



Food Pantry and Clothing
Serving the Community Since 1975

NEWS

January 2023



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow FISH Volunteers:

In our November, 2022, newsletter, I mentioned that we were entering our busiest time of the year and asked that you continue to serve our clients with "patience, love and good cheer". I have to congratulate each one of you for exceeding my most optimistic projections. You were amazing, as you provided support to a near record number of individuals and families with food, clothing and housewares during this frenetic period.

As you know from your own experience, we started out modestly in January, 2022 (during renovations and our pending relocation) with 194 unique households comprising 528 unique individuals served. After our move was completed, those numbers increased rapidly month after month with December statistics reaching 441 households and 1,170 individuals!! These numbers, we believe, were the result of greater visibility on Second Street, but more importantly, of greater need caused by the lingering effects of the COVID pandemic and rising inflation that severely affected our client base.

The disturbing data on inflation, particularly on food prices, has created increasing hardship on our clients and makes our jobs that much more critical. Consider this: in 2022, overall food prices increased by 9.9%. Egg prices led the way, increasing by 32.2%, the result of Avian Flu. Poultry was up 14.6%, cereals up 13%, dairy products up 12% and on and on. The predictions for 2023 are essentially more of the same with egg prices predicted to increase by 27.3%. Other food prices are also expected to increase, although by smaller percentages. The only outliers in this data are projected decreases in beef, pork and fresh fruit prices by 1.7-3.0%. (All this data is from the USDA Research Service, 1/25/2023.)

Further compounding the problem is a supply chain that, while not broken, is certainly bent. We don't know, week to week, what our food orders will look like. Some weeks we can't get beef stew; other weeks we are shorted on bread or any number of non-perishable items. High prices or not, we continue to order eggs because of their high nutritional value. This Monday, we ordered 150 dozen eggs and received 45 dozen. We have tried to counteract these negative factors by ordering from alternate sources, although not always successfully. Following direction from our Board, we have determined that, effective immediately, we will "expand our footprint" vertically by significantly increasing the amount of food that we give our customers. Revised "Quantity Guidelines", dated January 23, are now in place to guide our pantry volunteers. Thanks to Maura Rush, Ginger Miller and Holly Trotter who led this initiative. We will closely track the impact of these increases over the next few months to determine their long-term efficacy.

Warmest regards,
Jack Trotter
President

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2022 Grant Funding

FISH thanks our generous grant donors who helped us fulfill our mission in 2022. Their partnership of compassion with us exemplifies our caring community. Their support is exceedingly valuable to our friends in need.

- Bruton Parish Church
- Empty Bowls Virginia Peninsula
- Peninsula Community Foundation
- Smithfield Foods
- St Martin's Episcopal Church
- Williamsburg Community Foundation
- Williamsburg Health Foundation
- Williamsburg Presbyterian Church
- York County Community Services

--Jeff Deel, Director - Grants Coordinator

Welcome

New Volunteers

Forrest Williamson
 Grace Aprahamian
 Jay Harrison
 Joan Owen
 Rita Milas
 Susie van Rijn

Thank you for choosing FISH!



2022 SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022, FISH served 3,886 requests for assistance:

- 3,360 requests for food, equating to an estimated 188,265 meals
- Clothing for 6,912 outfits
- Housewares for 386 households

We served 1,325 unique households of which 492 were new to FISH (37%):

- City of Williamsburg: 474 households (35%) with 1,341 requests (35%)
- James City County: 610 households (46%) with 1,850 requests (48%)
- York County: 196 households (15%) with 592 requests (15%)
- Outside Service Area: 45 households (3%) with 101 requests (3%)

In addition, we distributed:

- 3,300 Food Lion gift cards, \$10 each
- Emergency groceries to residents of four local motels.

--Cathey Sadowski, Director - Secretary



While the Ngo family was together over the holidays, they toured the new FISH facility and reported back, "We were so proud to think that my Mom started this organization in Williamsburg, and so happy that the mission lives on. You all have taken that mission to a whole new level...congratulations, and thank you.

We were so inspired by what you're doing, that we have decided, together, to make a \$5000 donation today to FISH, in memory of my Mom, and as a small way to provide support for all the great work you are doing."

L-R: Catherine, Bernie and Reggie Ngo; Jack Trotter, President and Tour Guide

Please see more on Founder Ling Ngo: [May 2022 Newsletter](#) - At the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new FISH facility
[June 2022 Newsletter](#) - In Memoriam



We received many bins full of warm hats and scarves handknitted by the Williamsburg Knitting Guild.

W&M Gymnastics Team

The combined men's and women's gymnastics teams from William & Mary held a food drive on January 7-8 and presented 2,400 pounds of non-perishable food to FISH to help serve the less privileged in our community. This annual event is a vivid testimony that "William & Mary Cares".



They also helped unload and shelve all 2,400 pounds.

[Click here](#) for the article from Tribe Athletics.

Thank You

Ford's Colony Country Club



Ford's Colony Golf Association LGA 18 and LGA 9 Holiday Luncheon where \$2705 was collected for FISH.

Williamsburg Presbyterian Church



The Williamsburg Presbyterian Church donated groceries (above) plus earlier in the month, the **Kirk Krafters** delivered over 20 beautiful hand-knitted scarves and hats.

Young Donor



Look at the groceries this 10-year-old collected and delivered as her own project! Inspiring!

