



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

January 2026

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



LEADERSHIP

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Director

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Distribution

Ed Mackus
Food Donations

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Volunteer Coordinator

Heather Qualley
Outreach

Natasha Stresemann
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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.

2025 was a strong year of broader community involvement and increased resiliency for Crossroads Connection. Planting seeds has been the theme in 2025. We saw the demand for our services increase due to federal job cuts, reduced government food support, and other local food support programs reducing services due to funding challenges. Despite these challenges, we were able to expand our reach, adding one more school to the 18 we already serve. That brings the total to 19 schools across Prince William County. Crossroads Connection has delivered regular, reliable, and dependable food support to around 460 children.

We also saw a 15% increase in the number of students we were able to support, going from 400 to 460. Thanks to the many 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. We saw more volunteers and increased corporate support by companies investing in our community. By raising awareness, building trust, and collaborating, we're able to meet our mission head-on.

Our entire team is truly dedicated to doing God's work. As a flagship ministry of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, we remain committed to helping those in need in our community and making a compassionate, positive impact in the world.

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

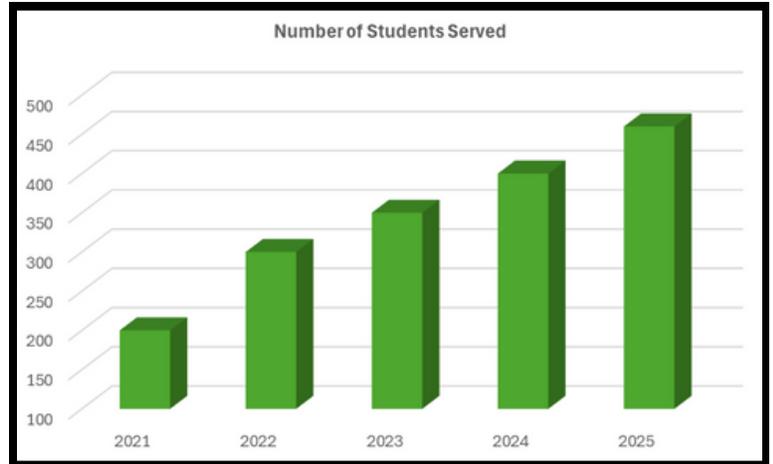


ANDY ZEMBOWER
DIRECTOR

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past five years the need and our ability to assist hungry school children **has nearly tripled**. Food insecurity continues to be a significant public health problem facing children in the United States and Prince William County. The generous support of fellow citizens and local business fuels our ability to meet this need.

Many aspects of Crossroads Connection focuses on kids. Not only do we serve children by providing kids-friendly food directly into their backpacks, but **we have children who volunteer** to pack, write encouraging notes and conduct food drives to help their fellow classmates. Together, these acts of kindness help formulate a foundation of service and kindness for future leaders of our community.



The newly elected ELCA Metropolitan Washington, DC Synod Bishop, **Dr. Philip Hirsch visited us** in November, He was impressed by our work, even citing it in a recent report. Hopefully his support will open new doors for us in 2026.



Community support continues to grow. More and more people are aware of the food insecurity in our community, and more people are learning about Crossroads Connection and the work we do. Carter’s Mill, Heritage Hunt, Regency, and Dominion Valley residents and community groups help us plant the seeds of community awareness. Tell your friends and neighbors of the compassion and kindness of your fellow citizens. Together we can make a great community!



2025 HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

Haymarket Day is one of our big annual community events. This year was especially outstanding. Haymarket Day featured hundreds of people who stopped by our booth. 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 volunteering and conducting food drives for us.



The Crossroads Connection Haymarket Day Booth

Virginia Soccer Association has held three food drives this year providing support from both their recreational and competitive teams. This community support activity is modeled after English soccer clubs that have a similar community support role.



Our students and parents have indicated that this help is life-changing for families to provide snacks for the weekend. The students come in on Fridays and pick up their bags with a smile.

School Social Worker



2025 HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

Heritage Hunt continues to be a foundational partner for Crossroads Connection. Their residents provide financial support through the **Giving Circle Grant**, support us with food drives and provide many volunteers. We are truly blessed to have their support.



