

2021  
AND BEYOND

DWARC

UNITED TO MEET THE NEED



# DES MOINES AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

## FACILITY RELOCATION & EXPANSION



# UNITED TO MEET THE NEED

The Des Moines Area Religious Council, more commonly known as DMARC, is an interfaith organization that is united in its mission to meet basic human needs in the greater Des Moines community. Founded in 1952, DMARC collaborates with more than 200 congregations from across the religious spectrum to provide food for our community.

## DES MOINES AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL



# Fighting food insecurity is DMARC's most visible contribution to the greater Des Moines community.

## ALL ARE WELCOME

Today, the DMARC Food Pantry Network consists of 14 partner pantries and 31 mobile food pantry sites that assist over 58,000 unique individuals annually in Central Iowa.

Those who currently utilize the DMARC pantry do so on average only 4 times during the course of one year. By and large, people use a pantry when they must, but no more. DMARC continues to be part of a safety net for our community, helping those in need when that need occurs.

Women, children, and adults over 60 comprise the majority of people receiving food assistance through the DMARC Food Pantry Network. One in three people assisted by DMARC are children. Food pantry visitors represent diverse religious, cultural, regional, and ethnic backgrounds. An estimated 95% of food pantry users have household incomes at or below 185% of federal poverty level.

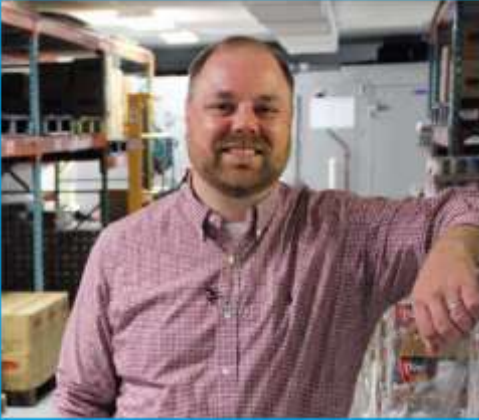
## FOOD INSECURITY IS ON THE RISE

Unfortunately, food insecurity in Polk County has not decreased or even stabilized. In fact, prior to the pandemic, DMARC was seeing continued increases in food pantry usage when compared to the same time period the year previous – a 15% average monthly increase in the second half of 2019. Since moving into the current DMARC facility in 2014, DMARC has seen an 82% increase in the number of total annual visits to food pantries, from 126,000 to over 228,000! Despite this, total food costs have only risen 24% thanks to DMARC's incredible job of decreasing the cost per person by 32%.

In order to continue to meet the need, DMARC must purchase more food and increase storage capacity. Currently operating from two separate storage facilities, our capacity is still inadequate and operations inefficient. A new building will:

- Provide DMARC one centralized location for inventory management
- Provide overnight indoor storage for the mobile program
- Increase buying power, resulting in cost savings
- Add more space to increase volunteer support and on-site pantry access.

*“Our country has not yet solved the food insecurity problem that plagues our cities and states. Instead, the problem has increased in recent years to a degree that should cause every American to pause & reflect on our use of resources. While fixing the problem must be a national priority, responding to it day in & day out in a compassionate, flexible, organized, way is the responsibility of every community. Providing nutritious, healthy food for children and adults calls for creativity and constant vigilance. DMARC meets that challenge! This campaign to relocate to a new larger and efficient facility will greatly enhance the ability to feed our community. Join us in helping to make this happen!”*



