

## THE PANDEMIC A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY LUKE ELZINGA,  
COMMUNICATIONS &  
ADVOCACY MANAGER

*DMARC Operations Manager Joe Dolack poses with a USDA food box on the DMARC mobile food pantry.*

It has been one year since COVID-19 arrived in Iowa. The past 12 months have been unlike any others experienced by all of us. But with your help, and the help of our partners, the DMARC Food Pantry Network has continued to provide healthy food to our community while following policies to keep our visitors, staff, and volunteers safe.

*continued on page 4...*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

A MESSAGE FROM MATT • ANNOUNCEMENTS  
DONATING YOUR FRESH GARDEN PRODUCE  
THE RED BARREL AT BRICK STREET MARKET



## A MESSAGE FROM MATT

It is hard to believe that by the time you sit down to read this, we likely will have spent a full year living with a pandemic; it will have been just less than a year since the tragic death of George Floyd—sparking a national movement for long overdue racial equity in our country; and it will have been just a few short months since our nation's capitol building was overrun by an attempted insurrection. You might think this is a list of odd bedfellows, but all of them are connected by their need for continued advocacy.

The recent storming of the capitol building can teach us many lessons about things that should have been done differently, or understanding how easy a narrative—false or not, can bring people to deplorable actions. But what I see is the opportunity this points to in our politics. Ours is supposed to be a politics of debate based in truth, a politics of finding common ground and compromising to further the shared ideals for our nation. That can still be actualized.

To that end, DMARC always aims to share the realities for those we assist. We continue to push for policies that will help improve the circumstances those facing food insecurity have to navigate—whether funding for food, child care assistance, or increasing access to healthy foods—especially in light of the pandemic. Far too frequently, and we've seen it again this legislative session, we spend a great deal of time fighting bad policy changes that aim to demonize assistance programs or push a narrative that they are rife with fraud and problems, which just is not the case. We will continue to share the facts and ask for your help to share those with friends, family, and policy makers yourselves.



We also continue to work on being a more equitable and inclusive organization. We've built on efforts to get more voices at our table from people of color, different cultural backgrounds, and different walks of life. If you think yours might be a voice we're missing, we want to hear from you and we want your help! We continue to partner with more diverse organizations on trainings to better understand things from their perspectives and have been adapting our policies—both with hiring and within our pantry network; including the voices of food pantry staff and visitors in that work.

There is always more to do in this regard, but we are up to the task. Thank you for everything you do to support our efforts and those you make yourselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Unger".

Matt Unger  
Chief Executive Officer

# A GUIDE TO DONATING FRESH GARDEN PRODUCE

BY LUKE ELZINGA,  
COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY MANAGER

Did you know your own back yard could serve as a powerful resource to feed your neighbors in Greater Des Moines? DMARC partners with personal, community, corporate, and faith gardens to provide fresh produce throughout our Food Pantry Network. Together, we aim to ensure access to healthy and nutritious food for everyone in our community.

"Planting culturally appropriate produce items supports our refugee and immigrant communities with hard to find produce items that are expensive to purchase in grocery stores," said DMARC Food Pantry Network Director Rebecca Whitlow.

Follow these three easy steps to make sure your garden produce helps us the most:

**#1 - Always harvest your produce before peak ripeness.** We'll need at least 24 hours to get it out into a food pantry.

**#2 - Properly clean and package your garden produce** when it makes sense to do so—it saves our warehouse staff time.

**#3 - Be sure you yourself would eat the food you're donating.** Blemishes are okay, produce ripe past usefulness is not.

Produce donations can be dropped off at our Food Pantry Network warehouse located at 1435 Mulberry Street in Des Moines. Reach out to our warehouse at (515) 282-2026 with any questions.

Are you planning on tending a garden this year? Consider planting an extra row or a few extra pots to donate to the DMARC Food Pantry Network. Check out the list to the right for suggestions of produce you can plant for donation. Thank you to all those who support us with donations of fresh fruits and vegetables!

