

# Montgomery County Food Council **ANNUAL REPORT 2020**





# INTRODUCTION

There are **2,000+** farms, food businesses, agencies, and organizations in Montgomery County that are working on food-related issues, and the Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) is the only organization that brings them all to the table for education, advocacy, and collaboration building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the **100,000+** residents at risk for hunger, expanding food education for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources.

Thanks to the generosity of our funders and volunteers, we are leading the collaboration of thousands of partners and stakeholders to build an equitable, prosperous, healthy, and climate-smart food system in Montgomery County, Maryland.



The East County Hub at Kingdom Fellowship Church distributes food in the Briggs Chaney area.



## VIRTUAL TRAINING SESSIONS

April 1st, 11:00am-12:00pm

### FOOD ASSISTANCE RESOURCES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

In the year since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the food security landscape in Montgomery County has changed dramatically. This virtual training will provide attendees with an overview of food insecurity in the County, and the County's COVID-19 food assistance response. We will discuss the network of resources developed by the Food Council and our partners, such as the Online Food Assistance Resource Directory, Food Assistance Referral Tool, and the County's Food Assistance Website. We will also review federal nutrition benefits and other resources that can be beneficial in mitigating food insecurity. Attendees will learn how these resources have helped residents gain access to food quickly and efficiently during the pandemic, and how efforts to eradicate food insecurity may evolve in the future.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER: SUSAN KORNACKI, MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOOD COUNCIL**



Susan (she, her) is the Interim Food Security Programs Manager at the Montgomery County Food Council. Susan oversees the Food Council's food security programs, including implementing several recommendations of the Montgomery County Food Security Plan, "A Food Secure Montgomery: What we know now, and what we can do." She serves as the staff liaison to the Food Recovery and Access Working Group. Susan is a Bloomberg Fellow with the Bloomberg American Health Initiative at Johns Hopkins University.

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT [MOCOFOODCOUNCIL.ORG/TRAININGS](https://mocofoodcouncil.org/trainings)**

[www.mocofoodcouncil.org](https://www.mocofoodcouncil.org)  
[info@mocofoodcouncil.org](mailto:info@mocofoodcouncil.org)  
[@MoCoFoodCouncil](https://twitter.com/MoCoFoodCouncil)



The Food Council hosts a training on food assistance resources in Montgomery County.

# We build the capacity of local food system programs, businesses, and organizations.

Led **5** grant-making programs, funding over

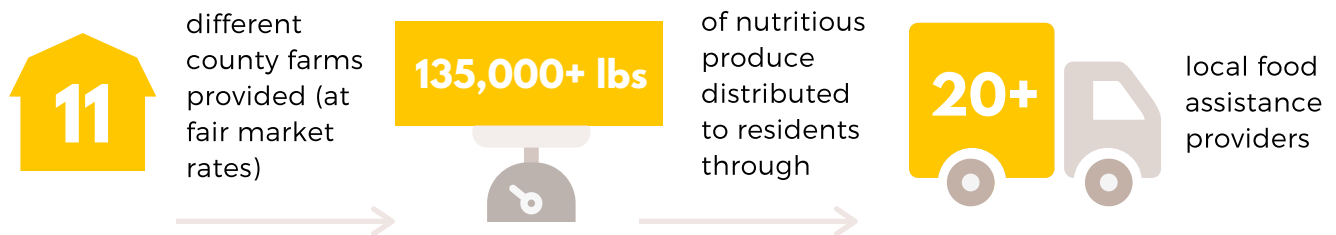
**\$ 2.8**  
MILLION

for

**102**

organizations in Montgomery County.

- ▶ The Farm to Food Bank Program, which was a collaborative partnership with the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture and Manna Food Center, resulted in **\$236,805** being awarded to **22** local food-producing farms. During Phase I of the program:



- ▶ **\$2.3 million** awarded to more than **60** organizations for Food Assistance Distribution and Capacity Building under the fiscal sponsorship of the Healthcare Initiative Foundation, which managed the grant process and grant award distribution.

- ▶ The Resident and Community Food Production program awarded **\$201,810** to **12** local gardening organizations. Through this funding:



**5,000**

people's gardening efforts are supported



**12,500**

people are provided with food

▶ SNAP Outreach and Enrollment: **\$93,000** to maximize resident enrollment in critical Federal nutrition assistance programs.



MCFC designed and led these 5 grant-making programs by:



Researching and developing the grant scope, timeline, funding sources, outreach strategy and evaluation rubric



Assembling review committees of **72** community advocates, funders, and government agency partners, who collectively reviewed **210** applications across the **5** grant programs

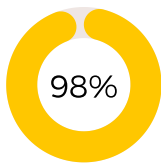
Grant awards were funded through the Montgomery County government, Food for Montgomery, and the Community Food Rescue mini-grants program. The grant programs were led in close partnership with Montgomery County DHHS, the Food Security Task Force, the Healthcare Initiative Foundation, and the Greater Washington Community Foundation.