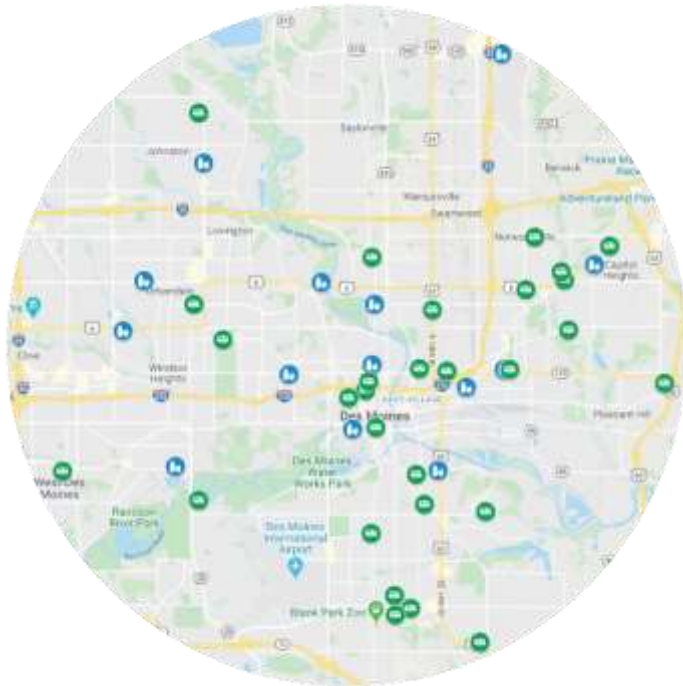
DMARC moved into our Mulberry facility in January of 2014 to better meet the growing need of people living with food insecurity in our community. At the end of that year, we had assisted just over 32,000 unique individuals. By 2019, that number grew to just under 56,000 unique individuals – an increase of 75% in just 5 years. While we're proud of our efforts, we cannot continue to meet this existing need, let alone the growth we expect, without a large, more effective space.

This project isn't about allowing us to offer more assistance – although it will. Rather, we're facing a moral imperative that if we cannot end up in a bigger, more effective space, we are knowingly setting ourselves up to leave many hungry children, seniors and families behind – that simply should not be okay with anyone.

—MATT UNGER,  
DMARC CEO



# DMARC Food Pantry Network



**COLLABORATION** is at the core of DMARC's organizational philosophy, as perfectly represented through the Food Pantry Network. DMARC serves as the coordinating entity for all its partner food pantries, which are independent nonprofit organizations or community agencies. This arrangement allows DMARC to maximize advocate in the fight against food insecurity. By acting as a network, DMARC provides consistent access to a reliable source of food for those who are struggling to make ends meet.



**PARTNER PANTRY:** another organization that provides a site location staffing. They adhere to DMARC's guidelines and are provided all food for the core food supply at no charge. There are **14** partner food pantries in Greater Des Moines. (see *partner list at bottom of slide*)



**MOBILE FOOD PANTRY:** a pantry on wheels. These mobile units travel to various sites in the community that do not have easy access to a grocery store or food pantry. Currently, DMARC collaborates with nearly **30** community partners to offer this mobile service. (see *map to left*)

# How Does DMARC Partner With The Food Bank Of Iowa?



DMARC obtains **20%** of its food through the Food Bank of Iowa, an organization that serves a network of **500+** partner agencies across **55** countries in Iowa. Food banks collect and store foods that are then distributed to local food pantries such as the DMARC's **14** partner pantries.

People visiting a DMARC partner food pantry can receive a three day supply of nutritious food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, once per calendar month. While some of these items can be secured through the Food Bank, DMARC does regularly purchase products to support the three day supply. Additional food such as Meals from the Heartland, items obtained through food rescue and recovery, and donated fresh produce are available whenever the food pantry is open. DMARC provides a reliable and consistent food supply to its partner pantries, which offer a dignified shopping experience for visitors and guarantee access to nutritious food for people experiencing food insecurity.

While DMARC partner pantries receive their core food supply from DMARC at no cost, some pantries do supplement their own inventories by holding food drives and purchasing items that are not included in the monthly supply from DMARC.

*"West Des Moines Human Services is proud to be a partner of the DMARC Food Pantry Network – a network that constantly fights food insecurity in new, innovative ways to put a face on the hidden hunger in our community. DMARC enhances our food pantry service by providing an abundance of fresh produce and other nutrient-rich foods for visitors to choose from. DMARC's vision continues to push the boundaries on food pantry service in order to meet our neighbors where they are."*

— STEPHANIE CORBETT  
WEST DES MOINES  
HUMAN SERVICES



# Programming & Innovation



*"In so many programs there are 'strings;. But with DMARC there are none. They were all so kind when I first went to the Bidwell Riverside Center Food Pantry, They welcomed me with no judgement; they were great (even singing!) while helping me shop for food. They treated me like I mattered. And provided a way for me to access fresh and healthy food which is so expensive."*

— TARA KRAMER, FOOD PANTRY USER & FRIEND OF DMARC

DMARC's commitment toward hunger goes beyond food assistance, implementing pantry-based initiatives to provide nutrition education and advocating for policies to address the root causes of poverty and food insecurity.