## MOST NEEDED ITEMS

DMARC accepts donations of all kinds of fresh fruits and vegetables, but the following list includes some of our most requested items:

- beets
- bell peppers
- bitter melon
- bok choy
- broccoli
- brussels sprouts
- cabbage
- carrots
- chayote
- cucumbers
- garlic
- ginger root
- green beans
- kabocha
- kale
- kohlrabi
- lemon grass
- onions
- opo squash
- peas
- potatoes
- pumpkin
- squash
- sweet corn
- sweet potatoes
- taro
- tomatoes
- zucchini

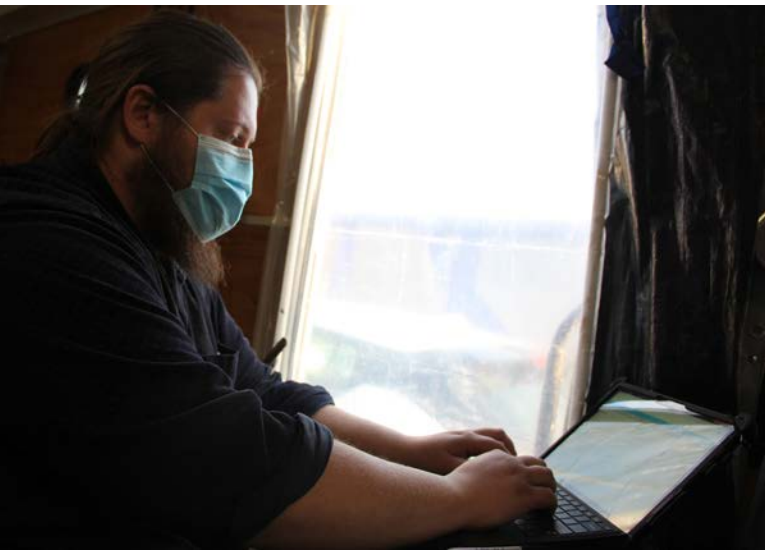


*...continued from cover*

As we review the past year of the pandemic at DMARC, some big changes stand out.

## **ADAPTING OPERATIONS**

As it became evident that COVID-19 had arrived in Iowa and a public health emergency was declared, the DMARC Food Pantry Network began implementing changes to limit mass gathering and help ensure the health of our food pantry visitors, staff, and volunteers.



At DMARC headquarters, we established safety protocols including masks, taking temperatures, handwashing and sanitizer, limiting in-person meetings, and remote work.

The DMARC Food Pantry Network includes 14 partner food pantries, and procedures at food pantries during the pandemic have not been uniform, but some of these changes include:

- providing masks and sanitizer to all
- eliminating or reducing volunteer shifts
- rolling back the "choice" pantry model and shifting to pre-packed bags of food or limited choices
- not allowing visitors inside the building, or only allowing a certain number of people inside at one time

- curbside pick up and pick-up windows
- call-ahead ordering
- no-contact deliveries

While some of these changes were not easy to make, DMARC continues to prioritize the health of our community during the pandemic.

## **NO-CONTACT DELIVERY SERVICE**

In April 2020, DMARC launched a no-contact food pantry delivery service. Monday through Friday, from 9am to 12pm, people can call 1-833-362-7220 to place an order for a no-contact delivery of food. Once the order has been placed, food is delivered by a volunteer to the person's doorstep with a no-contact drop off the next business day. DMARC is so grateful for the volunteers who have helped make this delivery service a reality.

## **EXPANSION OF DMPS MOBILE SITES**

Prior to the pandemic, the DMARC mobile food pantry had sites at two Des Moines Public Schools locations: Howe Elementary School and River Woods Elementary School.

DMARC expanded its partnership with DMPS in September 2020 to add 12 more mobile food pantry sites at K-12 schools across the metro. These mobile food pantry sites serve the entire community they are in and are not limited for exclusive use by students.