Haymarket Church welcomed a new Pastor this year - Chelsea Morse. She initiated a Friendsgiving event where they collected food AND we packed 200 bags of food.

Adaeze Acholonu, student at **Pennington Traditional School** spearheaded an amazing food drive. In two weeks, Adaeze's classmates collected 4,800 food items!



QTS Datacenters and 7 x 24 Exchange have stepped up to provide support and volunteers. QTS Datacenters purchased one month of food, and provided the staff to pack 1,800 bags of food at their facility. Their Manassas leadership team and employees are regular volunteers.



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. Send us an email if you are interested in receiving one.

Our biggest school-sponsored food drive event was (once again) held at Gravelly Elementary School where they collected 7,000 food items, wrote inspiring notes and packed 500 bags of food.

CHILDREN SERVED

We increased the number of students we serve from 400 to 460 (a 15% increase). Some months we went up as high as 460 students. We now serve nineteen schools, up from eighteen last year.

The number of students needing our help range from a low of 4 students in one school to a high of 88 in another. We also provided food to Marumsco Hills Elementary School when they made us aware of 100 kids who suffered homelessness and hunger who needed our help. We currently serve 60 children through a growing partnership with churches in that area.

This increase is in response to multiple factors – Reduction of federal jobs, an increase in food prices, the reduction in government subsidies through programs like the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, and reduction of services from other area food programs.

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.

460
STUDENTS

19
SCHOOLS

16,500
BAGS OF FOOD

\$250
COST PER CHILD

SCHOOLS WE SUPPORT



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

MARUMSCO HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MOUNTAINVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PACE WEST SCHOOL

PINEY BRANCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

REAGAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

SUDLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

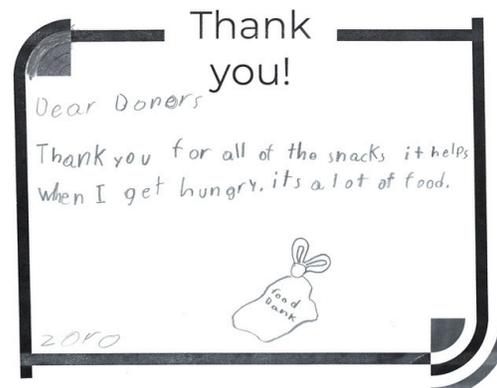
T CLAY WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TYLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

VICTORY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In 2025, we increased the number of Prince William County public schools in the Haymarket-Gainesville area from eighteen to nineteen.

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



We have different extremes of need and food insecurity and I know for the most needy, this makes a huge difference on whether or not they eat AT ALL over the weekend and I'm positive that they appreciate it.

School Principal

AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

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

We are building a bigger table of friends at Crossroads Connection.



WE PACKED THIS
WITH LOVE TO
BRIGHTEN UP
YOUR DAY!
♡ 😊



THANK
YOU



FOOD ITEMS

BJ's Wholesale continues to be a great partner, providing the food items we serve. Their customer service is amazing. Food drives supplement our purchased food, helping to reduce our overall costs. *This year, thanks to some generous donors, we added Ramen noodles to our menu.* We occasionally substitute food items to add variety or to replace some items that are out of stock. For vegetarian students, we offer vegetarian items to replace the items that contain meat. Any food items we receive at food drives that we cannot use are passed along to other food pantries.



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

- Assorted Cereal
- Instant Oatmeal
- No Sugar Apple Sauce Cups
- Chewy Fruit & Nut Bars
- Oats 'n Honey Crunch Granola Bars
- Cookie & Cracker Variety Pack
- Skinny Pop
- Ramen noodles
- Fruit Cups
- Chef Boy R Dee Spaghetti & Meatballs
- Mini Pretzels
- Fruit Snacks
- Goldfish Crackers
- Easy Mac & Cheese Cups
- 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. Twenty-two food drives were held in 2025. We received nearly **41,000 food items valued at \$13,500**. Food drives have become a significant element of our ability to serve more children and increase our community impact. 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.