## DMARC Refuel Station

Deployed in April of 2019, a new mobile pantry created for children, called the Refuel Station, serves **700+** youth per month with healthy, kid-friendly, grab-and-go food items along with educational opportunities focused on nutrition. **The Refuel Station is hosted by Boys & Girls Club sites at local schools and Drake University.**



## Food Pantry 2.0

Utilizing a signature point system, choice architecture, and behavioral economics, food pantry visitors are incentivized and environmentally-motivated to select **healthier options** in their monthly food allotments. Food items are assigned a nutritional score and pantry users select and 'purchase' products based on available credits. This successful program empowers pantry users access assistance throughout the month and gives them freedom to choose foods that are most appropriate for their needs.

## Delivery Service

During the Coronavirus pandemic, DMARC launched a delivery service to reach individuals with disabilities and others unable to access permanent and mobile pantries. Individuals in need of food assistance delivery are now able to call DMARC via a toll-free number in the mornings from Monday through Friday. Delivery is prioritized for those with health, transportation, or other issues.



## Advocating for Change

DMARC believes that to truly end hunger and food insecurity in Greater Des Moines, simply providing more nutritious food through pantries is not enough. With more and more people turning to food pantries to help them feed their families, DMARC is committed not just to meeting the growing need, but to "shortening the line" at food pantries.

Through data, storytelling, educational events, and lobbying of elected officials/community leaders, DMARC advocates for policies that will reduce food insecurity in the State of Iowa. DMARC has fought to protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Iowa as Food Assistance, from threats at the state and federal level. DMARC advocates for policies that will address root causes of hunger and food insecurity, and takes an intersectional approach in understanding poverty in Greater Des Moines.



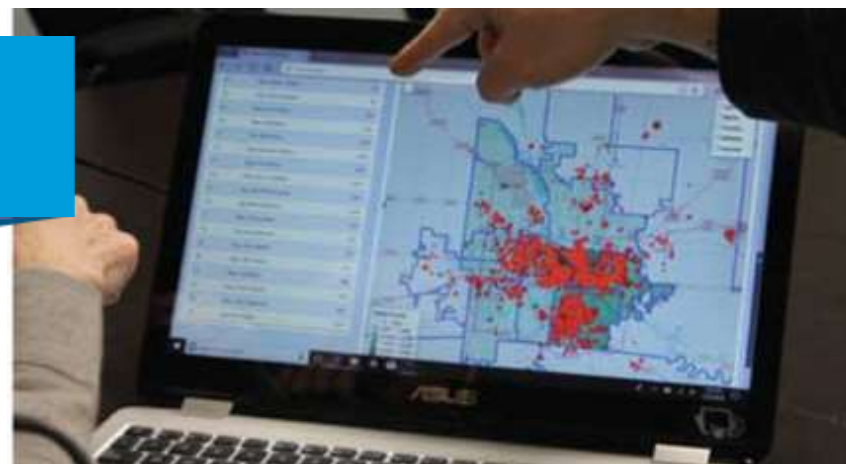
DMARC is also a member of the Iowa Hunger Coalition, a 501(c)4 non-profit organization. The Iowa Hunger Coalition is a group of passionate anti-hunger organizations and individuals who work for effective policies and help educate Iowans on the causes, effects, and solutions of food insecurity and hunger in Iowa.

# Data Visualization Dashboard



Perhaps one of DMARC's most innovative contributions to our community that truly tells the story of food insecurity was the development of the **Data Visualization Dashboard** in 2012. DMARC believes that it is more important that ever for community stakeholders to join together and confront the root causes of food insecurity through long-term approaches.

With this tool, DMARC is better able to understand and address the intersecting factors that prevent Greater Des Moines from reaching its full potential and improving quality of life for all.



The Dashboard helps DMARC, its partners, and community leaders to collect:



**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:** Better understand the people that DMARC assists by collecting and analyzing demographic data like age, race, and income of people assisted by a particular food pantry.



**NEIGHBORHOOD GEOGRAPHIC DATA:** Better understand the geographic areas of need by analyzing food pantry use according to region, school district, city, or legislative district.



**FACILITY DATA:** Cross-reference pantry usage maps with other data maps such as bus routes, grocery store locations, and those people being assisted by other safety-net programs in the community.



