



Food Pantry and Clothing
Serving the Community Since 1975

NEWS

May 2023



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow FISH Volunteers:

Earlier this month, I received an invitation from a long-time and very generous supporter, The Rotary Club of the Historic Triangle, to speak to their organization. Specifically, they asked me to describe and speak about a "typical family" that was a FISH client in the current, challenging environment of high inflation and lowered benefits. Mulling this over, I reached out to Cathey Sadowski, our Secretary and senior data analyst who, because of her long and productive experience at FISH, is uniquely positioned to describe our "typical family" if, in fact, one exists. Cathey immediately responded that a "typical family or individual client" is impossible to describe and provided me with several data points to illustrate. These are all so compelling that I want to share them with you.

During the first four months of 2023, we have served over 2,500 unique individuals. We're serving about 300 children a month, under age 18. While we have traditional "average" families of two adults raising one or two children, we also have single-parent families with children, large families (some with ten or more in the household), a lot of single individuals, some young people who are trying to make it on their own, some who are living in their cars and some who have just been released from jail. Additionally, we have grandparents raising grandchildren and other multi-generational households. We also have families with adult dependents at home, some who have special needs but have aged-out of most governmental support. We also have families with children in college. The number of veterans served is low (about 3% of all households in a month) but some of these veterans have the most difficult circumstances.

Our clients either walk to FISH, ride the WATA bus, wait for a neighbor to get a ride, or have groceries picked up by a friend, family member or a nonprofit like Faith in Action. We also have families who are new to the United States, and have come from all over the world.

We don't ask about job status, but from conversations with clients, we know that many are employed, often with more than one job.

Finally, we are seeing an unusually high number of folks coming to FISH for the first time. Consider this, in 2019 we saw an average of 30 new households a month; in 2022 that number increased to 41 per month. So far in 2023, we're averaging almost 60 new households a month! This last number is also an indicator as to why our food expenses have risen so dramatically.

The foregoing certainly illustrates the value of FISH and other local nonprofits that constitute a safety net for our clients in need. Our mission has never been more critical. I particularly want to thank each of you, whether in the Clothes Closet or Food Pantry, for the work you do daily on behalf of the underserved in our community. The fact that our good work helps attract dedicated men and women to join the FISH family is testimony that we're making a difference in the Greater Williamsburg area. Thank you.

Warm regards,
Jack Trotter
President

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Giving Back

*Sometimes it's the smaller, simpler things in life that touch us immeasurably.
Here are two instances of clients/friends giving back to us.*

A beautiful bouquet of fresh cut flowers was left at the reception desk with a note handwritten on an envelope ...



**Just wanted to say Thank You
for all you do for others!**

A lady brought in a large donation of men's clothes late on a Friday. She said the gentleman had lost a lot of weight and told her to take them to a consignment store so she could get money for them.

She replied to him that she was taking them to FISH because several years ago FISH helped her over a period of time when she was desperate, and she hoped the donation would help someone else now.

She had tears in her eyes and said she was so grateful to FISH.

We thanked her for her thoughtful decision and action.

--Submitted by Jeanne Fulks

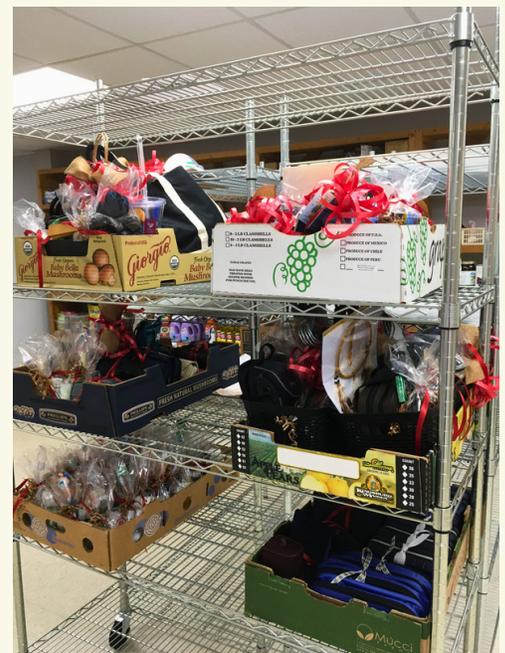


Happy Mother's Day!

Happy Father's Day!

Imagine the smiles these gifts bring to mothers and fathers who are struggling to put food on the table.

Thank you again, generous
Anonymous Donor!

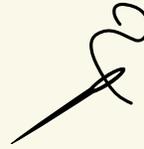




FISH Focus

Many FISH volunteers work beyond their committed hours in the Food Pantry, Food Delivery, Clothes Closet, Board of Directors, etc., on behind-the-scenes tasks that support this nonprofit.

Nora Lowery is one of these volunteers who used her sewing skills and made fish-patterned tablecloths to use at events. We have used these tablecloths many times over the past year!



As a seamstress, she also supports BellyButton's Boutique, a fellow-supporter of FISH. (See [November 2022 newsletter](#).)



