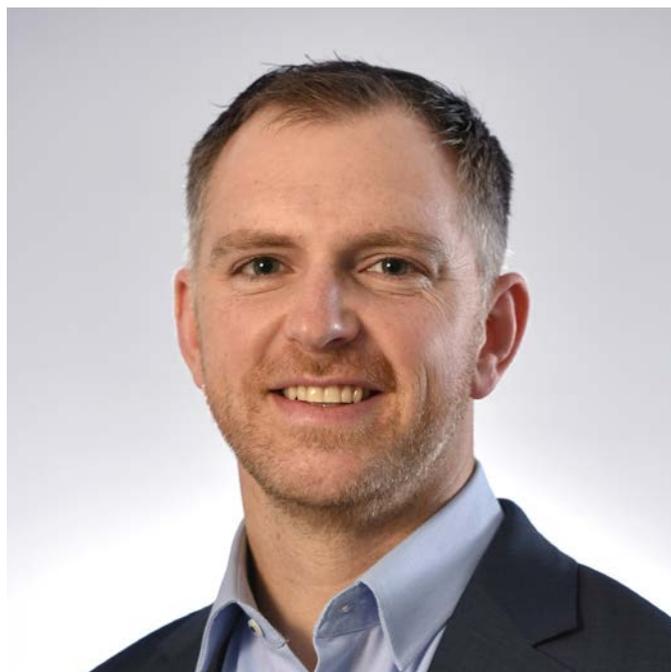
Our Food Pantry Network was there for thousands of people who used a DMARC food pantry for the first time ever. The DMARC mobile food pantry expanded its partnership with Des Moines Public Schools to provide students, their families, and the community with access to nutritious food.

We distributed over a million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables through the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program with the help of our partners and a crew of amazing volunteers.

At our fall delegate assembly, we took steps to reinforce our relationships with our faith community partners and build on the interfaith core of our organization.

We got serious about equity and confronting racial injustice. In addition to participating in the United Way of Central Iowa's 21-Day Equity Challenge, our team participated in implicit bias training and we have established an Equity and Inclusion Committee to review our internal hiring practices and food pantry policies, as well as identify continuing education opportunities for our staff, board, volunteers, and partners.

We made significant progress on our strategic plan we adopted in December 2019, and are



excited at the opportunities and possibilities that lie ahead of us in 2021. We don't want to give too much away right now, but expect to hear from us in the following year as we look to relocate and expand our facility.

We strengthened our relationships with elected officials and successfully advocated at the state and federal level for policies and programs to reduce hunger and food insecurity in Iowa.

Perhaps the most inspiring thing we witnessed in 2020 was the outpouring of support we received from both new and long-time supporters.

Throughout it all, you have been there supporting our mission through your donations of funds, food, and time. We have been overwhelmed with gratitude at the giving nature of the greater Des Moines community time and time again this year.

We do not know what 2021 may hold, but we do know that we can rely on you to step up and meet the needs of our community, no matter what.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Durham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matt Durham
President

IN LOVING MEMORY

*Linda
Vander
Hart*

1949 - 2020



In December, DMARC lost a very important member of our family, Linda Vander Hart.

Linda was the Office Administrator for our team for more than seven years, but that “title” falls woefully short in describing how much Linda did for DMARC. She very much was the glue that held everything together. To say she will be missed could not be more understated.

Linda was a true believer in our mission and dedicated to those food insecure individuals and families our food pantry network assists. She would go out of her way to connect callers with the kind of assistance they needed—often times connecting them with other organizations. And she worked with great determination to find ways we could do things more efficiently and

more effectively, always with that person who faces food insecurity in mind.

Family was incredibly important to Linda – #2 perhaps only to her faith. She shared many warm smiles with all of us in relaying regular stories about her children and grandchildren and their many successful pursuits in life and school.

To us at DMARC, Linda was and always will be family, too. And we will share many warm smiles when we remember all our times together and the incredible impact she has made on all of us and the organization we love.

Our hearts and prayers are with the entire Vander Hart family and we ask that you hold them in yours as well.

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Prior to the pandemic, visitors to Catholic Charities Food Pantry could walk through and select their own items from the shelves, similar to as in a grocery store. However, due to the pandemic, visitors are no longer allowed inside the building, and the pantry has shifted to a pre-packed box model, while still providing choice to meet the dietary needs of people who are seeking assistance, such as gluten-free, non-dairy, and vegetarian options.

"It goes back to the importance of providing food in a respectful way with dignity, and understanding that just because someone can't afford food we don't just expect them to eat what's handed to them," said Leslie Van Der Molen, Poverty Reduction Program Manager at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Des Moines.