On average, these new mobile food pantry sites at DMPS schools have seen a higher share of first-time DMARC food pantry visitors when compared to the network as a whole.

## **MONTHLY USE DOWN, OVERALL USE UP**

As the pandemic first hit, DMARC food pantries saw a lot of traffic. But that slowed down within a week or two, and since then, many DMARC food pantries have not been seeing as many individuals every week as they did prior to the pandemic. At the same time, food pantries are seeing a lot of new faces who have never previously sought help.



# 58,707

## unique individuals assisted in 2020

Looking at the numbers for 2020, the DMARC Food Pantry Network assisted more unique individuals than ever before in its 45-year history, and nearly one in four people were using a DMARC food pantry for the first time. Despite this, the total number of food pantry visits actually decreased when compared to 2019. More people are using the DMARC Food Pantry Network during the pandemic, but they're using it less often.

We are not entirely sure why this is, but we have some guesses. Some households had more money to spend on food due to increased Food Assistance (SNAP) benefits and relief checks. We also saw a number of new anti-hunger projects pop up in our community, providing more resources for people seeking help with food.

### A STRAINED SUPPLY CHAIN

The pandemic has put a strain on our nation's food supply chain, which has led to DMARC seeing increases in food prices, delays in delivery times, and in some cases, food orders that have been cancelled altogether.

## 63% increase in cost on average per food item

*pre-March 2020 vs. post-March 2020*

Throughout this pandemic, DMARC has been fortunate to have our skilled staff and generous supporters ensure we're able to continue to meet the need in our community.

### USDA FOOD BOX PROGRAM

Since May 2020, DMARC has been participating in the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program. The program has gone through multiple phases, and as a result, the contents of the food boxes have varied, but have included fresh produce, dairy products, meat products, and milk.

In addition to these food boxes being distributed throughout the DMARC Food Pantry Network, a public giveaway was during the summer months at Southridge Mall.



# 58,522

## USDA food boxes distributed

*via USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program, May-December 2020*

The USDA food box program has been a great resource to DMARC and the people we assist. It has saved on produce costs and increased the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables DMARC distributes through the Food Pantry Network.

### WHAT WE MISS RIGHT NOW

In another, non-pandemic year, we would be looking forward to a number of upcoming events, including our annual Spring Greens fundraiser and the National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger food drive and volunteer event.

We miss spending time in person with our staff, board, volunteers, and visitors. We miss providing all our food pantry visitors with a warm, inviting atmosphere where they can take their time, chat with one another, and select their own food from the pantry shelves. We miss a lot of things right now, but we know that if we all work together as a community, we will get through this.

## 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**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FY21:

**MATT DURHAM,**

President

**CHRIST NAUMANN,**

President Elect

**THOMAS CROSS,**

Vice President

**IHSAN YASEEN,**

Secretary

**RANDY JENSEN,**

Treasurer

**EMILY WEBB,**

Past President

**LUAI AMRO**

**DENISE BUBECK**

**TOM CHAPMAN**

**LISA LOGAN**

**RACHEL COLLIER MURDOCK**

**REV. RACHEL MITHELMAN**

**STUART OXER**

**MATTHEW STRAWN**

**RON BEANE** (Advisory)



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. Want to learn more? Contact DMARC Director of Development & Outreach Leslie Garman, CFRE, at [lgarman@dmarcunited.org](mailto:lgarman@dmarcunited.org) or (515) 277-6969 x13.

## HONOR SOMEONE SPECIAL WITH A TRIBUTE OR MEMORIAL GIFT

Looking for a creative gift idea for a birthday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, or another special occasion? You can make a tribute gift to DMARC in their name. You can also honor the life and legacy of a loved one who has passed by making a memorial gift in their name.

When you make a tribute or memorial gift, we will notify the honoree that you have made a gift in their name. You can also include a customized message for the recipient when you make the donation.

Make a tribute or memorial gift online today at  
[dmarcunited.org/donate/donate-online/](https://dmarcunited.org/donate/donate-online/).

