

THE DINNER BELL

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF

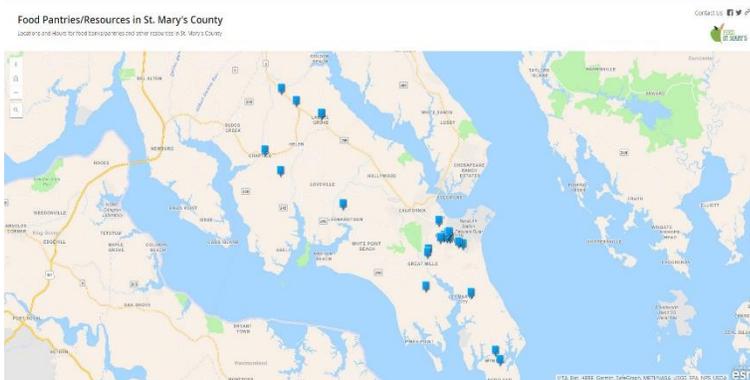


OUR MISSION:

TO ALLEVIATE FOOD INSECURITY THROUGHOUT ST. MARY'S COUNTY

OUR VISION:

A ST. MARY'S COUNTY FREE FROM HUNGER



WHAT'S INSIDE:

- **NEW INTERACTIVE MAP**
- **GUEST EDITORIAL – BILL ROBERTS**
- **FSM'S NEW PARTNERS**

Feed St. Mary's would like to introduce a new tool available to those seeking resources that can be used to provide food to residents of St. Mary's County. Thanks to Scott Strickland, we now have an interactive map that shows various food resources throughout the county. In addition to the locations, the map also shows information such as hours of service and links to websites. The information can be accessed by clicking on the map or through this link: [SMC Food Resources](#).

Scott is a 2004 graduate of Great Mills High School, an alumnus and adjunct instructor at St. Mary's College. Feed St. Mary's appreciates the efforts community members such as Scott invest in addressing food insecurity in our county.

Community leaders respond to food insecurity in St. Mary's county while building relationships of "Caring, Sharing, and Dignity" – by Bill Roberts

I awoke on Monday, January 18th with a sense of excitement. I was joining a group of volunteers at Church of the Ascension's food pantry on this national holiday that honors the late, great American hero, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The pantry at Ascension is run by a dedicated group of volunteers who I see as community leaders. Every Monday and Thursday morning between the hours of 9am – 12 noon, anybody can walk or drive up (but be sure to wear your COVID mask!) and receive a warm greeting of welcome from Ascension's volunteer leaders. I think their warm greetings mean more to the people who come for gifts of food than just following a norm for respectful social interaction. I saw that Ascension pantry volunteers have strong relationships of caring and sharing with the people they serve that reinforces everybody's sense of dignity and wellbeing. Caring, sharing, compassion and empathy are among the qualities of human interaction I saw that Monday and every day since that I've gone to work with the Ascension pantry volunteers. The actions of pantry volunteers, the donors who come by singly or in groups, and the people who come for food for their families or neighbors contribute to broadening a community fabric that values caring and sharing and promotes dignity and a sense of worth and belonging. Pantry volunteers and pantry visitors, whether donors or recipients, are the key actors for creating an environment of dignity, care, and sharing within our county community as we work together to overcome food insecurity in St. Mary's county.



For tens of thousands of years previous generations of people lived in small groups or bands where everybody contributed what they could towards meeting the basic food needs of the entire group. When there was plenty, everybody enjoyed plenty, and when times were lean, everybody did with less. Dependent children, the elderly, the injured or infirm received their share because they were part of the group. Sharing food symbolized social belonging with the group. In the few remaining groups of people in the world who live this way today, the people who produce more food share more food with others and enjoy high prestige and reputation within the group. Today, people continue to hunt, fish, garden or gather foods for their family or to sell in the market, but the production and distribution of food has changed dramatically. Even before the COVID pandemic caused havoc among the most vulnerable members of the county, our state, and the nation, food insecurity was more widespread than many people realize. Today, people and families who are food insecure not only have to manage survival without enough food, they must deal with the shame and stigma imposed upon them for circumstances beyond their control. Access to sufficient nutritious food may be considered a fundamental human right by national governments, but we will overcome food insecurity by supporting the efforts of food pantry leaders who know the needs of their immediate community. Additionally, the people who receive gifts of food from the pantries for their families or neighbors are just the types of leaders who can encourage other people to overcome whatever sense of shame or stigma they want to avoid by visiting St. Mary's county pantries. *(Continued on the next page.)*

“Caring, Sharing, and Dignity” – by Bill Roberts (Continued)

There are nearly two dozen food pantries in St. Mary’s county with dozens of volunteers who are leading the effort to reduce food insecurity. These volunteers “lead with dignity” as they foster relationships of caring and sharing with other members of the county community facing food insecurity. Receiving gifts of food carries absolutely no expectation of compensation or reimbursement. But recipients could become the community leaders who “pay it forward” by encouraging others in their neighborhoods who might be reticent about going to a pantry to “give it a try.” Pantry volunteers serve their communities while developing respectful relationships of caring and sharing that enhance human dignity while providing for a fundamental human need. In other words, our pantry leaders could cultivate community leaders who can expand the reach of the pantries. Let’s continue our efforts to reduce food insecurity within our county community while enhancing the dignity of everybody involved. Nobody goes hungry in a community that cares about one another and shares what they have!



Bill Roberts is a professor of anthropology at St. Mary’s College of Maryland where he has been teaching since August, 1991. Bill has been a St. Mary’s county resident since July, 1999.

WELCOME TO THE FEED ST. MARY’S FAMILY:

FSM would like to congratulate Hands That Feed Ministry (Gospel Tabernacle of Prayer) and Trinity Care Pantry (Trinity Lutheran Church) on being accepted as Partner Pantries with Feed St. Mary’s and the Maryland Food Bank.

The St. Mary’s College Food Pantry has begun working with Feed St. Mary’s to provide food to college students who need access to affordable, nutritious food.

Keep up to date with what is going on at Feed St. Mary’s Food Bank:

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

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