



Food Pantry and Clothing
Serving the Community Since 1975

NEWS

March 2023



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow FISH Volunteers:

I'd like to take a few moments to briefly update you on some interesting developments that are materially affecting our clients. You may recall that last month I mentioned that temporary benefit increases to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enacted by Congress early during the COVID-19 pandemic ended on March 1, after three years, and that we may see a marked increase in the number of clients that visit FISH as a result. While our numbers are up for the 14 days we've been open in March, this is a small sample size and not alarming. When we look at the numbers from the start of 2023, however, it is more sobering. In January 2023, client numbers (food and clothing) were the highest in a decade; February 2023 numbers were double those of February 2022. The number of new households served, a key data point, increased to 77 in January and 45 in February. We believe that our client workload and demand for our services will continue to grow throughout the year, although it may be months before we can accurately see the effect of the SNAP reductions locally. In prior newsletters, I've described the across-the-board increases in non-perishable food we provide our clients, effective January 23, in recognition of growing need. In addition, we're trying to more effectively utilize food available from the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank, with the assistance of our "Food Shoppers", seven James City Lions. These dedicated folks, coordinated by Don Butts, have been superb, traveling to Hampton several times a month, keeping our stocks up and adding frozen meats and vegetables, whenever available.

Another initiative we've undertaken is an informal, no-cost partnership with the Food Lion store where we buy the bulk of our non-perishables. Beginning in early March, we have been able to pick up fresh vegetables, fruits, deli products, baked goods and even milk on a weekly basis. These items are near their "sell-by" dates but they remain nutritious

supplements to our other food offerings. Our experience in the past two weeks shows that these add-ons are extremely popular and go out the door fast. We are deeply grateful to Food Lion for its generosity.

Another successful partnership, which is nearing its first anniversary, is with the Bicycle Co-Op of Williamsburg. We provide vouchers to any FISH client that has no other means of transportation for a like-new bicycle, at no cost to the individual. During the period May-December of 2022, forty-eight (48) bikes were given to our clients! So far this year, the number is ten. Again, this is a real game-changer for our clients and we remain deeply grateful to the dedicated men and women who make the Bicycle Co-Op so special. Thank you!

And so, to each of you, thank you for your devotion to FISH and the underserved in our community. You make a huge difference every day whether in the Clothes Closet or Food Pantry with your selfless caring, good humor and willingness to serve others. You are appreciated!

Warmest regards,
Jack Trotter
President

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2023 Annual Meeting & First Anniversary at Second Street Celebration Saturday, April 15, 2023

FISH Volunteers:

We hope you will be able to attend the annual meeting and celebration of our first year in our new location on Second Street.

The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and include a fun and free raffle for great prizes and refreshments. Raffle drawings will be held at 11:00 a.m.

You may submit your election ballot, "Grill the Board" with your questions and suggestions, and view two new FISH videos. See you then!

Getting Ready for Warm Weather (Clothes Closet Changeover)

A team of volunteers completed the transition from winter to spring items in the Clothes Closet on Saturday, March 11. Shorts, short-sleeved tops, and light-weight jackets replaced sweaters, long-sleeved tops, and parkas on the shelves and racks. The winter items, including woolen gloves, hats, and scarves, were packed away until Fall.

Our warmer weather inventory consists of items from our storage or recently donated. We have some gaps in our inventory and welcome donations of summer clothing and shoes for older children (sizes 8 and higher in both boys and girls), women's shorts in all sizes, and basketball-style shorts for boys and men.

Going beyond their regular volunteer duties and helping with the semi-annual changeover were Janis Walby, Lucy Kunkle, Nora Lowery, Jeanne Fulks, Barbara Riebe, Sandy Dunton, Cindy Tocci, and Patti MacGillivray. Jeanne and Dan Fontaine spent most of Friday moving summer things from the Storage Annex and staging the boxes to make it easy on the other volunteers.

