



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

January 2025

# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

## LEADERSHIP

**Andy Zembower**  
Director

**Linda Zembower**  
Food Acquisition and  
Distribution

**Ed Mackus**  
Assistant Director

**Kristi Mutschelknaus**  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Heather Qualley**  
Community Outreach

**Natasha Stresemann**  
Digital Marketing

**Jill McCutcheon**  
Volunteer Registration

**Ulli Reynolds**  
Heritage Hunt Press Agent

**Nikole Brilliant**  
Grant Lead

**Donna Flory**  
Volunteer Truck Driver  
Extraordinaire

100% Volunteer

Crossroads Connection is an outreach  
ministry of Shepherd of the Hills  
Lutheran Church.

2024 was a fantastic year of growth and deeper community involvement for Crossroads Connection. We saw the demand for our services increase due to inflation, a growing number of refugees in our area, and reduced government food support. Despite these challenges, we were able to expand our reach, adding three more schools to the 15 we already serve. That brings the total to 18 schools across Western Prince William County.

We also saw a 14% increase in the number of students we were able to support, going from 350 to 400. Thanks to food drives and our strong partnership with BJ's, we kept our annual food cost per child under \$250, even with rising food prices.

Community engagement is key to tackling food insecurity, and it's clear that when we work together, we can make a bigger impact. By raising awareness, building trust, and collaborating, we're able to meet our mission head-on.

Our leadership team is truly dedicated to doing God's work, and as a flagship ministry of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, we remain committed to helping those in need in our community.

We encourage you to spread the word and find ways to support Crossroads—every bit helps!



**ANDY ZEMBOWER**  
DIRECTOR

# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

This past year, we held 32 food pick-ups, pre-packing, and packing events. Our volunteers purchased, donated, moved, packed, and delivered approximately 14,400 bags of food including 216,000 food items.



In the summer we met with the new **PWCS Director of Food and Nutrition. - Andrea Early**. Andrea visited our facility to learn more about the Crossroads operation and how we support school children's nutritional needs on the weekend. She enlightened us on several things related to nutrition needs in PWCS. She is also now a Crossroads Volunteer!

To make it easier for our supporters to purchase the specific food items we need we established an **Amazon Wish List**. We share this list with a QR code (found at the end of this report).

This summer our food partner BJ's donated 5,800 packages of Lance crackers and cookies. That's almost a 4-month supply!

In April the **Regency Women's Club held their annual Charity Golf Tournament and Putting Event**. Crossroads Connection was proud to be one of the charities this wonderful group chose to be the beneficiary of the proceeds. Our good friends at Willing Warriors were the other group receiving a donation. Several Crossroads staff participated in the event as did Shepherd of the Hills. A few weeks later, once the proceeds were tallied, we were presented with a check for \$10,000! Thanks to the sponsors, hole sponsors, players and raffle participants the RWC Charity Golf Tournament was a resounding success.



Andrea Early - Director of Food & Nutrition PWCS



Andy and Linda Accepting the Regency Women's Club Donation.

# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

**Haymarket Day** is one of our big annual community events. This year was especially outstanding. Haymarket Day featured spectacular weather, thousands of people in attendance, and countless outstanding programs and products shared with the public. This was especially true for Crossroads Connection. Throughout the event, booth volunteers handed out hundreds of flyers and gratefully accepted cash donations, which will go toward the purchase of food. We met a number of groups who have donated funds and expressed interest in conducting food drives for us.



The Crossroads Connection Haymarket Day Booth



Trysten Jackson, the 2024 Miss Prince William County Fair

*Crossroads has been a blessing to our program and we appreciate all the assistance they provide, and truly believe that their donations make a significant difference to the students who benefit from them!*

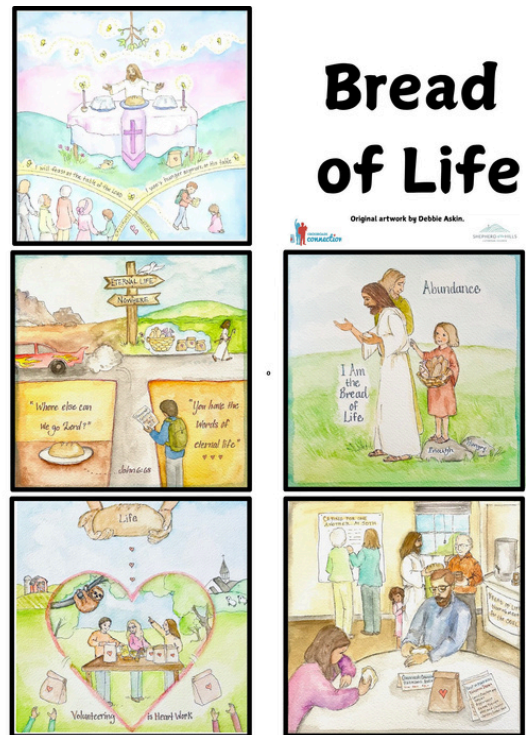
School Social Worker



# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

During five Sundays in July and August, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church offered a **Bread of Life message** that tied the Gospel of John, Chapter 6, to our everyday lives. This passage discussed the feeding of the 5,000, also known as the “miracle of the five loaves and two fish.” In five years, Crossroads Connection has increased its capacity from 100 to 400 students through the miracle of others and their generosity.

