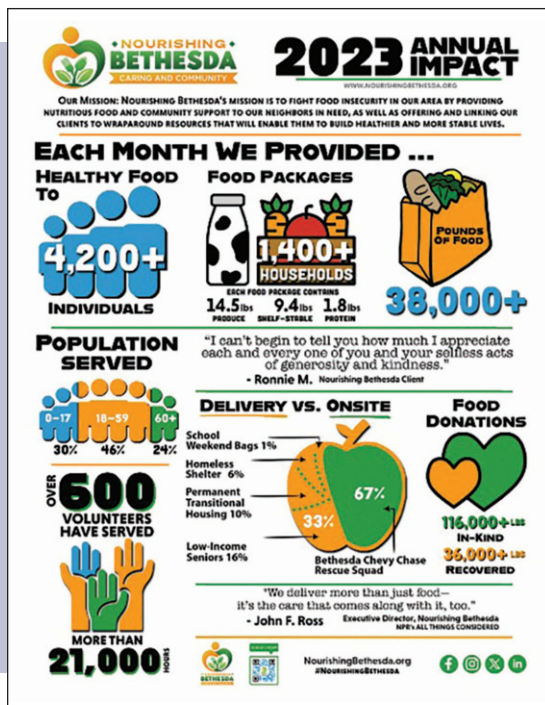




# dojustice

activism and advocacy at the crossroads of faith and life

**And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. —Micah 6:8**



Nourishing Bethesda was founded at the height of the pandemic in the summer of 2020 by a group of St. John's parishioners who formed partnerships with the county government, the County Council, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and others. Nourishing Bethesda's success is due in great part to dozens of St. John's parishioners who joined and supported the effort. Thank you St. John's! This issue of the Do Justice News highlights a number of big steps forward Nourishing Bethesda has taken over the last year in the fight against food insecurity.

## Grand Opening of Nourishing Bethesda's Choice Market

Nourishing Bethesda began as a “grab-and-go” program that distributed food packages in the parking lot of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad at the height of lockdown restrictions. In September 2022, Nourishing Bethesda transitioned to an appointment model at the same location, which made the process more personal and interactive while, at the same time, maximizing the amount of food distributed each week. Sobering data in the recently published Capital Area Food Bank's 2024 Hunger Report indicated that “far from receding, food insecurity has seen a dramatic uptick. The percentage of people in need in our area has risen significantly in the last year...” Fully 34 percent of those living in Montgomery County have experienced food insecurity. Such news has only deepened Nourishing Bethesda's commitment to working more fully and effectively with its neighbors in need.

The *Do Justice Newsletter* is published by the Social Justice Advocacy Committee (SJAC) of St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish. If you'd like to join the SJAC, please contact one of the co-chairs:

Lisa Raisner (lraisner@gmail.com) or Annelise Hafer (annelisehafer@yahoo.com). All are welcome!

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***By transitioning to a choice market, Nourishing Bethesda is more deeply empowering and honors our clients while combating food insecurity.***

Montgomery County Councilmember Gabe Albornoz said, “I believe strongly that the Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger is not some aspirational document. It can and will happen through the kind of innovation, leadership, and direction that brings us here today.” Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson applauded the market, stating “The choice model allows for the dignity of making your own decisions about what goes into your body, making your own decisions about what you get to eat.”

By transitioning to a choice market, Nourishing Bethesda is more deeply empowering and honors our clients while combating food insecurity. The choice model also increases the interaction between Nourishing Bethesda and its clients because they are shopping in the new market rather than simply picking up pre-packaged bags of food. This additional interaction enables Nourishing Bethesda to build a deeper relationship of trust, which will further strengthen its bonds with clients and lead to even more opportunities to engage and deliver other needed wraparound services.

So far the reception has been overwhelmingly positive—Nourishing Bethesda’s clients simply love the ability to choose the food they want in a grocery-store-like setting!

## **Launch of Nourishing Bethesda’s New Sorting Center & Pantry at St. John’s**

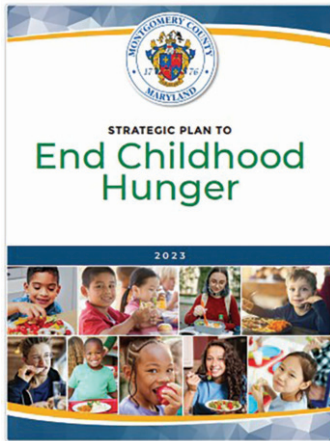


Nourishing Bethesda opened its brand new Sorting Center & Pantry at St. John’s Norwood, which, at full capacity, can store up to 20,000 pounds of shelf stable food, while also housing a commercial-sized refrigerator and freezer. This space enables Nourishing Bethesda to more than triple the amount of food it receives through food drives. St. John’s generously donated the large two rooms rent free, while the Capital Area Food Bank and Kiwanis Club of Bethesda provided key equipment through grants.

