



Arlington Food Assistance Center

"Feeding Our Neighbors In Need"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Chair2
 AFAC Mission.....2
 Plot Against Hunger3
 Sheila Johnson Chairs Benefit for AFAC3
 Penn Farm 4
 Doubletree Food Drive 4
 Client Profile5
 Potatoes for AFAC.....5
 Teen VolunTERS6
 New at AFAC..... 7
 6th Graders Food Drive7
 Volunteer Needs8

SUMMER FOOD DRIVES

Please remember to make AFAC a part of your summer by sponsoring a food drive at your swim club, neighborhood gathering, church picnic or similar event. For more information and help in organizing a drive, contact Food Drive Coordinator Magda Jaskot by email to magda.jaskot@afac.org or call her at (703) 845-8486.



You can donate online to AFAC. See our website for details. www.afac.org

COMMUNITY SUPPORT BOLSTERS, STRENGTHENS AFAC

The tremendous efforts of the Arlington community to support AFAC as our client count remains high deeply impress all of us – Board, volunteers and staff.

"This amazing support means that many Arlington families in need can remain in their homes, are better fed and thus healthier," said AFAC Chair Sue Covucci.

For the first nine months of our current fiscal year (which began July 1, 2009), food donations from the community totaled almost 240,000 pounds. Volunteer hours were over 17,000. That's the equivalent of almost eight fulltime staff people.

Last fall we asked that faith communities, workplaces, apartment buildings, schools and other organizations hold holiday food drives for AFAC. We received 379 donations totaling almost 150,000 pounds. The Arlington Scouts annual Scouting for Food drive collected 45,000 pounds.

Executive Director Christine Lucas points out that we expect to deliver 2.5 million pounds of food directly to Arlington families for the year ending this June 30. That's up from the 2.2 million pounds the previous year.

We at AFAC are proud that we've managed to give each family that comes to us the same amount of groceries each week even as the number of families keeps growing. We're also starting a program to give more food to larger families. And we're looking to set up additional distribution sites to make it easier for clients to receive their weekly food.

These and other steps -- such as continuously striving to get the lowest prices on milk, eggs, meat and other food we buy -- are necessary to serve the still-growing number of families that come to us. In the last six months of 2009, we averaged about 1,200 families each week. In the first three months of this year, that average rose to 1,250, and the average in March was 1,320. Put another way, more than 2,300 Arlington adults and 1,400 children depend on AFAC each week.

About 500 of the families served each week are large ones – with four or more members. We have long wanted to give them more food. In April, we started doubling the amount of chicken each large family receives weekly.

Another of our continuing challenges is to provide each family with fresh produce. Looking ahead to this summer, we expect even more success from our Plot Against Hunger program that gathers fresh produce from local gardeners and farmers. Last year, it garnered 270,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables. That was up from just 35,000 pounds in 2007.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you can read a profile of a farmer growing vegetables for AFAC, what a teenager learned while volunteering and a brief description of a client.

We offer a profound Thank You to all who help AFAC by contributing money, volunteering, donating food and supporting us in myriad other ways.

AFAC HELPS ASPAN, SEEC

Under a grant from the Arlington Community Foundation, AFAC will buy and provide food for clients of the Arlington Street Peoples Assistance Network (ASPAN) and the Shirlington Employment and Training Center (SEEC). AFAC is using the \$15,000 grant to buy individual microwavable meals for the homeless served by ASPAN and meals and other support to the day workers at SEEC.

"This grant will enable us to help two agencies that we've worked closely with for years and complement our efforts as part of the social services network that serves the needy in Arlington," said AFAC Executive Director Christine Lucas. "We're very grateful to the Foundation

...continued on page 5

AFAC BOARD

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



As I complete my second year as chair and as we at AFAC plan for our June 8th fundraiser, which marks our 22nd anniversary, I think it's appropriate both to look back at our accomplishments and look forward to our challenges.

You have heard, perhaps with disbelief, the statistics of the sharp and continuing increase in AFAC's clients and you, the Arlington community, have answered with great generosity. Due to your help, we have been able to hire additional staff, purchase larger quantities of food and sort the growing amount of donated groceries to better

serve our client families.