**MOBILITY DATA:** Better assist people who use food pantries and determine where new mobile food pantry sites should be located.



# Partnerships



*"The thoughtful and strategic expansion of the DMARC Food Pantry Network over the past decade has been impressive and crucial to our community, particularly the development of the mobile units that serve more neighbors in need closer to their homes, schools and workplaces... Simply put, more neighbors have access to pantry resources because we know where those resources are needed. DMARC's work is not cased on "good guesses" but on careful research and study."*

— REV. RACHEL THORSON MITHELMAN, SENIOR PASTOR  
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

DMARC and its myriad partners are serving as catalysts for change by working together to improve community access to fresh, healthy food.

In addition to the 14 partner pantries and 30 mobile pantry partners, DMARC collaborates with so many other organizational partners including:

United Way of  
Central Iowa

Food Bank of  
Iowa

Eat Greater  
Des Moines

Downtown  
Farmers Market

Meals from the  
Heartland

Boys and Girls Clubs  
of Central Iowa

DART

National Association  
of Letter Carriers

Today, DMARC has very limited space to share and educate our community on the issue of food insecurity. It is difficult to train and educate volunteers. A new building will afford them an adequate location for proper training, inspiration and program growth.



*“There is nothing more important than ensuring that our children are adequately fed. More than 77% of children in Des Moines rely on school and after school programs like Boys & Girls Club for their principal source of nutrition. Our partnership with DMARC helps us ensure all children have access to food during this pandemic.”*

—JODIE WARTH, FORMER CEO  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CENTRAL IOWA



**DMARC was founded out of a belief in the power of interfaith engagement as a way to build community and create positive change.**



### INTERFAITH EDUCATION:

DMARC's Food Pantry Network is founded on the partnership of nearly 200 diverse faith communities from across the religious spectrum that provide DMARC with gifts of cash, food, and service.

Because so much more can be done **TOGETHER** than done when acting **ALONE**, DMARC is committed to helping faith communities learn about one another. We unite by building relationships through meaningful connections among people across our community's diverse religious traditions and beliefs. This is done through interfaith education and dialogue opportunities, ranging from interfaith panels and visits to religious communities, to classes on interfaith and religious topics.



### INTERFAITH YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP:

Since 2017, DMARC has hosted an annual Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp, bringing together high school and college youth from across the religious spectrum to build relationships and make memorable experiences, spending multiple days exploring the religious landscape of Greater Des Moines. Students create digital stories that are meaningful to their own personal faith experiences and learn the foundations of Interfaith leadership. The Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp is a collaboration of DMARC and The Comparison Project at Drake University.



### MEET MY RELIGIOUS NEIGHBOR:

Meet My Religious Neighbor is a monthly interfaith open-house series. Each open house allows the public the opportunity to tour a sacred space, learn how religion is practiced in it, and meet the congregation who worships there.

Originally established by The Comparison Project at Drake University, Meet My Religious Neighbor is a project of the Iowa Interfaith Exchange, a collaboration between The Comparison Project at Drake University, CultureALL, DMARC, and Interfaith Alliance of Iowa.

# What Comes **NEXT?**



## VISION TO REALITY

Attaining more space is pivotal in helping DMARC continue to meet the basic human needs of our community. Today, DMARC's primary base of operations and supplemental "on loan" warehouse are filled to capacity.

Additionally, many logistical and efficiency challenges exist due to the inability to house all available products in one building. The new larger facility will provide space for mobile pantry overnight storage and provide efficiencies in terms of loading and unloading.

Finally, increasing DMARC's buying capacity equals cost savings! Having more space will allow for larger purchases which in turn means higher discounts and lower shipping costs.



## NEW LOCATION

DMARC is working with Knapp Properties to purchase the former Iowa Medicaid Enterprise building located at 100 Army Post Road on the south side of Des Moines. The building would be remodeled and half of the space would be used for warehouse-style storage and distribution operations.

The remaining space would be used for staff offices, community meeting space, and leasable opportunities for organizations that could benefit from collaborating with DMARC by housing within the same location.

There will also be a permanent pantry on site to better serve the neighborhood and the needs of those who live with food insecurity.



## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

DMARC will sell their current Mulberry Street headquarters and apply the projected **\$2 million** profit towards the total **\$5.6 million** goal, which includes purchase and renovation of the new Army Post Road property.