***This Spring, 240 children at three local schools received weekly or biweekly weekend bags containing six tasty, nutritious items.***

## **Further Collaboration with Montgomery County to End Childhood Hunger**

Children in the Free and Reduced Meal Program (FARM) at our local schools often face challenging weekends with little access to food. Studies show they often arrive at school on Monday hungry and unable to focus. Nourishing Bethesda partnered with the County and successfully completed a pilot program to feed children in four schools. This Spring, 240 children at Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Rosemary Hills and Wood Acres Elementary Schools received weekly or biweekly weekend bags containing six tasty, nutritious items, such as ravioli, macaroni and cheese, soup, oatmeal, fruit, and snacks. In addition, Nourishing Bethesda provided 30 B-CC High School families with fresh fruit,



vegetables and shelf staple foods, plus many snacks for students during the week. The program proved such a success that Nourishing Bethesda was given a grant to support this work for the 2024/2025 school year.

## Nourishing Bethesda Selected for Spur Local Class of 2024

Spur Local, formerly known as the Catalogue for Philanthropy, selected Nourishing Bethesda as one of its Class-of-2024 members. Nourishing Bethesda passed a rigorous review process and joins a prestigious list of trusted, critical and small nonprofits in the Greater Washington region.

Over the past 20 years, Spur Local has become the largest nonprofit capacity builder in the area, publishing its influential and widely read guide to nonprofits for donors, as well as offering training in fundraising, marketing, leadership and management, and more to nonprofit staff, volunteers and board members. To date, the organization has raised nearly \$60 million for local nonprofits and trained more than 25,000 nonprofit professionals.



**A critical & trusted local nonprofit**

[spurlocal.org/2024class.php](http://spurlocal.org/2024class.php)

Spur Local

Platinum  
Transparency  
2024

Candid.

## Nourishing Bethesda Receives the Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency

Nourishing Bethesda earned a Platinum Seal of Transparency— indicating the highest level of clarity about its programming and organization from Candid, an online database that features information on more than two million non-profit organizations across the United States. Candid is a key source of information for donors and grantmakers researching the effectiveness of charitable entities.

## Orange Matters

Every year Nourishing Bethesda joins together with St. John's Gun Violence Prevention Ministry to support the nationwide Wear Orange weekend. This year, Montgomery County Sheriff Max Uy joined as well and spoke about safe gun handling. More than 300 Be SMART cards about securing firearms safely were placed into recipient food bags. During all following distribution shifts, volunteers showed their commitment to ending gun violence by wearing orange.

*Volunteers showed their commitment to ending gun violence by wearing orange.*



## Rising to a Hard Challenge



It's a sobering fact that the vulnerable populations Nourishing Bethesda serves are particularly vulnerable to family violence and human trafficking. Nourishing Bethesda is committed to creating a safe environment for all our recipients and initiated a partnership with the Family Justice Center in the Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff to train volunteers in recognizing signs of family violence and trafficking—and how to take appropriate measures that honor the injured party but help ensure their safety.

## Harvesting Events at Sandy Spring Gardens



Nourishing Bethesda continued its partnership with Sandy Spring Gardens organic farm in Ashton, Maryland, by organizing events and volunteers to pick tomatoes and squash and dig potatoes for distribution to clients.

## How You Can Get Involved



**Volunteer.** Nourishing Bethesda is a volunteer-led and volunteer-powered organization, so donating your time and talents is critical to our continued success. Large crews are needed to sort and pack food bags, set up and run the choice market and deliver food on Fridays. Many of the jobs are well-suited for middle and high school students as well as adults. (Volunteering with Nourishing Bethesda is an MCPS-approved opportunity for earning required Student Service Learning, or SSL, hours.)

**Donate.** Make a high-impact donation to help fund Nourishing Bethesda's transition to a "best practice" model that allows (a) more communication with clients, in order to better understand their needs and constraints; (b) greater client dignity, by enabling them to choose the items they need and/or prefer; and (c) increased collaboration with other local service providers, and connecting clients with other services that can help them escape the web of interrelated forces that keep them trapped in a state of economic insecurity. Donate here: <https://www.nourishingbethesda.org/donate>

**Advocate.** St. John's own Social Justice Action Committee is a great option; other groups to connect with include the Poor People's Campaign Feeding America, Food Research and Action Center, Maryland Hunger Solutions, Montgomery County Food Council, and the Episcopal Public Policy Network.

**Educate.** You can also help by telling friends, family, and neighbors about food insecurity in our community.