In September, the food pantry at Johnston Partnership Place doubled the size of its facility and added a second door, which allowed the pantry to alter its setup and welcome visitors back inside with a one-way path through the pantry.

"You come in one door, choose your food, and exit out the other door right to your car," said Andrea Cook, Program Director at Johnston Partnership Place. "One person leaves and another comes in."



Andrea Cook, Program Director at the Johnston Partnership.

An enclosed service counter at Urbandale Food Pantry limits physical contact between visitors and staff.



Urbandale Food Pantry installed an enclosed service counter with an intercom system to limit exposure among visitors, staff, and volunteers, thanks to help from the Hansen Company.

"Everyone had to make modifications across the board," said Patty Sneddon-Kisting, Executive Director of Urbandale Food Pantry. "We've kept creative and innovative on how we can still provide services to our families."

Other DMARC partner food pantries have adapted in similar ways to strike a balance between providing access to nutritious food that meets individuals' dietary needs and curbing the spread of the coronavirus in our community.

The DMARC mobile food pantry program has also implemented modifications to its pantry layout and policies to help keep visitors and staff safe, all while doubling the number of mobile food pantry locations across the community.

DMARC would like to thank the staff, board, volunteers, and supporters at every one of the partner food pantries and mobile food pantry host sites that make up the DMARC Food Pantry Network. We could not fulfill our mission of meeting basic human needs in the greater Des Moines community without the tireless dedication of these front-line individuals and organizations.

ADVOCATING FOR AN END TO HUNGER IN IOWA

BY LUKE ELZINGA,
COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

Food insecurity rates have increased 50% in Polk County, Iowa due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to estimates from Feeding America. Right now, one in eight people in our community experiences food insecurity.

The pandemic did not create hunger and food insecurity in our community, but it certainly made the situation worse. DMARC has seen thousands of first-time food pantry users this year, many of them out of work and struggling to pay for groceries and other necessities.

We also witnessed how effective safety-net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Iowa as Food Assistance, can be in responding to crises. As Food Assistance benefits increased in response to the pandemic, DMARC saw less people who were enrolled in the program turn to our food pantries for help. But too many struggling Iowans still do not qualify for the program, or face barriers in accessing the benefits they *do* qualify for.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we protect our safety-net programs to ensure that when Iowans face financial hardship, they have places to turn for help to get them through.

But going further, if we are serious about ending hunger and food insecurity, we must address the root causes of poverty. That will take our community coming together to find solutions to some big challenges: ensuring everyone has access to affordable child care, housing, health care, transportation, and nutritious food. We are in this for the long haul.

To learn more about how you can get involved with DMARC's advocacy efforts, contact Communications and Advocacy Manager Luke Elzinga at lelzinga@dmarcunited.org.

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AGENDA

Protect and enhance Food Assistance (SNAP) and other nutrition programs

DMARC supports:

- state investment in the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) program, which incentivizes the purchase of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants
- expanding eligibility for Food Assistance to assist more Iowans who are struggling to make ends meet

DMARC opposes:

- policy changes that create barriers to accessing nutrition benefits

Support Iowa's nonprofit anti-hunger organizations

DMARC supports:

- exempting food banks, food pantries, and other anti-hunger organizations from the Iowa state sales tax
- providing funding to assist with logistical support, delivery, and access issues at food pantries, and for a food insecurity data collection pilot project for rural Iowa
- expanding IDALS' Local Produce and Protein Program to include nonprofit anti-hunger organizations

DMARC supports programs that empower Iowans to lead healthy, self-sufficient lives by bridging gaps in opportunity and building stronger, more resilient communities.

dmarcunited.org/advocacy

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

CHRIS HAUGEN

NISHA KISHOR

CARRIE LA RUE

JOHN McPHEE

PATRICK MINOR

MICHAEL SIROIS

REV. SARAH TRONE GARRIOTT

KEN WITMER

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RON BEANE (Advisory)

DMARC

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 ways 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/.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARINGSM

Support the DMARC Food Pantry Network with a fund or food drive during the Souper Bowl of CaringSM! We'll provide you with all the tools you need to make your drive a success.



Souper Bowl of CaringSM is a nation-wide food drive campaign that works to tackle hunger using the energy of the Big Game.

To learn how your congregation, workplace, or organization can get involved, contact DMARC Volunteer & Outreach Manager Nisha Kishor at (515) 277-6969 x18 or nkishor@dmarcunited.org.