Without our even having to ask twice, the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who come to AFAC at least monthly have willingly agreed to work longer hours and do whatever it takes to ensure that AFAC operates smoothly in providing food for more than one thousand Arlington families each and every week. Our volunteers truly assist our clients in rain, hail or snow! Through all the winter storms, volunteers made it in and kept AFAC's doors open for our clients.

The number of food drives organized to provide AFAC with donated food has increased twofold, resulting in more than 50 tons of food last Fall. Please check out our website and join our virtual food drive if you are unable to organize a food drive at your place of business, your place of worship or your place of education.

In addition to our main goal to provide supplemental groceries to Arlingtonians in need, AFAC has been working to pay off the mortgage on our building, which was purchased three years ago. The Permanent Home Campaign (PHC) has raised over \$500,000 of our \$1-million goal so we are half way. Thank you to all our PHC donors!

AFAC's Board consists of 14 members who are extremely dedicated. I cannot thank them strongly enough for all they have done to ensure that AFAC continues to expand to meet the demands of the community during these very difficult economic times.

In closing, I want to give special recognition to our Secretary, Sandy Robinson-Burkholder, who is leaving the Board at the end of June for a post at the U.S. embassy in Bolivia. Sandy has served as Chair of our Plot Against Hunger Committee, which grew from producing 35,000 lbs of fresh produce in 2007 to 270,000 lbs. last year. We thank her, will miss her and look forward to her return to Arlington in a few years.

We are deeply grateful to all of you who support us in many different ways!

Sue Covucci

Our Mission

We are a community-based non-profit that provides supplemental groceries to our Arlington neighbors in need.

Our Vision

We are the community leader in providing and promoting dignified access to nutritious food for all Arlingtonians in need.

Our Strategic Plan

On April 12, the Board adopted a Strategic Plan based on our mission and vision. The plan has five long-term goals and objectives, each of which has detailed tasks and due dates. The full plan is available on our website at www.afac.org.

PLOT AGAINST HUNGER PLANS A MORE BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

In 2009, the Plot Against Hunger brought more than 268,000 pounds of fresh produce to AFAC. The Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network (MAGNET), the Columbia Pike, Courthouse and Crystal City farmers' markets, the USDA Experimental Station, and plots at churches, community gardens, schools and individual homes all contributed to this impressive total. With a full schedule of gleaning opportunities during the course of the summer, our poundage from MAGNET was phenomenal. A new website, (google AFAC Plot Against Hunger) greatly contributed to our ability to communicate with volunteers and donors and highlighted school participation in gardening.

This year, the Plot Against Hunger will continue to explore ways to obtain fresh produce by expanding our farmers' market and gleaning initiatives. By adding new farmers' markets to our produce pick-ups and bringing on a volunteer to schedule and organize gleanings throughout the growing season, we are planning to take full advantage of the abundance of fresh produce from these sources.

AFAC will also continue to work with schools to explore the educational opportunities found in schoolyard and community gardens, churches and individuals to increase the number of plots providing fresh produce for our clients. In addition, together with the Arlington County Extension Service, we will be encouraging the County to make more land available to community gardeners.

Other initiatives associated with the Plot Against Hunger include identifying nutritional education opportunities with our clients, offering recipes for using some of the produce we receive and partnering with the Extension Service and others to offer information on growing and preserving fresh vegetables.

...continued on page 4

SHEILA JOHNSON CHAIRS BENEFIT FOR AFAC



The Permanent Home Campaign Committee is pleased to announce that Sheila C. Johnson, well-known entrepreneur and philanthropist, is the Honorary Chair of the Third Annual Benefit for AFAC's Permanent Home Campaign. The fundraiser will be held June 8 at the Washington Golf and Country Club.