Food Drive Partners

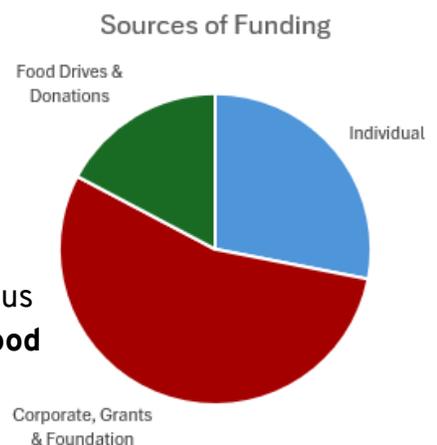
- Battlefield High School Key Club
- Carter's Mill Community
- Dominion Valley Sharks Swim Club
- Glenkirk Elementary School
- Gravely Elementary School
- Haymarket Church
- Heritage Hunt Community
- Piney Branch Elementary School
- Pennington Traditional School
- Reagan Middle School Junior Honor Society
- Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
- St. Michael's Academy
- Virginia Soccer Assoc.
- Women in Construction



Gravely Elementary School Food Drive

FUNDING

We have strong, diversified sources of funding. We continue to be primarily supported by nearly 200 individual donors. We also received grants and sizeable donations from **Antioch Baptist Church, Regency Women's Club, Heritage Hunt Giving Circle, Dominion Valley Women's Club, 7 x 24 Exchange, QTS Datacenters, Neall Family Charitable Foundation, Loyal Order of Moose, and Heritage Hunt Women's Organization**. They make a huge difference in our ability to meet our growing needs. We also see an increase in donations from family charitable giving funds and minimum required distributions. 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.

LOOKING AHEAD

Crossroads Connection has grown in our ability to meet increased hunger needs in our area. Some of this is due to increased awareness. Some is due to our increased ability to serve. There are still schools and children in our area that we can and should serve. Our focus this year will be to **build a bigger table**. This means more people involved, increasing support from the business community, creating increased capacity, and serving more.

Objectives for the coming year include:

- Establishing a Board
- Expanding our facility
- Bigger and better food drives
- Increasing corporate support
- Increasing the number of repeat/regular donors
- Exploring a summer program
- Improving communication to our supporters
- Improving marketing and community engagement skills
- Involving more youth in our organization
- Develop partnerships to expand our reach



HEALTH & WELLNESS

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 **400 volunteers** (an increase of 14%) doing God's work in our community. Our volunteers come from across the community and include church members, sports teams, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Rotary Club, Key Club, Wegmans' employees, QTS Datacenters, 7x24 Exchange, and community groups like Heritage Hunt, Carter's Mill, Regency, and Dominion Valley.



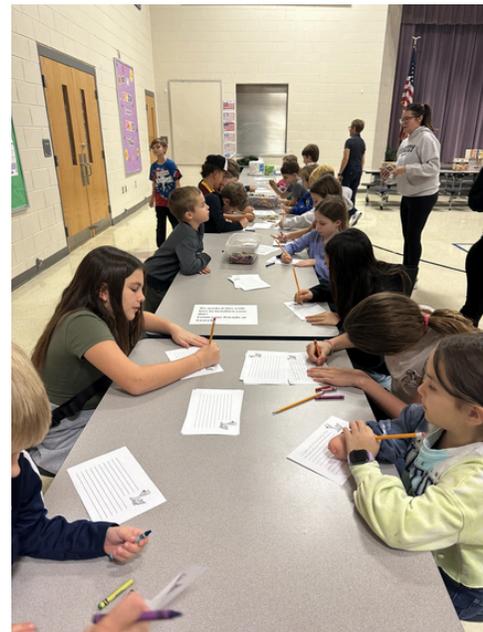
Our volunteers are everyday citizens, young and old, of different ages, religions, communities, and backgrounds, who hold food drives, raise money, unload trucks, count food, move food around, deliver food, and write encouraging notes with inspirational sayings.



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.**



Gravely Students Writing Inspirational Notes



WALL OF FAME

Our **Wall of Fame** recognizes 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. Our Wall of Fame will 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!