ROLLING OUT THE NEW RED BARREL

BY NISHA KISHOR,
VOLUNTEER & OUTREACH MANAGER

DMARC is relaunching its Red Barrel program at metro area grocery stores with a fresh new look! The Red Barrel program was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but is back and looking better than ever for 2021.

The Red Barrel program collects food donations from shoppers at local grocery stores, who can donate food purchases in a Red Barrel after checking out on their way out of the store.

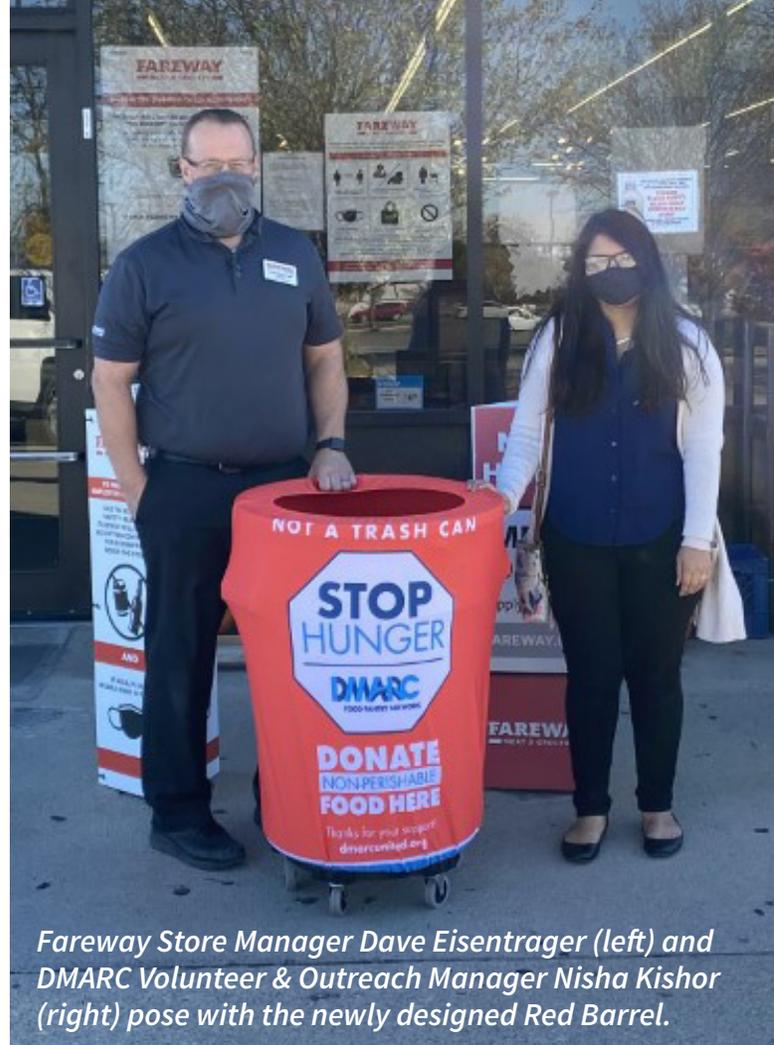
The program has been supporting DMARC and the people we assist through our Food Pantry Network for over 30 years. It was originally launched in April 1990 by members of local Kiwanis clubs.

At its peak, the Red Barrel program collected over 100,000 donated food items on an annual basis that were distributed through DMARC's network of 14 partner food pantries and 30+ mobile food pantry locations.

Donating food to the DMARC Food Pantry Network is as easy as purchasing a few of our most needed items along with your groceries and dropping them off in a Red Barrel as you leave the store.

DMARC relies on volunteers to pick up food donations from Red Barrels on a weekly basis. Volunteers can also host pop-up food drives at grocery stores to encourage shoppers to donate our most needed food items to the Red Barrel, as well as collecting cash donations from shoppers.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with the Red Barrel program, or hosting a pop-up food drive, please contact DMARC Volunteer & Outreach Manager Nisha Kishor at (515) 277-6969 x18 or nkishor@dmarcunited.org.



Fareway Store Manager Dave Eisentrager (left) and DMARC Volunteer & Outreach Manager Nisha Kishor (right) pose with the newly designed Red Barrel.

MOST NEEDED ITEMS

whole grain cereal



peanut butter



fruit canned
in 100% juice



UNITED TO MEET THE NEED

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Des Moines, Iowa 50309

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dmarcunited.org

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Des Moines Area Religious Council
 @DMARcUnited

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THE VOICE



The FY20 Annual Report for DMARC is now available. Learn how your contributions of funds, food, and time have made a positive impact on people in our community experiencing food insecurity this past year:

dmarcunited.org/annual-report



UNITED TO MEET THE NEED