Ms. Johnson is CEO of Salamander Hospitality, LLC, a company she founded in 2005. She is also President and Managing Partner of the WNBA's Washington Mystics, and a partner in Lincoln Holdings, LLC. She is the first African-American woman to have a stake in three professional sports teams, including the Washington Wizards and the Washington Capitals. In 2006 she was named global ambassador for CARE, a leading aid organization fighting global poverty. Ms. Johnson is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. She lives in Middleburg and Arlington, is married to Judge William T. Newman, Jr. of the Arlington Circuit Court, and has two children. For more information about the event, to purchase tickets or become a sponsor, please go to AFAC's website, www.afac.org and click on "Permanent Home Campaign June 8th Fundraiser." We look forward to seeing you there!

The Permanent Home Campaign has raised \$576,000 to date, so we are half way on our journey "home!" Please partner with AFAC to pay off the mortgage on our building, and to establish a capital needs fund for future upkeep. Doing so will allow us to recommit all of our resources on our only mission --providing free supplemental groceries to Arlington families who need our help.



AFAC volunteers prepared a plot for growing a variety of vegetables at the Arlington Central Library as part of the joint Arlington Reads, Arlington Grows program. Volunteer coordinator Puwen Lee is fourth from the left.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Gardeners: A few of Arlington's Plot Against Hunger gardens need volunteers this spring, summer and fall to help on a regular basis with weeding, watering, and planting. If you are interested in helping with these Plots, let us know and we'll put you in touch with our garden contacts.

Farmers' market drivers and produce teams: It's that season again. By mid-June, the warehouse coolers will start filling up with fresh produce brought from area farmers' markets. Can you help AFAC on Saturdays, Sundays or early Tuesday evenings from June through early November? Drivers and helpers collect donations from market vendors and drive them to AFAC mid-day Saturdays and Sundays. "Produce teams" are needed on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to sort and bag the produce.

FOCUS ON PENN FARM

NORTHERN NECK GROWER PROVIDES VEGETABLES FOR AFAC

You may have seen Dora Beltran at one of the many farmers' markets where she sells her produce. As the farm manager for Penn Farm in Virginia's Northern Neck, she has been one of AFAC's largest donors through the Plot Against Hunger pickups from farmers' markets. Last year she used seeds that Puwen Lee, AFAC's volunteer coordinator, sent as a thank you to plant a row of crops for AFAC. We wanted to find out whether she would plant for us again, so on a Saturday in late March, Puwen and I visited Penn Farm for a tour.

Dora met us outside one of the five greenhouses currently used for seedlings and young plants. She had recently received an assortment of lettuce seedlings, which were ready to plant and attracting the attention of local rabbits. Inside the greenhouses were varieties of tomatoes, winter and summer squash, melons, peppers, okra, and herbs. She walked us, along with one of her daughters, to a field where she and her family had "set" onions the weekend before. In another field, she had already planted asparagus, and was also planning to plant spring garlic this year.

With her husband, five children ranging in age from kindergarten through college, and a nephew, she has help with the planting and harvesting. During the high season, Dora attends a farmers' market almost every day of the week. She



Dora Beltran with some of her lettuce seedlings

may even add another this year with the help of her nephew. Attending a farmers' market involves waking up at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning to load the vegetables and then driving to the market site. On weekends and in the summer, one of her daughters comes along to help. While she is selling produce, her husband and summer assistants harvest, wash, and store vegetables for the next day. They also plant more crops. In one season, Penn Farm may see as many as seven plantings of some crops.

There is really no down time on the farm. The Beltrons are harvesting and preparing for the next crop or season, ordering seeds, growing seedlings or planting most of the year. During the summer, whoever arrives in the kitchen first cooks dinner. Dora noted that December is the only quiet month; however, by the time of our visit, December must have seemed long ago. In addition to her vegetables, Dora has plans to sell herb window boxes, hanging baskets of flowers, and garden plants this spring. Look for Dora at the Columbia

Pike, Clarendon or Ballston farmers' markets in Arlington. She is one of the many farmers who, together, donated more than 43,000 pounds of fresh produce to AFAC last year. We appreciate their hard work and generosity.

-- Lisa Crye

PLOT AGAINST HUNGER PLANS A MORE BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

(continued from page 3)

One such learning opportunity is the collaborative display garden currently in preparation at Arlington's Central Library located on N. Quincy Street. In late March and April, volunteers were removing a thick cover of liriopse. Additional work days have been scheduled to prepare the soil and plant vegetables such as corn, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and potatoes, herbs and flowers to illustrate the potential of local gardens. AFAC not only hopes to grow some of its own produce, but to also inspire both old and new local gardeners.

