

WE ARE

Businesses Rising to Tackle Hunger

2020 PROGRESS REPORT

WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS!

The business community in Montgomery County is rising up to help meet our county government's pledge to significantly reduce hunger where we live.

Year 2 has been a very busy and rewarding year for Business Leaders Fighting Hunger. We developed new relationships with businesses, funded new, innovative ventures, and supported our local economy to combat the unprecedented increase in food insecurity during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Ours is an investment in economic opportunity, as well as the right course of action for the most vulnerable among us. We know that hungry people aren't productive people, and that opportunity for each of us presupposes basic sustenance. We are making progress. Real progress. But we can and must do more. We can't ask government alone to solve this enormous challenge.

We are Business Leaders Fighting Hunger

Business Leaders Fighting Hunger is a coalition of Montgomery County employers committed to doing their part to reduce hunger in our midst. We seek to inspire businesses to step up alongside county government and the many nonprofits involved in solutions to the hunger problem in our community. We are aligned with the County's Food Security Plan and Montgomery County's COVID-19 Food Security Task Force. We make sure that our investments are in sync with the county's strategy for reducing hunger, including the recently launched Food for Montgomery campaign.

This year during the pandemic we were highly adaptable and quickly responded to the county's incredible food shortage.

We aim to raise more than \$500,000 over four years by inviting corporate citizens to pool funds and make strategic investments to improve food security. And, we are well on our way. The Business Leaders' fund is managed by the Montgomery County Community Foundation, a 501(c)3.

WE ARE NIMBLE

Just two weeks into the COVID-19 global pandemic, before the food lines were miles long, Business Leaders Fighting Hunger granted \$50,000 to support eight county organizations including [Manna Food Center](#), [Identity](#), [Universities at Shady Grove](#), [Gaithersburg HELP](#), [Meals on Wheels](#), [Nourish Now](#), [Rainbow Community Development Center](#), and [Shepherd's Table](#).

Swift and generous donation to Identity families from Business Leaders Fighting Hunger

Identity is grateful for the quick and generous action of Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, who today donated \$12,500 for emergency food support for Identity families suffering from sudden financial stress and hunger since the COVID-19 global pandemic. A match by an anonymous local business unlocked a full \$25,000 that will immediately go to pay for groceries for thousands of young people and their families living in high-poverty areas of Montgomery County.

"Business Leaders Fighting Hunger showed up when we needed them most," says Carolyn Camacho, one of Identity's program directors. "Now we can begin to head off an immediate hunger crisis among some of the most isolated, most vulnerable of our Latino and other historically underserved neighbors, and give them immediate support to make it through this unprecedented upheaval".

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Our Local Response to the COVID-19 global pandemic

50%

Since March 2020, food insecurity has grown throughout the U.S., including in Montgomery County, MD, where foodbanks are seeing a 50% increase in the number of clients.



WE ARE GROWING

When Stein Sperling’s managing partner Jeff Schwaber heard about Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, he organized a group of Montgomery County law firm leaders to come together to help support and promote the effort. As Jeff explained, “It is our collective responsibility to take a leadership role in fighting hunger and food insecurity in Montgomery County. Business Leaders Fighting Hunger was an ideal vehicle for providing that support.” As the COVID-19 global pandemic shut down commerce in March, support from Stein Sperling and other law firms and individuals in the county made a swift and meaningful impact on the ability of Business Leaders Fighting Hunger to further its reach.



The firm pledged both financial support and a commitment to engage others in the county in the urgent fight against hunger, particularly in response to increased area need due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

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WE ARE INNOVATIVE

As business, community and civic leaders in Montgomery County, we need to do whatever it takes to invest in economic opportunity so that everyone has the same basic opportunities — a chance to work hard, to pursue happiness and to earn their own success. Our business community has the collective power to be a game-changer in people’s lives, helping people access food so that all else becomes possible. That’s what we can be.

Using a grant from Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, Nourish Now and Rainbow Community Development Center incentivized local, minority-owned, small business restaurants to reactivate their businesses as meal providers for hunger relief.

This innovative funding model:

- ▲ Fed families and children who are food insecure,
- ▲ Allowed restaurants to rehire frontline workers, and
- ▲ Helped feature small businesses that are committed to helping the community.

Business Leaders made it possible for one thousand eight hundred meals to be provided in partnership with All Set Restaurant & Bar, Los Chorros Restaurant, Kusshi Sushi and Cava Mezze. And, then the food was delivered to clients, including 200 residents with COVID-19, by Hughes United Methodist Church to one of the areas hardest hit by the pandemic.

“I just wanted to take the time out to let you know that we enjoyed our dinners. The pandemic has been a struggle for all of us, but this took a load off. I want to thank you and all the contributors who made this happen. The food was warm and delicious.”