Crossroads Connection and the need to feed were highlighted during each of the five weeks. **Debbie Askin, a Shepherd of the Hills member**, created original artwork to grace the cover of the bulletin each week. This poster commemorates Debbie’s work and how we can relate the needs in our community to John’s gospel lesson.



**School-sponsored food drives** have become quite popular. They offer ways for students and their families to be involved in a community project that helps classmates and other students suffering from food insecurity. To help conduct a food drive we have created a **Food Drive in a Box**. Our Food Drive in a Box provides all the information and answers all the questions needed to run an effective food drive. Send us an email if you are interested in receiving one.

**Our biggest school-sponsored food drive event was held at Gravelly Middle School** where they collected 6,500 food items, wrote inspiring notes and packed bags of food.



# CHILDREN SERVED

**We increased the number of students we serve to 400 from 350 (a 14% increase). We now serve eighteen schools, up from fifteen last year.**

The number of students needing our help range from a low of 4 students in one school to a high of 86 in another.

We also provided food to Pace West School to support their summer school program.

This increase is in response to multiple factors – An increase in food prices, an increase in population movement to western Prince William County, the reduction in government subsidies through programs like the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, and an increase in refugees coming into our area.

Without this assistance, many of these students might not have guaranteed sustenance at home to last through the weekends. That is in addition to any other struggles or stressors they might face.

**400**  
**STUDENTS**

**18**  
**SCHOOLS**

**14,400**  
**BAGS OF FOOD**

**\$250**  
**COST PER CHILD**

ALVEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

BATTLEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

BRISTOW RUN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

BULL RUN MIDDLE SCHOOL

BUCKLAND MILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

CHRIS YUNG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GAINESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

GLENKIRK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GRAVELY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HAYMARKET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MOUNTAINVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PACE WEST SCHOOL

PINEY BRANCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

REAGAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

SUDLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

T CLAY WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TYLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

VICTORY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

# SCHOOLS WE SUPPORT



In 2024 we increased the number of Prince William County schools in the Haymarket-Gainesville area from fifteen to eighteen.

There are more schools we can serve if we can increase our capacity through increased funding.



*This extraordinary program has been a huge success due to all of the compassionate people from Crossroads Connection sharing their most valuable time and those making it financially possible as well.*

School Principal



# THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS



Words can't express how much we treasure the contributions from our volunteers. We have tremendous support across the community.

We have truly created a **community of friends** at Crossroads Connection.



350  
VOLUNTEERS





# FOOD ITEMS

Most of the food we purchase is from **BJ's Wholesale**. Food drives supplement our purchased food, helping to reduce our overall costs. We occasionally substitute food items to add variety, to replace some items that are out of stock from our provider, or the result of large donations. We also offer vegetarian items to replace the items that contain meat for those vegetarian students.



We provide fifteen individual servings of shelf-stable and nutritious food items.

- Kellogg's Assorted Cereal
- Quaker Instant Oatmeal
- Motts No Sugar Apple Sauce Cups
- Nature Valley Chewy Fruit & Nut Bar
- Nature Valley Oats 'n Honey Crunch Granola Bars
- Lance Cookie & Cracker Variety Pack
- Skinny Pop
- Del Monte Fruit/Peach Cups
- Chef Boy R Dee Spaghetti & Meatballs
- Snyder's Mini Pretzels
- Welch's Fruit Snacks
- Goldfish Crackers
- Kraft Easy Mac & Cheese Cups
- Kellogg Nutri-Grain Bars
- Sweet & Salty Granola Bars

All of these items can be found on our Amazon Wish List using the QR Code at the back of this report.

# FOOD DRIVES & DONATIONS

We experienced an increased level of support through food drives. In fourteen food drives we received nearly **37,000 food items valued at \$12,300**. Companies, schools and neighborhoods are showing their support for the children in need, Food drives have become a significant element of our ability to serve more children and increase our community impact. Both Wegmans (15,400 items) and BJ's (5,800 items) provided significant donations of food this year.