Cindy Tocci & Patti MacGillivray
Clothes Closet Co-Coordinators

WATA Bus Stop Update

Wonderful News to Report!

Our friends at WATA (Williamsburg Area Transit Authority) just announced an extension of bus services supporting FISH.

Effective March 20, 2023, the Route 3 bus will stop at FISH every hour at 40 minutes after the hour!

Specifically:

Monday - Saturday: 6:40 a.m. - 8:40 p.m.
Sunday: 8:40 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.

Temporary Storage Needed

There are three bins of furs in The Costume Sale area that we'd love to store until September in someone's spare room or closet.

These generous donations can bring in funds for items we purchase as needed, such as socks, underwear, and under-supplied clothes.

Please contact Karen Berquist at kaberq@wm.edu or 757-880-1284.



Welcome

New Volunteers

Audrey Godwin
Janis Walby
Lori Forcucci
Miranda Saumier
Sarah Chase

Thank you for choosing FISH!

Always Remember Why We Volunteer

We should always remember why we are FISH volunteers. There is so much joy in being part of a caring team of volunteers that is serving the needs of our community.

Our clients come from many backgrounds and experiences. We don't know their personal challenges. We are just here to help them with a little kindness and some food, clothing, and housewares.

While most of our clients are a true joy to help, some provide more of a challenge. I have days where I'm tired or get easily irritated. At those times, I remind myself why I volunteer, put on a smile, and use a caring, patient tone to help make a client's experience at FISH one that they want to share with their friends.

Here's a recent example. A client was selecting clothes for her household of five. Her method of selecting an appropriate size for the younger children and herself involved unfolding a lot of clothes in different sizes. The process took longer than most visits and many clothes were replaced unfolded on the shelves by the client.

It would have been very easy for me to become impatient with the client, but I thought of why I volunteer and tried to put myself in her shoes. It helped guide me to treat her with kindness and respect throughout her visit.

We should do our very best to be a friendly advocate for FISH with our clients, even the difficult ones. It's easy to come across as impatient or uncaring, even if unintentional. Let's remember why we volunteer and do what we can to make a client's visit a positive experience for all.

Dan Fontaine

Warm Coats to Turkey



Working with a local church initiative, FISH was able to pass more than 15 warm coats to the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Thank you to Patti MacGillivray and Joe Benedetti, for their involvement in this effort.





Poverty Simulation Summary

by **Cindy Tocci**
Clothes Closet Co-Coordinator

I attended the Poverty Simulation, presented by the Williamsburg-JCC Community Action Agency and the Virginia Cooperative Extension on March 6. It was an interactive and enlightening program developed by the Missouri Community Action Network. The goal was to bring to life the day-to-day struggles of individuals and families with limited incomes and resources.

The meeting leader gave each participant a role in a financially insecure family unit and provided a real-life scenario with simulated activities for that family to engage in over a period representing four weeks.

Community resources and services were placed around the perimeter of the room. Families had to visit these locations to do their banking, apply for jobs, access food, attend school and childcare, pawn or buy goods, get transportation coupons, etc.

I was a 14-year-old student with an older brother and mother. Our father had left our family and had taken our family car and all our money, except \$10. Our mother, who was jobless, had to navigate social services and resources while I went to school and my brother, a high-school dropout, tried to get a job. We quickly learned that getting assistance was confusing and time-consuming. My "mother" had the added challenge of depending on public transportation. A request from

school for \$5 for a special project strained our family budget. At least I was old enough to stay home alone during Spring Break and babysit two kids in our apartment building to earn the money for the school project and to get new shoes. My mother was lucky to find a job, but her first paycheck didn't come in time to pay the rent, so we were evicted and ended up in a homeless shelter. We all experienced a quick downward spiral.

Each family had its own scenarios and struggles but experienced many of the same frustrations with daily activities.

After the simulation activities, the representative at each resource/service summarized their experience with the families. Some of the families reported on their experiences. Patterns of emotions included confusion, frustration, and recognition of inefficient procedures.