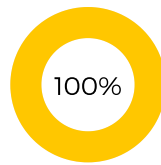
Food Access Grant awardee Rainbow Community Development Center provides food to a resident at a drive-through food distribution site.



Provided Food Security Capacity Building Trainings to **190** total participants from **50** different community organizations and nonprofits in 2020.



of participants reported that they learned useful information that they planned to share with others.



of participants reported that they would recommend Montgomery County Food Council Virtual Trainings to other people in their networks.

- ▶ Training topics included food assistance resources in Montgomery County, safe operations of emergency food distributions, nutrition standards for food assistance providers, and culturally competent community engagement and outreach.

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Convened and provided subgrants to **8** food assistance Service Consolidation Hubs in each of the County's regional service areas to facilitate partnership building among the food assistance organizations in each region.

"We would like to extend our gratitude for the entire team of the Montgomery County Food Council and most especially to the folks behind the scenes who are very pivotal in the fight against hunger in Montgomery County and its surrounding regions. Our community engagement is strengthened and empowered by the generous contributions of the county support in defeating food insecurity in the county."

- Dr Abdul K. Sesay, Kings & Priests Court International Ministries - City of Light Helping Hands

"Thank you to the Food Council for its wisdom and guidance in assisting us [food assistance providers] in carrying out the necessary work. When we entered this arena it was all new to us, but every question we had was answered graciously and we were given so much support. Thank you for the blessing you are to the county and beyond. "

-Ms. Doreen Hines,  
The Living Legends Awards for Service to Humanity

- ▶ Coordinated monthly meetings to help facilitate partnerships and to provide information to the hubs about resources that are helpful to their efforts, such as programs to acquire diapers, hygiene products, toys, and other essentials for families who are experiencing food insecurity.

- ▶ Led discussions on services areas, gaps, and referral processes in order to improve service delivery to residents throughout all regions of the County.

# We enhance cross-sector connectivity and partnerships.

- ▶ Co-led the COVID-19 Food Security Task Force with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, which has:
  - increased the volume of food distributed by the food assistance system,
  - improved access to food by building the capacity of the food assistance network to store and strategically, safely, and efficiently distribute food to residents through home delivery and community pickup sites, and
  - communicated critical information to ensure residents are connected with available resources.
- ▶ Partnered with the Greater Washington Community Foundation to launch Food for Montgomery to galvanize private sector and individual support of food access initiatives in the County in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ Actively participate in regional and national food system work through Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments FARM Committee, Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board, Future Harvest CASA Conference, USDA Food Security Measurement Expert Working Group, Regional Food and Agriculture Working Group, and the Emergency Assistance Coalition.



**100+**

events hosted



**645**

meetings with County  
and regional stakeholders



**81**

engagements with  
government entities



**70+**

MCFC staff featured as speakers at  
events at local, state, and national levels.



**3,600+**

total attendance at  
monthly Working Group meetings

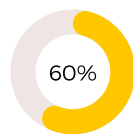


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Our biweekly Food Security Community Calls bring together 250+ food assistance providers, government leaders, and community partners to communicate their service and resource gaps, so that MCFC and County agencies can coordinate appropriate responses and solutions, and provide a forum for sharing best practices and resources.

► Current survey results:

Have you made new connection(s) to other organizations, on a Food Security Community Call? Please select the best range.



of organizations have made up to **5** new connections

Have you shared a resource that you heard about on a Food Security Community Call with other people at your organization, or in the community?



**"Love how all provider groups have been connected to one another and resources..."**

- Food Security Community Call Participant

**"...[The Food Council does...] PHENOMENAL work. Our organization benefits tremendously from the information you share."**

-Food Security Community Call Participant

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Facilitated new partnerships for MoCo Made organizations:

- Hosted **4** MoCo Made events
- The Food Council connected local group "The Beer Fairiez" to the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation and the Small Business Navigator to discuss potential expansion opportunities and funding sources.



Blueberries from Farm to Food Bank Program partner, Butler's Orchard.

- ▶ Connected Cinnamon Tree Organics with two other MoCo Made businesses, Santa Lucia Coffee and Chouquette Chocolates & Confections, to share best practices related to shipping wholesale quantities of product nationwide.

**58%**

of surveyed MoCo Made businesses reported “new relationships with fellow food and beverage businesses” as a result of participation in the MoCo Made program in 2020.