- LaQuita



“We are so grateful that Business Leaders Fighting Hunger in partnership with the Rainbow Community Development Center selected All Set Restaurant & Bar and Money Muscle BBQ to provide meals to over 550 families in need at this very troubling time for our country.”

– Edward Reavis,
All Set Restaurant, Chef/Owner

– Jennifer Meltzer,
All Set Restaurant, Managing Partner

And our innovation continued...

One of the biggest challenges to fighting hunger in Montgomery County during the pandemic has been reaching people who need food most – families in sudden financial distress who are not only isolated by language barriers, but fear accepting benefits no matter how dire their circumstances.

That’s why the [Montgomery County Food Council](#) and Business Leaders Fighting Hunger collaborated with Identity this summer to offer internships to two bilingual workforce development program participants, each receiving a grocery stipend for their time. They helped the Food Council make its website and materials more accessible to Spanish speakers and helped small nonprofits and their qualifying clients access state and county benefits like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants and Children). This program has since been expanded, and several other interns have worked with the Food Council!

Nicolas says his internship was life changing. Not only did he gain the confidence to talk to strangers in a professional setting, but also it unleashed a passion to help others.



Nicolas M., Identity Youth Opportunity Center Participant

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WE ARE REDUCING BARRIERS

The Business Leaders Fighting Hunger coalition provided essential support to the [Food is Medicine](#) program in Montgomery County and its expansion into the East County area. Over 1,300 patients in the Care for Kids program and Montgomery Cares program were referred to Food is Medicine, offering 12 weeks of no-cost food assistance as well as diabetes education. Among families that participated in the program, over 70% reported healthier nutritional behaviors (fewer sugary and salty snacks, more fruits and vegetables), 62% reported weight loss, and 56% of diabetic and prediabetic participants reported improved glycemic control. On average, participants lost 6 pounds and improved glycemic control (HbA1c) by one percentage point. Follow-up surveys found that two thirds of participants maintained these improvements after the program ended.

The infrastructure established through the Food is Medicine program has been essential in the COVID-19 global pandemic. Food insecurity has increased dramatically as thousands of families lost work or self-isolated due to potential exposure to the disease. Zip codes in East County were hit especially hard. Community Health Workers helped to connect families to food assistance, including food delivery for families in quarantine, and provided enrollment assistance to other local health and assistance programs. Food Is Medicine is reducing barriers to accessing healthy food in high poverty communities.

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Business Leaders Fighting Hunger accepts the 2020 Partnership of the Year Award. Left to right: C. Marie Taylor, Former Chief Executive Officer, Leadership Montgomery, Shondra Jenkins, Co-founder, Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, Wendy Mackie, Chief Financial Officer, Burness.

WE ARE **HUMBLED**

At Leadership Montgomery's annual Corporate Volunteer Luncheon, businesses were recognized in six categories for contributions to their community through employee volunteer engagement. Business Leaders Fighting Hunger was honored and is humbled to be named the 2020 Partnership of the Year.

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WE ARE **LOOKING FORWARD**

Our four focus areas for 2021:

- 1 Fund wrap-around food services for the newly established Educational Equity and Enrichment Hubs, serving low-income public-school students
- 2 Expand innovative internship programs.
- 3 Scale local restaurants and non-profit food provider partnerships.
- 4 Continue support of Food is Medicine.

WE ARE **THANKFUL**

Business Leaders Fighting Hunger is a group of Montgomery County businesses committed to reducing the number of food insecure residents in the county by making strategic investments in programs that tackle the root causes of hunger. The coalition was co-founded by Sodexo and Burness.

We are thankful for supporting businesses, including:

- ▲ Atlantic Electric Supply Corp
- ▲ Bass Accounting & Tax Services
- ▲ Belikove and Graves
- ▲ Bendler & Company
- ▲ Bethesda Magazine
- ▲ Clark Construction
- ▲ David R. and Deborah S. Lambert Charitable Trust
- ▲ Golden & Cohen
- ▲ SmithPilot
- ▲ Stein Sperling, LLC
- ▲ Jezic & Moyse, LLC
- ▲ Law Office of Brian Gruber, Judith Bluefeld
- ▲ Jo Benson Fogel, P.A.
- ▲ McCabe Russell, PA
- ▲ Schulman Bhattacharya LLC
- ▲ Hostetter Strent LLC.

We welcome all businesses that want to step up to help our neighbors thrive. We feed Montgomery!

MULTI-YEAR PARTNERS:

Two years later, forward-thinking corporate citizens are making strategic investments to fight hunger in Montgomery County.



If you'd like to invest in this collaborative venture

Send a check to:

Attn: Finance Department
Greater Washington Community Foundation
Business Leaders Fighting Hunger Fund
P.O. Box 49010
Baltimore, MD 21297-4910

Please include "For Business Leaders Fighting Hunger Fund" in the memo line.

Contribute online at:

www.thecommunityfoundation.org/donate

Please include "For Business Leaders Fighting Hunger Fund" in the memo line.