The simulation was successful in raising awareness about the daily struggles of financially insecure families and how one unfortunate event, such as an unexpected bill, significantly impacts a family's welfare. Next steps include having the participating organizations assess their procedures through the eyes of their clients to identify possible pain points, and increase collaboration among organizations.

A Fun FISH Story

The FISH concept originated in England during the early 1960s. When it came to the United States, several communities embraced the FISH model to help those in need. Volunteers were alerted to those needing assistance when someone placed a picture of a fish in their window. Today, our FISH continues the tradition by helping those needing assistance within the Greater Williamsburg Area.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority



A very generous donation of food, housewares and clothing!



Virginia Beer Company



While we are late in acknowledging this donation, we are so appreciative of our neighbors, The Virginia Beer Company and Robby Willey (pictured here) for their support.

During the holidays, they hosted a coat drive and donated lots of coats in January.



Our faithful, anonymous donor once again has blessed this community and FISH with Easter baskets of colorful, tasty happiness!

LEAD Greater Williamsburg



The LEAD Greater Williamsburg alumni and Jill Holroyd (R), FISH Director, had a great time on March 9 at Precarious Beer Project for the People, Pets and Pints event. The organization donated 5 crates of food and some cash to FISH.

Good Music, Good People, Good Cause



The Three Jolly Coachmen's Coffee House selected FISH to receive the proceeds from their March 10 concert.

Jill Holroyd, Director, represented FISH, enjoyed beautiful music, and accepted a \$1,000 donation from Greg Davy.

Stonehouse Elementary School



The Student Council Association and K-Kids organized a food drive for FISH.

Thank you, Morrison Dental Group!!



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.

J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School



The Harris family delivered 102 boxes of cereal from JBB Elementary School.

The students lined up the cereal boxes throughout the school for a Domino Effect representing "pay it forward with kindness".

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.

Williamsburg Masonic Lodge #6



L to R: Peter Booker, Ginger Miller (FISH), and Donna Hayes

The Lodge intends this to be a recurring monthly donation.

Amazon ended the AmazonSmile program on February 20, 2023.

Thank you to our donors who made the conscientious effort to shop through AmazonSmile for FISH's benefit!

Stay tuned for our Amazon Wish List.

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

THE HEART OF VOLUNTEERING

Barbara Williams
Clothes Closet

Q1. Why did you choose to volunteer at FISH?

A1. I decided to volunteer at FISH because I had recently retired and felt a strong desire to do something to help others. I have worked in a local hospital for many years and caring and serving others has been a lifelong passion for me. Personally, I feel we all have a responsibility to serve and reach out to others in need.

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

A2. What I find most rewarding at FISH is the dedication and hard work that the volunteers put forth in receiving, sorting, organizing and distributing items to clients, and the myriad of "behind the scenes" duties performed to support our mission to serve our community. I see firsthand all that needs to be done and am comfortable with my assigned duties for the day. Wherever I can help is where I will gladly be.



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

A3. Recently while volunteering at FISH, a really bad storm came through the area quicker than what was being forecast. Conditions were getting worse causing the Jamestown Scotland Ferry to temporarily shut down until the next morning. The volunteers I share my day with were concerned about my safety and how I would get home (along with my family!). I REALLY appreciated their concerns and support because I had to leave FISH early to navigate another way home, and left my fellow volunteers down one person. I felt relieved that they were encouraging me to do what I needed to do to get home safely. That meant a lot!! Thankfully, I did get home, driving to Surry via Charles City County—it took me a long time, but I made it! A co-volunteer called me later just to make sure I got home okay.

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

A4. It is wonderful and truly a blessing that FISH exists to assist those in need of food, clothing, housewares and other necessities without cost to them. It's amazing and gratifying to see how our community of businesses, private organizations and individuals work together and donate to FISH. When we have more than we need, there is always someone who needs more than they have. We may never know if and when one day we may need that same help. As the Bible says, "Do unto others..."