-- Lisa Crye

To participate in this fun and rewarding project or to find out more information, visit our web page at www.afacinfo.org/AttentionGardeners or call Puwen Lee at (703) 845-8486.

DOUBLETREE HOTEL'S FOOD DRIVE



Employees of the Doubletree Hotel in Crystal City show just some of the food they collected in their holiday food drive in front of the loading dock at AFAC

A LONG-TERM CLIENT DEPENDS ON AFAC

Watching the procession of men and women, many with their children, lining up to come through AFAC, always makes me wonder what their stories might be. Occasionally I give them a hug as I help them decide what veggies and fruits to take home. I hope a bit of conversation, laughing and looking them in the eye gives them hope that I and others truly care about them as individuals. This interaction is always one of my joys at AFAC! Recently I was pleased to have the opportunity to spend some time with a client, Leslie (not her real name).

Leslie comes in weekly and is escorted through the back of the warehouse by a staff member or volunteer, unlike the other clients who come through the front door. I always wondered what her story might be. She is a very sweet woman in her early 60s who shared matter-of-factly that she has lived with mental illness since college and has been retired from government for 23 years.

She told me being around crowds in public places causes so much anxiety that she would not be able to come if not for the individual attention she receives to help her maneuver the lines to pick up her food. She said she lives on a mere \$850 per month, and put her fingers up in the air to indicate the long list of medications she is taking.

I asked her how she got to AFAC each week, which is an amazing part of her story. For the past eight years, Leslie's friend since their computer lab days in college, has picked her up every week and brought her to AFAC. For eight years!

As we finished our visit, she stood up and took the initiative to shake my hand and asked my name again. She shared that she was unable to lean over to pick up her two large bags of food due to a pinched nerve in her back. As we walked to the car, she introduced me to her good friend. We exchanged smiles, and I told her I looked forward to seeing her again next week.

-- Rhonda Adgate

AFAC HELPS ASPAN, SEEC

(continued from page 1)

for funding our grant request." She explained that the grant is to AFAC due to our experience in buying large quantities of food and being able to get lower prices than the other two organizations.

The \$15,000 will be divided equally among ASPAN and SEEC, both of whom have experienced significant increases in the number of clients they serve.

For ASPAN, AFAC is buying individual microwavable meals that don't require refrigeration. Operations Director Charlie Meng says that AFAC has already found a source where it can buy the meals in bulk at a price far below retail. In turn, ASPAN will provide the meals to clients at its facility in South Arlington. ASPAN Executive Director Kathleen Sibert says that it has 1,300 client visits each month there. She pointed out that this cooperative effort with AFAC is separate from ASPAN's program that provides bag meals daily to clients. For that program, churches and other organizations prepare about 80 bagged meals and deliver them daily to the homeless in Oakland Park and in Rosslyn every day of the year.

Sibert explained that her agency needs to provide individual meals to the homeless it serves as they have no place to store or prepare food. She added that the cooperative effort with AFAC will provide food during the spring, summer and fall when the Arlington County Emergency Winter Shelter is closed.

At SEEC, Executive Director (and AFAC Board member) Andres Tobar says that they will provide microwavable meals from AFAC as well, but SEEC will also use grant funds to buy gift cards from Giant Food. The cards will buy food for volunteers to prepare sandwich bag meals on those days when churches and other organizations aren't providing them. Also, SEEC will pay a truck vendor to provide hot food to clients every two to three weeks when meals are not available from other sources. Tobar explained that buying meals from a truck vendor will provide a warm meal periodically to the day laborer and will help the vendor who is struggling to stay in business.

ROTC CADETS HAUL, SORT POTATOES FOR AFAC

Junior ROTC cadets from the Arlington Career Center spent a Saturday in March transferring five tons of potatoes from a large semi-tractor trailer to our van (below) and then sorting and bagging the spuds at AFAC.