- ▶ Facilitated a procurement partnership between Montgomery County Public Schools and Sandy Spring Gardens to bring more local produce to students.
- ▶ Recruited **17** new businesses for the MoCo Made program in 2020, increasing membership in the program to **84** total participants.

"The Food Council is doing an amazing job. We, at Tsiona Foods, we wouldn't be where we are now if it was not for MOCO Food Council."

- Tsiona Bellele, Tsiona Foods

"I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the MoCo Made Team for keeping in touch with e-mails about programs and activities that were going on as COVID-19 emerged. It was a time that was confusing and unsettling for food and beverage businesses."

- Kim Zello, Stone Soup Catering

- ▶ Facilitated new partnerships among Food Council Members: Returning and Exiting Council Members indicated that they have made over **125** new connections during their participation in the Food Council in 2020.



The Farm at Our House features the MoCo Made logo at their farmers stand.



► Engaged **50+** partners within the agricultural community, through hosting:



### **A Farmer Forum**

We shared resources related to legal support for farms, local procurement opportunities, culturally appropriate food access and food production, and on-farm composting.



### **A Farm to School Meeting**

We discussed opportunities for local farms to partner with Montgomery County Public Schools Division of Food and Nutrition Services for procurement and food education.



### **A Farmer Listening Session**

We discussed opportunities for County funding to be allocated to food producing farms through a grant program in exchange for a commitment to support the Farm to Food Bank program in 2021.



### **An on-Farm Composting Discussion**

We focused on newly introduced legislation at the County level that would expand on-farm composting.



MoCo Made partner Metro Microgreens at the Central Farms Market in Bethesda.



The Food Council's MoCo Made initiative provides resources and support to more than 23 local farms.

# We lead advocacy and drive policy and process change.

Submitted or signed on to comment letters for:



**3** bills or Zoning Text Amendments at the County level related to food system sustainability



**10** letters of support for proposed legislation at the State level



**7** bills at the federal level

- ▶ The **10** bills that the Food Council supported at the State level in 2020 addressed issues such as food waste composting, local food procurement in state institutions, protections at the state level for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and other food security initiatives.
- ▶ The bills that the Food Council supported at the Federal level in 2020 related to COVID-19 food security response efforts, as well as seeking to prevent “rollbacks” of the nutrition requirements for school meals.



A Food Security Community Advisory Board member testifies in favor of the Heat and Eat bill in the Maryland General Assembly.

- ▶ Provided oral testimony on behalf of **2** bills at the state level



Income Tax Credit - Residential Composting and Pickup Service (HB 1105)



Food Supplement Program Eligibility (HB 1532)



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Food Security Community Advisory Board members are county residents who have directly experienced food insecurity. In 2020, FSCAB members engaged in policy discussions and direct advocacy at many events and meetings, including:



Testifying in support of multiple state-level anti-hunger bills and programs



Engaging with elected officials and staff at the County, State, and Federal levels about food security policy recommendations and specific opportunities to expand community advocacy leadership



Sharing their recommendations for local- and state-level policy opportunities to fight hunger at regional conferences, town halls, and televised media events

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Collaborated on County-level planning processes, including the Climate Action Plan and the Thrive 2020 Master Plan, and provided oral testimony on the Thrive 2020 Master Plan.

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Policy successes:

- ▶ The Food Council partnered with County Councilmember Evan Glass to connect the expertise of local farms to expand on-farm composting through policy change. ZTA 20-04, which passed unanimously in County Council in February 2021, expands the amount of offsite materials that farms can utilize in on-farm composting operations.



The Food Council and its partners conduct nonprofit budget advocacy with Montgomery County Councilmember Evan Glass.

▶ The Food Council developed and submitted comments to County Council on ZTA 20-01, Solar Collection Systems, and advocated that the Agricultural Reserve should be prioritized for equitable and affordable land access to increase local food production and be protected from large scale solar development.



Food Council staff celebrate Hear the Crunch - an annual event where students, parents, educators, policymakers, advocates, and others in Maryland and the DMV take synchronized bites into apples in support of school breakfast.

▶ The Food Council led dozens of statewide partners, including local Food Councils, advocacy groups, and agencies, to draft and advocate for 2021 Maryland House Bill 831, which was proposed by Maryland Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Lorig Charkoudian to establish a Maryland Food System Resiliency Council.

 13

County-based and state-level organizational partners signed on to our letter of support



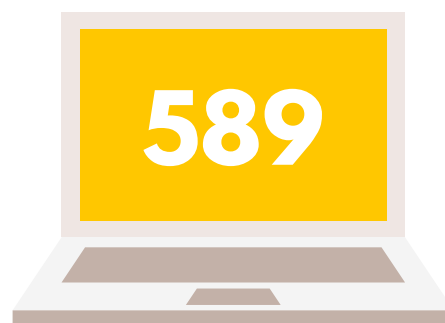
Food Council Executive Director Heather Bruskin joins County Executive Marc Elrich's Weekly Briefing.