She preferred not to give her name, but we have permission to print this photograph.

United Methodist Church



Debbie Bruss is decorating a Christmas tree with hats, gloves, and socks collected by the United Methodist Church for FISH during this holiday season.

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.

Williamsburg Chapter NSDAR



The Williamsburg Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution donated many more bags than pictured here.

L-R: Sherril Buckner, Kim Defibaugh, Jack Trotter (FISH President), Robin Doucette, Marie Ja Kob

Matthew Whaley Elementary School



Thanks to Marissa Spencer who brought the donation from Matthew Whaley Elementary. The Student Council Association oversaw the collection of 187 boxes of cereal which will be greatly appreciated.

Kiwanis Club

Doug and Jill Holroyd (FISH Board member) delivered 48 bags of food collected at the Kiwanis Holiday Party on December 15. The items collected specifically meet the needs of the 78 homeless families living in local hotels.

L-R: Doug Holroyd, Jill Holroyd, Holly Trotter, Ginger Miller



Virginia Peninsula Jail



Staff happily delivered goods.
Thank you for all you do.

Delta Kappa Gamma



Before Christmas, Susan Semes delivered many useful items collected by this philanthropic society.

Colonial Williamsburg Golden Horseshoe Golf Club



Charles Efird brought holiday greetings and 25 bags of groceries from the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club.

Arthritis and Rheumatic Diseases

The Arthritis and Rheumatic Diseases medical practice collected items at their office on McLaws Circle.

Ginger Miller (R), FISH volunteer, accepted the donation from their representative (L).



Colonial Williamsburg Workplace Advisory Board



L-R: Barbara Swanson, from the Board, with Ruth Bott, FISH volunteer.



FISH Makes a Difference

The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are especially busy for FISH. There is a greater need for food and clothing as the holidays approach. It's also a time of great generosity by the Greater Williamsburg community and churches with FISH receiving many donations from their food and clothing drives. While it can be exhausting, it brings endless joy to our volunteers.

I'd like to share a recent personal experience. I escorted a client through the Clothes Closet to select for her family of four. It melted my heart as she lit up while selecting clothes, shoes, linens, and housewares. She really lit up when she found a teddy bear hat for her 2-year-old, and a warm coat for herself that she immediately wore. After we loaded the bags into her car, she used Google Translate to tell me that we had made her so happy by getting so many new clothes. It gave me such a nice feeling knowing that we made her so happy by helping her family.

We're currently watching a show on Netflix called Maid. It is giving me some awareness of the struggles of the working poor. It really reinforces my awareness and conviction of the good that FISH provides.

If you haven't considered escorting clients in the Clothes Closet, you may be missing out on experiencing a special aspect of our FISH mission. I was hesitant at first, but found out that it gave me a particular kind of joy to interact with a client while they select items for their family. If you would like to start escorting clients in the Clothes Closet, just let me or Patti MacGillivray (macgillp@gmail.com) know. You'll be happy you did!

--Dan Fontaine
maineguy@cox.net

Thank You

Donating Made Easy

Online donations may be made by clicking this Donate button



or scanning this QR code



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.

Also, when shopping through the AmazonSmile program, a portion of your purchase price will be donated to FISH. Click the amazonsmile button below to start shopping.



Another convenient option is to donate through the [Target Wish List Registry](#)



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

Volunteer Spotlight

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Jeanne Fulks
Clothes Closet-Housewares

Q1. Why did you choose to volunteer at FISH?

A1. I moved to Williamsburg, in 2017, to be near my son after the death of my husband. I started volunteering with FISH in July, 2018, with the ladies from Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church sizing clothes one day a week for adults and, more specifically at that time, children. After the month was over, I liked it so much I asked the FISH coordinator, Billie Johnston, if she could use me every week. She said absolutely, and the rest is history. Billie was a huge influence on me, specifically when Covid first hit. I also volunteered in the Food Pantry several days per month, as well as the Mobile Food Pantry at Life Church once a month. Now I primarily work in the Clothes Closet-Housewares twice a week.



Q2. What do you find most rewarding about FISH?

A2. Helping folks with their clothing and houseware needs is very rewarding. Through incredible donations from our community, hotels, organizations, schools and families, we now have more linens, towels, plates, glasses, utensils, cookware, small kitchen appliances, coats, etc., than we've ever had. It's pretty amazing!

We ask our clients, "What do you need?", and some start out saying they feel ashamed of their situation. We ALWAYS try to make them feel that whatever they are going through is okay and could happen to anyone; and that we are extremely grateful to be able to help them in any way we can.

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

A3. My contribution to FISH, while working in Housewares, entails sorting, cleaning, and preparing items to be put in the Clothes Closet for our clients, making sure everything is in good shape. One day recently, we received a microwave oven, and I was just finishing cleaning and testing it to make sure it worked, when a client asked their volunteer if we had one. The client had recently been placed in one of the hotels and had no way to cook. Pretty amazing that we had exactly what she needed at that exact time! When you can improve someone's situation in any way, and see them leave happy and feeling better, it makes it all worthwhile.

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

A4. I love working with fellow volunteers and backing up each other when one of us is away—really incredible people!

I enjoy being near my son, and working church activities that benefit the church and the community.

And, then there is my cat, "Princess" Diana. Her name is Diana and I rescued her from a local shelter. My granddaughter told me about the "Princess" and talked me into adopting her 5 years ago. She really is living up to her name and rules the house.