The potatoes came from the Society of St. Andrews through the Fairlington United Methodist Church. The Society is a gleaning organization active in 32 states that, among other efforts, provides potatoes to either large food banks or churches that distribute them to local food pantries such as AFAC.



LEARNING SOME LIFE LESSONS WHILE SERVING OTHERS

When my thirteen-year-old son came home from middle school explaining that he needed to complete ten hours of community service, I searched the Internet to see what volunteer opportunities existed for teens in Arlington County. A quick search revealed that most social service agencies serving the disadvantaged only accepted adult volunteers. AFAC was a welcome exception.

Kevin knew he wanted to work at AFAC. He had participated in his elementary school cereal drive, toured the food pantry with his Cub Scout den and often read the AFAC newsletter. He called AFAC's office and learned that youth younger than fourteen must be accompanied by an adult, and I agreed to join him.

Our first shift was December 24th. We passed a long line of clients on our way in; men, women and families with children, all waiting to receive a bag of groceries before the holidays.

Inside, the food pantry buzzed with activity. Kevin and I were met by one of the staff and after completing some paperwork, were quickly put to work, bagging oranges donated by students from HB Woodlawn. Soon our hands adjusted to a steady rhythm - six oranges to a bag, tied at the top and the bottom and placed in a cardboard box.

On occasion, we paused in our work as staff and other volunteers stopped by to say hello. People were warm in their greetings, offering handshakes and smiles and, most important, comments such as, "Thanks for coming. We really need your help. You're doing a great job." Kevin turned to me and whispered, "Mom, everyone here is so nice!" He was so clearly pleased to be treated with respect and appreciation by adults, recognizing that their words were not empty praise.

On a cold, rainy January afternoon, we returned and were put to work in the warehouse AFAC rented to accommodate holiday food donations. We lifted box after box of canned fruit, vegetables, meat and soup, moving them next door to

the pantry where they would be ready for clients the following morning. Having long ago passed me in height and surpassed me in strength, Kevin was able to lift more than I was -- a milestone in our relationship that we both recognized and appreciated.

The following month, we were tasked with the job of emptying out the warehouse. At this point, it only contained a few crates of food and some empty cardboard boxes, a sobering reminder that while the demand for food continues to grow, the supply is limited. I felt a special gratitude for each and every school, organization and individual sponsoring a food drive.

Back in the pantry for another shift, we sorted and bagged sweet potatoes and went through several bins of cabbages, picking them free of dirt and rotten leaves. Later, we formed an assembly line and bagged rice. Each person had a job - opening bags, scooping and filling, and tying knots. As we

became familiar with our tasks, conversation began around the table. Our group included a professor and a local college student. The two began talking about the importance of working hard in college, not taking the opportunity for granted, and seeking out challenging experiences. I watched Kevin consider their thoughtful perspectives and believe the advice had greater impact on him because it was coming from co-workers rather than lecturing adults.

Another group of volunteers

worked at a separate table and together we bagged 1,500 servings of rice.

It seemed like an enormous amount, and yet AFAC is now serving about 1,300 families a week, meaning that most of it would be gone by the following weekend.

As we were walking out, I asked Kevin what he liked about volunteering at AFAC. He turned and looked at the bins of vegetables he had sorted and the rice he had bagged. "I'm doing something to help other people," he said. "That's why I like it."

-- Margie Finn



Kevin Finn (right) and other volunteers prepare bags of rice for each client.

We cordially thank these schools for conducting food drives for AFAC in the first three months of this year. Total food received was 8,035 lbs.