# We build knowledge and awareness of resources and issues.

Number of engagements with the Food Council's food security work:



Number of unique participants on our Food Security Community Calls:



Total website pageviews Jan 2020-Dec 2020:

165,209

Total new website users Jan 2020-Dec 2020

60,938

Hits on website:



Food assistance resource map:

27,063



COVID-19 resource page in English:

24,876



COVID-19 resource page in Spanish:

4,399



Pages pertaining to food security resources:

70,000+







Number of social media posts sharing information about food assistance resources:

**657**

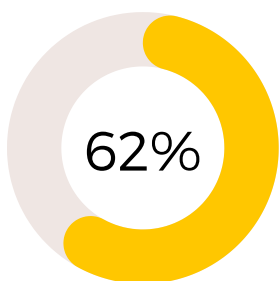
The MoCo Made initiative is intended to offer resources and support to local farms and food and beverage producers, and to increase the visibility and awareness of the diverse products made and grown here in Montgomery County.



**18** new businesses joined Moco Made in 2020



**1,600+** print copies of the 2019-2020 Food and Beverage Guide were distributed



of surveyed MoCo Made businesses reported an increase in brand recognition as a result of participation in the MoCo Made program in 2020

**80+**

Total Moco Made Businesses, of which:



identify as women owned



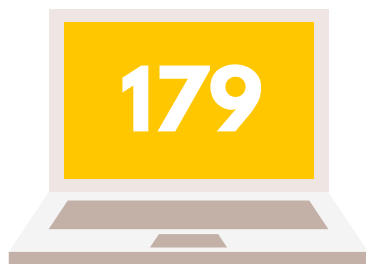
identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC)-owned



are food-producing farms

# We research and communicate opportunities and challenges.

Number of organizations represented on Community Calls for Food Assistance Providers:



Number of organizations receiving MCFC support with respect to COVID-19 related issues:



Convened

83

local gardeners and growers representing



organizations in Montgomery County in the Gardening Subcommittee, which met

4 times in 2020

7

Local government agencies and nonprofit organizations that conduct SNAP outreach and enrollment in the County convened at

6

Benefits Outreach and Enrollment Workgroup meetings



to enhance systems-level capacity for SNAP outreach and enrollment through sharing of best practices and resources.

# Thank you!

The Montgomery County Food Council thanks the following contributors for their generous financial support in 2020:

**\$20,000+**

Montgomery County Council, Office of the County Executive, and  
Department of Health and Human Services

Burness Communications

Institute for Public Health Innovation through the Trinity Health  
Transforming Communities Initiative

USDA Local Food Promotion Program

Mead Family Foundation

Greater Washington Community Foundation

Nationals Philanthropies

**\$10,000 to \$19,999**

Healthcare Initiative Foundation

**"Whenever we talk about our work and investment in the systems building-space we always highlight the work of the Food Council. The Food Council's Food Security Community Advisory Board built the critically important food security safety-net that allows the pandemic response to be swift and well-coordinated. Without the Food Council's infrastructure and leadership in this space, so many more residents would have gone without food for their families."**

**- Jessica Fuchs, Director, Grants and Community Impact, Healthcare Initiative Foundation**



## **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Bender Family Charitable Fund

No Kid Hungry

## **\$1,000 to \$4,999**

DAI, Inc.

Jim Dempsey

George Green and Glenda Cohen-Green

Heritage Montgomery

Holy Cross Health

Mary Lu Johnston

Richard and Sara London

Pickard Djinis and Pissarri LLP

Potomac Presbyterian Church

The Beer Fairiez

The Lois and Richard England Family Foundation

The Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund

## **\$250 to \$999**

John & Mary Atwater

Wendy Nevett Bazil

Regan Billingsley Interiors, LLC

Shirley Blakely

Mike Houston

Katherine Madaleno

Jerry Martin and Patty Larson

Matt and Joanne London Fund

William and Victoria Pao

Myra Sklarew

and ten additional individual donors.

## \$100 to \$249

Victoria Heisler Edouard

Fred and Patty Simonton

Susan Eisendrath

Ellen Singer

Selma Eisenstadt

Sklarew Charitable Fund

Steven Mandel

The Rudick Taft Legacy  
Fund

Karen Post and Jonathon  
Nevett

Michael J. Wilson

Aizat Oladapo

and 26 additional  
individual donors.

Vicki and Steve Schwartz  
Family Fund