As an artist, Nora's talents are currently on display as part of the Williamsburg Contemporary Art Center Exhibit at the Stryker Building through May 31. ([Click here for more details.](#))

More of her work is at [Nora's Art](#).

*Thank you for
going above
& beyond.*

*I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.
-- Maya Angelou*

Williamsburg Host Lions Club



Lion Doug Brown of the Williamsburg Host Lions Club visited FISH recently with a donation of 250 pounds of farm fresh Vidalia onions. The Host Lions travel to Georgia once each Spring to buy the onions direct from local farmers there and return to sell them in Williamsburg as a primary fundraiser. These onions will be offered to our clients and will go quickly. Thank you, Williamsburg Lions!!

Amber R.I.S.E.

Katrina Foster, of the Avalon Center and founder of R.I.S.E. (Restore hope while you gain your Independence to Survive and become Empowered), thoughtfully donated a shopping cart of crockpots, rice cookers and skillet.

We are grateful to Avalon for regularly referring its clients to FISH for assistance, and donating excess clothing.



Left to Right: Katrina Foster, Patti MacGillivray and Dan Fontaine of FISH



WindsorMeade Williamsburg

The WindsorMeade community collected and delivered 700+ pounds of food, and more than \$950 cash.

Not only was this a generous donation, but a good workout!!

Thank you for your faithful support of FISH.

Donations

Williamsburg Presbyterian Church

Jim Winthrop and Toby Lane delivered a donation of over 35 bags from Williamsburg Presbyterian Church on May 2, plus the intake log shows 38 bags delivered from the church on March 21.



Meet our New Volunteers

- Barbara Huehn
- Bob Stanzione
- John Morgan
- Loretta Twyman
- Lynn Pryor
- Madison Sandall
- Mary Ann Berube (returning)
- Miranda Saumier
- Peggy Weiss

Welcome to FISH!



Yummy Girl Scout Cookies



Cadette Troop 1087, Troop 1531, and Troop 1060 donated and delivered over 200 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies!

The clients will love these special treats!



Vietnamese Student Association at W&M



L-R: VSA Student Representative and Maura Rush, FISH Director & Food Donations Coordinator

Amidst the excitement and activity of receiving and shelving donations, the volunteers always try to get a picture and basic information. Any omissions are not intentional.



Summer Meals for Kids

With over 300 kids needing lunch every weekday this summer, FISH jumped in to help the Williamsburg Area Meals on Wheels with their Summer Meals for Kids program.

We purchased some needed items and when we asked, FISH volunteers brought donations of juice boxes, granola bars and many other items to enable Meals on Wheels to assemble lunches daily.

A huge THANKS to everyone who helped with this!



Donate Now

Donate online by clicking this Donate button



or by scanning this QR code



or by purchasing through the [Target Wish List Registry](#)



To scan a QR code:

- Open your cellphone's camera.
- Focus the camera on this QR code.
- Follow the instructions on your phone screen to complete the action.

All donations directly support FISH services to our neighbors in need.

Volunteer Spotlight

IT STARTS WITH RESPECT

Marci Kaplan-Lips
Food Pantry and Clothes Closet



Q1. Why did you choose to volunteer at FISH?

A1. I was looking for something to do where I could help others and give back to the community. In 2019, I visited Williamsburg and loved the area. Sadly, two years later my husband passed away and my friend/daughter, Allison, encouraged me to relocate here. I enrolled in a Line Dancing class where I originally met a fellow FISH volunteer, Ronda Roberts, and later encountered her again at a local faith-based organization. We began talking and she recommended FISH. Since then, we have become good friends and co-volunteers.

Q2. What do you find most rewarding about volunteering at FISH?

A2. The genuine gratitude of the clients is so rewarding and fulfilling. I really enjoy working with the clients, seeing their smiling faces, and receiving such positive feedback like "God bless you". It really makes me feel good when I can help them with what they need.

Q3. Do you have a specific experience while volunteering at FISH that you would like to share?

A3. I volunteer in both the Food Pantry and Clothes Closet. When working in the Clothes Closet, I enjoy assisting clients by helping them coordinate outfits. I had a career as a bookkeeper in the garment district in New York City where I developed a real feel on how to put an outfit together. One gentleman in particular comes to mind who needed clothing but was not really sure how to begin. He seemed frustrated. I looked at his size and coloring, then picked out something just for him and said, "This would look perfect with your eyes!". His whole demeanor changed instantly, and he asked me to pick out more clothes for him. What a pleasure!

I have had several clients tell me that they want to come back (should they need to) when I am volunteering, as they enjoyed working with me. I could see on their faces that I had made a difference in their day. I always treat people the way I would like to be treated and that starts with RESPECT.

Q4. Is there anything else you would like others to know about you?

A4. Volunteering at FISH since August 2022 has given me purpose again. After becoming a widow, I felt lost, and FISH has helped me almost as much as it helps the community. I am thankful.

In my spare time, I enjoy playing games, crocheting, and needlepoint. I crochet blankets and donate them to FISH. I also love to cook, bake, and help my friends which gives me great pleasure.