Abingdon Elementary School
Arlington Science Focus School
Arlington Traditional School
Ashlawn Elementary School
Barrett Elementary School

Campbell Elementary School
Falls Church High School
H-B Woodlawn Program
Henderson School
Oakridge Elementary School

Samuel Tucker Elementary School
St. Thomas More School
Stratford Program
Taylor Elementary School
Williamsburg Middle School

NEW AT AFAC

New Board member **Merle Schneider** is a retired executive at the American Red Cross National Headquarters where she was the Executive Director for the Office of the National Chair of Volunteers. There she set the strategic direction for developing and implementing policies and programs to assure that volunteerism remained central in the work of the Red Cross. Her 15-year career with the Red Cross started in Armed Forces Emergency Services as both Assistant Station Manager and Director of Volunteers at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. Merle is also a retired Marine Corps officer whose last assignment in her 20-year career was as Deputy Director for Military Equal Opportunity on the Defense Department Joint Staff. She is also leading the fundraising efforts for Save The Historic Arlington House, which promotes restoration and preservation of the historic site's buildings and grounds. Merle has a master's degree from Pepperdine University

in Malibu, California and a bachelor's from Marygrove College in Detroit.

The other new Board member is **Kathleen Stemplinski**, who retired from the State Department two years ago as the Deputy Director of the Office of International Conferences. The Office manages conferences abroad for U. S. delegations and domestically when the U. S. is the host. She has managed U. S. participation in conferences in Europe, Asia and South America. Among the large international conferences where she managed the U. S. participation were the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle in 1999 and Hong Kong in 2006. Stemplinski received her bachelor's degree from George Washington University and has lived in Arlington for more than 25 years with her husband and two children – a son in college and a daughter who is a junior at Washington-Lee High School. In addition to serving on the Board, she also volunteers at AFAC on Tuesday mornings.

6TH GRADERS FOOD DRIVE A 'HEARTY' SUCCESS

What started as a small, classroom project turned quickly into a food drive that involved the entire 6th grade at Williamsburg Middle School. I worked closely with Jennifer Dodd, a 6th grade teacher/team leader who coordinated the activities within the school. Here are the basics:

- * "Have A Heart" set around Valentine's Day (delayed due to snow)
- * The goal was 300 food items, representing one per student
- * An introductory communication was sent home about 7-10 days ahead by backpack mail
- * In the week leading up to the actual drive, students had brief presentations or educational information about hunger, AFAC, etc. each day
- * The Friday before the drive, AFAC delivered bright red collection bins to every 6th grade classroom.
- * The main bulletin board near the office was turned into a tracking board with informational items and posters and a large thermometer tracking the progress to 300 items
- * For every item donated, students got to put their names on a paper heart (red and pink paper) that was stapled to the board

Then the snow hit and threatened to derail everything. BUT, students and teachers responded beautifully.

Things geared up a little slowly but as students returned after the break, they quickly hit the 300-item goal, eventually donating a total of 658 items which AFAC weighed in at 842 pounds of food. The thermometer was "off the chart" and up to the ceiling. The kids loved seeing all the hearts go up on the boards and the bins overflowing.

AFAC came and with the help of a few students picked up all the bins from all the classrooms. Everybody did a great job, and I hope we gave the kids some real exposure to AFAC and the problems of hunger in our community.

-- Todd Ihrig
AFAC Parents Committee



6th graders at Williamsburg Middle School show food collected in large bins.

ARLINGTON FOOD ASSISTANCE CENTER (AFAC)
2708 SOUTH NELSON STREET
ARLINGTON, VA 22206



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
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VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT SUMMER NEEDS:

We are looking for a few Monday morning distribution volunteers to help distribute groceries each week at an Arlington County retirement community serving elderly clients. This distribution will begin in mid-June.

Summer Teens help AFAC in many ways after school is out: they hold food drives at their swim clubs, come once or twice a week over the summer to assist in the warehouse repackaging or restocking shelves, help with grocery distribution; or help in AFAC's offices with filing and other office work. We love to have their help! Shifts are Monday-Friday, 9:30-12:30. The schedule is flexible to accommodate summer schedules.

Help us enlarge our client's plates and palates. This summer, we will hold tasting demonstrations to show clients the variety of uses for the abundant fresh, local produce AFAC receives from farmers' markets and local gleaning organizations. Do you have a simple recipe to share? Submitted recipes should contain inexpensive ingredients easily available at the grocery store. Email to: volunteer4afac@afac.org to volunteer or call the AFAC Volunteer Department at (703) 845-8486.

Please designate AFAC #8354 in the United Way campaign or #19265 in the CFC.



Feeding Our Neighbors In Need