

THE DINNER BELL

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF



OUR MISSION:

TO ALLEVIATE FOOD INSECURITY THROUGHOUT ST. MARY'S COUNTY

OUR VISION:

A ST. MARY'S COUNTY FREE FROM HUNGER



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Thank you to one of our new partners!
The St. Mary's County Elks Lodge #2092
made a donation to Feed St. Mary's.
Dolly Broom, Grant Coordinator and Rick
Mills, Exalted Ruler and Charlie Wharton,
FSM Marketing Lead.

APRIL'S MOBILE FOOD DRIVE – By Greg Syler

For several years now, HOPE, the coalition of churches in St. Mary's County, has partnered with the Maryland Food Bank in setting up what they call a Mobile Food Drive. Once a month, generally on the fourth Saturday, for eleven months of the year (we skip December, as that's busy enough!), the MD Food Bank, teaming up with Farming-4-Hunger, sends a truck with donated food to Lexington Park. The truck unloads 7,000 – 8,000 pounds of food in one of two parking lots: one month, it's God's House of Refuge on Midway Drive in Lexington Park; the next month it's Church of the Ascension on Great Mills Road. These Mobile Food Drives are kind of like Christmas – you don't really know what's on the truck until it shows up, and I've been impressed each time it arrives: there are, literally, thousands of pounds of delicious, nutritious food, often fresh vegetables, sometimes meat, sometimes milk, sometimes pre-packaged dinners, ready to be given away to the community.

And that's what we do – give it away.

As you can tell from what I've described, the Mobile Food Drive is, itself, an amazing, coordinated offering – basically a Free Farmer's Market in downtown Lexington Park, at least eleven times each year. It's also a dynamic partnership between HOPE (like I said, a coalition of nearly 30 churches in St. Mary's County), the MD Food Bank, Farming-4-Hunger and, now, Feed St. Mary's, St. Mary's County's first-ever food bank, not to mention the generosity of so many grocers and restaurateurs and farmers and others who give of their abundance to serve others.

HOPE and its member churches have been doing these Mobile Food Drives for years, longer than I've been connected with the organization in my capacity as the pastor of Church of the Ascension. But these food drops have taken on a new level of meaning in our collective experiences around COVID19. We're learning a lot about partnerships, and I'm so grateful for the deep connectedness and generosity of so many in St. Mary's County – the way our neighbor churches share best practices and abundance with each other; the way our citizens show up and donate and support; the way we look out for each other. "We're all in this together," I've been saying for many weeks now, and that was nowhere more evident than on the last Saturday in April in downtown Lexington Park.

On Saturday, April 25, the truck showed up, as scheduled, around 9am that morning, and unloaded nearly 8,000 pounds of great stuff. There were crates of pre-packaged dinners from Freshly, pallets of boxes of bottled and sparkling water, fresh cabbage, brussels sprouts, other leafy greens, boxes of chips and cookies, and pre-boxed assortments of fresh vegetables and produce.

Equally amazing were the many people who came to receive, and receive gratefully, and so many fellow residents who were compelled to come and give of their time. Some volunteers spent the morning mingling and socializing and networking with others and with guests – the sidewalks marked at 8' lengths so as to keep social distancing. Other volunteers handed out food to those walking through, and those who drove-thru, too. We checked in more than 150 families or individuals, which totaled to more than 500 people who received food, when we added the number of persons at home. Finally, we also encouraged local food pantries to show up around 10:30am, and take extra supplies back to their pantry. That way, they could give it away through their operations the next week. By 11:15am or so, the entire parking lot was clear and the neighborhood was fed! Tables were moved inside, the pallets were removed, and people were on about their day. It was a truly amazing day of teamwork and mutual support ... precisely the "business" we say we're in!

The Mobile Food Drives, coordinated through HOPE and, now, with the added boost of additional support and coordination through Feed St. Mary's, will continue as scheduled on the Fourth Saturday of each month. There won't be a food drop in May, as that Saturday is the holiday weekend, but we continue on Saturday, June 27 at Church of the Ascension. All volunteers are welcome and encouraged to lend a hand, starting anytime around 8:30am that morning. For more information, please feel free to contact Wanda DiGennaro, HOPE's ministry coordinator, at (301) 737-2870, or hopesomd@gmail.com.

GOOD PEOPLE DOING GOOD THINGS:

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on St. Mary's County; however, there are still good people doing good things! Thank you to everyone who has had a part in helping to alleviate food insecurity in St. Mary's County.



Feed St. Mary's is honored to be a part of a community that cares. We appreciate local healthcare providers, first responders, social services workers, businesses, pantries, non-profits, churches and other community members and volunteers who dedicate themselves to help others.



Would you like to get the latest information from Feed St. Mary's?

FSM Website: <https://feedstmarys.org>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/feedstmarys/>

Are you interested in finding a Food Pantry in St. Mary's County? Check out the up-to-date listing on our website: <https://feedstmarys.org/services/>

Feed St. Mary's
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its Operational Sponsors



Generous Citizens
of Southern Maryland

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Club of Lexington Park



Patrons of the National Oyster
Festival in St. Mary's County