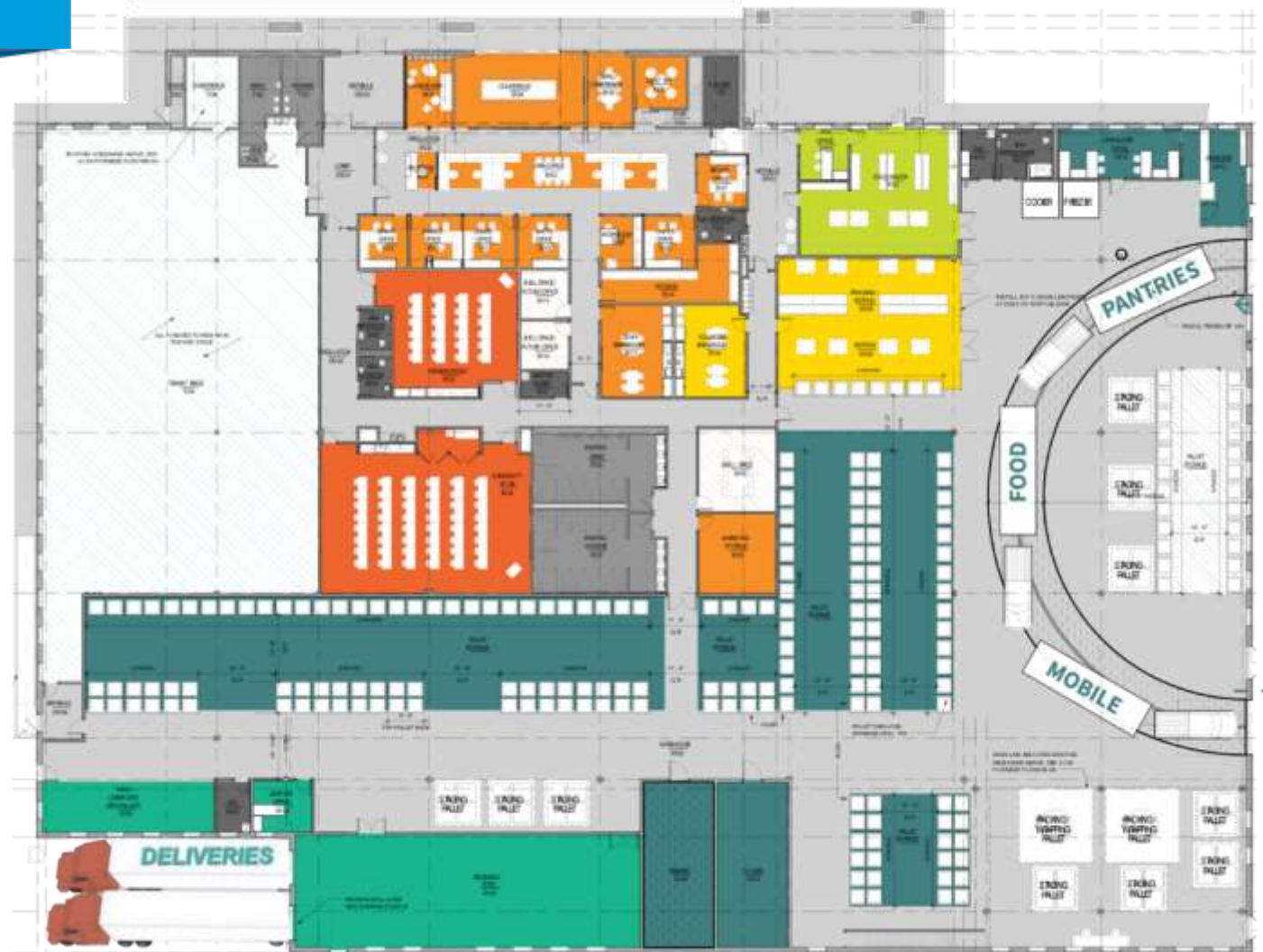
# Floor Plan



For more information about this project:

**Matt Unger, CEO**

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-  Inventory/Warehouse
-  Receiving/Warehouse
-  Volunteers
-  Staff/Office
-  Food Pantry
-  Education Training
-  Circulation
-  Future Tenant