## Our Community Partners

- Battlefield High School Key Club
- Carter's Mill Community
- Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints
- Dominion Valley Swim Club
- Gravely Elementary School
- Haymarket Baptist Church
- Haymarket Church
- Heritage Hunt Community
- NOVA Catholic Community
- Reagan Middle School Junior Honor Society
- Regency Women's Club
- Rotary Club: Gainesville-Haymarket
- Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
- St. Michael's Academy
- UVA Health
- Wegmans



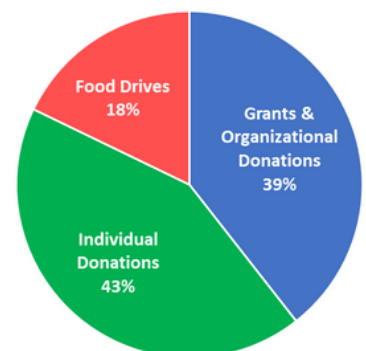
Gravely Elementary School Packing Event

# FUNDING

Our sources of funding are summarized in this chart. We continue to be primarily supported by individual donors. However, we received grants and sizeable donations from **UVA Health, Regency Women's Club, Heritage Hunt Giving Circle, Dominion Valley Women's Club, Bigoski Insurance, Novec Helps, Loyal Order of Moose, and Heritage Hunt Women's Organization** which has made a huge difference in our ability to meet the growing need for food insecurity. As the needs continue, we will need continued financial support from generous individuals and grant organizations. **Food drives are a way to reduce our food costs.**

**Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church**, our parent organization, continues to provide substantial financial support to Crossroads.

Sources of Funding



# GRANT PARTNERS

**UVA Health** awarded us a grant to hold a community food and wellness food drive in partnership with UVA Health at the Heathcote Hospital. **We were visited by State Senator Danica Roem and various leaders from UVA Health.** We collected 1,577 food items. That's enough for 105 bags of weekend food. The Crossroads Team had their blood pressure checked and got some physical therapy tips from the UVA Health healthcare workers who attended.

Joining us were community partners **CASA Children's Intervention Services, Inc.** and **Virginia Department of Health Prince William District** were on hand to provide information to help children in crisis and nutrition information for healthy eating and resources.



Sen. Danica Roem and Rozlyn Giddens  
with Crossroads Staff



Ed Mackus Getting His  
Blood Pressure Checked.

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Food insecurity continues to be a significant public health problem facing children in the United States and Prince William County.** Several studies indicate that food insecurity has negative impacts on health. Food and nutrition security form the foundation of both individual and public health, and good nutrition in infancy and early childhood can set the stage for healthy eating habits throughout life. These factors also directly affect a student's ability to learn. Lack of access to healthy food and nutrition can create dire health consequences for families with lower socioeconomic positions and those who live in underserved communities, which often include families of color.

**These are the reasons why our community needs Crossroads Connection.**



# NEIGHBORS WHO CARE

The Crossroads Community is blessed with the support of **350 volunteers** doing God's work in our community. Our volunteers come from across the community and include church members, hockey clubs, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Rotary Club, Key Club, Wegmans' employees, and community groups like Heritage Hunt, Carter's Mill, and Dominion Valley.



Our volunteers are everyday citizens, young and old, of different ages, religions, communities, and backgrounds, who hold food drives, raise money, unload trucks, count food, move food around, deliver food, write encouraging notes and decorate bags with inspirational sayings.

**It is an uplifting experience to see the love and care of this vast collection of people in our community.**

One of the most rewarding aspects of Crossroads is the children who volunteer. Our volunteers range in age from grade school through high school.

Some of them are seeking and receiving service hours in support of club requirements. They learn about their classmates who need food and the gifts they can provide by helping them through monthly pre-packing and packing events and food drives. **Some take the time to write notes of love and encouragement.**





# WALL OF FAME

This year we established a Wall of Fame to recognize our significant partners and contributors. The Wall of Fame is located in our facility and on our website. These organizations have provided financial, material, or volunteer support over the past two years. This poster is displayed in the front room of our facility. We couldn't do this without their help and support. We will continue to update the Wall of Fame to publicly recognize all new organizations who help us meet the food insecurity needs of students in our area.



## **SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Sponsor, Volunteers, Financial, Management

## **HERITAGE HUNT**

Volunteers, Food Drives, Financial Support

## **ATLANTIC COAST COTTON**

Facility Partner

## **BJ'S WHOLESALE**

Primary Food Supplier

## **WEGMANS FOOD MARKETS**

Major Food Donor

## **FEDEX**

Printing Partner

## **WIND RIVER CHIMES**

Food Transportation

# **PARTNERS**

Crossroads has strong and growing support from community partners who are vital to our success. We have benefited from great support from the following communities and businesses.



# YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS!

## LEARN MORE

To learn more about Crossroads Connection, volunteering, or donating go to our website.

<https://crossroads-connection.org>



## PURCHASE FOOD

To purchase food items using our Amazon Wish List scan the QR code.



## SECURELY DONATE

Securely donate through Vanco to Crossroads to help with the purchase of food scan the QR code.



# THANK YOU!