# THE RED BARREL AT BRICK STREET MARKET

BY NISHA KISHOR,  
VOLUNTEER & OUTREACH MANAGER

For over thirty years, the DMARC Red Barrel Program has been partnering with grocery stores across Greater Des Moines to collect food donations shoppers purchase and drop in the DMARC Red Barrel on their way out of the store.

Many of these Red Barrel locations are at larger grocery store chains like Hy-Vee, Fareway, and Price Chopper, but smaller independent grocery stores like Brick Street Market in Bondurant also participate in the Red Barrel program.

***"The Red Barrel program is an easy, accessible, and affordable way to do a small act that will make a big impact on someone's life."***

"There is so much need when it comes to food insecurity," said Brick Street Market owner Brian Lohse. "The Red Barrel program is an easy, accessible, and affordable way to do a small act that will make a big impact on someone's life."

Brick Street Market has been participating in the Red Barrel program since August 2014. The market prepares pre-packed Hunger Sacks filled with some of DMARC's most needed items that are placed right next to checkout lanes, making it easy for customers to grab a bag to donate before checking out.

"Our customers have responded overwhelmingly to having this opportunity to give," said Lohse. "I love seeing the Red Barrel filled to overflowing with the generosity of people."

Since it began participating in the Red Barrel program in 2014, Brick Street Market has raised \$16,387 worth of food donations for the DMARC Food Pantry Network through its Red Barrel.

The success of the Red Barrel program not only relies on the generosity of the customers making donations, but also relies on a dedicated group of volunteers who pick up these donations from grocery stores and transport them to the DMARC warehouse in downtown Des Moines.

Connie Richards is one of those volunteers. She has been volunteering with the Red Barrel program for seven years, and also volunteers her time with the DMARC mobile food pantry.



***Connie Richards (center) and employees of Brick Street Market pose with the Red Barrel.***

Richards picks up food donations from the Red Barrel at Brick Street Market every week. She counts the donated items, interacts with employees at the store, and ensures the Red Barrel stays in good working condition.

"I don't have the money to donate but I can donate my time," said Richards. "If we can, we should all help where there is a need."

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](mailto:nkishor@dmarcunited.org).





UNITED TO MEET THE NEED

Des Moines Area Religious Council  
1435 Mulberry Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

515.277.6969  
[dmarcunited.org](http://dmarcunited.org)

Warehouse: 515.282.2026  
Fax: 515.274.8389  
Email: [info@dmarcunited.org](mailto:info@dmarcunited.org)



Des Moines Area Religious Council



@DMARCunited

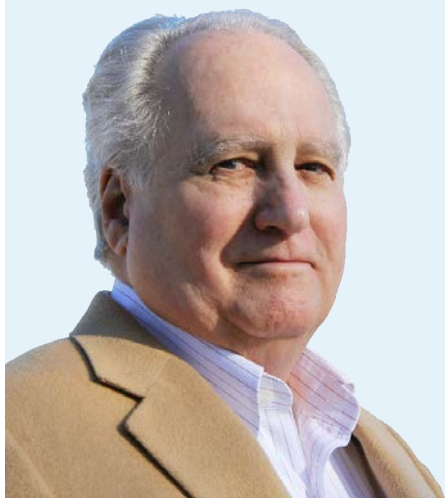
Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

DES MOINES, IOWA

Permit No. 2934

THE  
VOICE



DOUGLAS M. WOODS  
**HUNGER**  
CHALLENGE  
**MARCH 1-28, 2021**

Since 2013, the Douglas M. Woods Hunger Challenge has been matching gifts to the DMARC Food Pantry Network, thanks to benefactor and retired West Des Moines police officer Doug Woods.

Now in its ninth year, the Douglas M. Woods Hunger Challenge offers \$20,000 of matching funds. During the Challenge, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar—a \$10 gift will help DMARC provide 33 meals!

[dmarcunited.org/doug-woods/](http://dmarcunited.org/doug-woods/)



UNITED TO MEET THE NEED