



DWARC

UNITED TO MEET THE NEED



FY23 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023

A MESSAGE FROM MATT

In the 70-plus year history of the Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC), our mission has remained largely the same - working together to meet the basic human needs of our neighbors. As our organization finds itself in arguably one of its most pivotal moments, I feel incredibly lucky to find unity is at the heart of every facet of our work.

As we work to address an emergency level of need in our community, your continued support has helped us rise to the occasion.

FACING THE 'NEW NORMAL'

The overall volume of pantry visitors this year itself, is staggering. But the overarching theme in our pantry volume is the overwhelming amount of first time visitors – a relentless trend that has continued into our current fiscal year. In fact, in 17 of 18 consecutive most recent months we broke that month's record for the most new individual visitors and broke the overall record a number of times.

The sad fact of the matter is that food insecurity has long since left its role as a “poverty symptom” behind and has become a symptom of a new, broader inability for everyday working folks to meet the basic costs of living.

Inside you will find...

Spotlights :

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Beyond more recent inflation challenges, these costs continue to rise at a rate higher than that of salaries or incomes. We see that everyday across our food pantry network. This trend has resulted in more pantry visitors, from bigger households, and a need to visit more frequently.

RISING TO MEET THE NEED

The good news is, despite folks needing more and more frequent help, The DMARC network of pantries has risen to the occasion. Everyday we continue to offer a dignified pantry experience, where one can count on a regular inventory of items, and access to healthy foods. This good news is made possible by the giving of time, talent, and treasure from readers like you and a giving community that cares for its citizens. This report is a snapshot of those things you've made possible this year.

Matt Unger,
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Unger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

year in review

September 2022 - February 2023 Facing challenges to meeting our mission, DMARC has ongoing conversations with the Food Bank of Iowa to develop a renewed community partnership.



September 2022 - DMARC-ket Southside Food Pantry opens becoming first brick-and-mortar food pantry staffed and operated by DMARC.



June 2022 - US inflation rate peaks at 9.1 percent - the highest level in four decades.



February 2023 - New partnership agreement with the Food Bank of Iowa introduces changes to how DMARC distributes food to pantry visitors. Repeat visits begin to grow.



June 2023 - SF494 is signed into Iowa law. The legislation will add additional restrictions to accessing SNAP like asset testing and create additional hurdles to enrolling in the program.



July 2023 - In partnership with the Comparison Project at Drake University, DMARC hosts the 7th Iowa Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp.





FOOD PANTRY NETWORK

The busiest 12 month period on record has forced our team to innovate, as rising prices create new challenges.

Becky Whitlow, Director of the DMARC Food Pantry Network describes herself as a bargain hunter. As the primary wholesale purchase for the network of 14 food pantry partners, mobile food pantry sites, and food delivery program, Whitlow has had her hands full. Every day she finds herself spending almost two hours a day shopping around to keep our food costs low while maintaining the same quality options.

“Before the pandemic I was pretty much able to go to just 2-3 sources and get pretty much everything I needed at a reasonable price. Now I have to work a little harder at it. I’ve started working with 3-4 additional wholesalers in the last year to shop around for specific items,” said Whitlow, who will be celebrating her 12-year anniversary with DMARC in 2024.

“Previously we never could’ve taken a semi-load of canned fruit or pasta in one day and that saves us quit a bit of money. We might save 5,6, or \$7000 by ordering in a larger quantity.”

—Rebecca Whitlow
Food Pantry
Network Director



One in three people were first-time food pantry visitors.

As the number of individuals being assisted by the Food Pantry Network has increased, so has the added pressure on our warehouse and purchasing operations to keep up with the record volume. This is only accentuated by the increasing number of people a month who are utilizing a food pantry for at least one repeat visit a month.

The pandemic served as a paradigm shift in where DMARC's food is coming from as the percentage of items being distributed is more and more likely to be purchased. In FY 18-19 over 1.8 million pounds or 36% of total items distributed by the food pantry network was purchased from wholesalers. This past fiscal year that number increased to 2.1 million pounds or 52% of the cost/value of all items distributed.

While cost of food has come down slightly from a year ago, much of what we are purchasing is still more expensive than 3-4 years ago because of the increase in freight cost. Everything from the cost of diesel to the cost of the metal to make the can has pushed prices up.

"I am much more aware now of whether an order is being shipped out of Illinois, Minnesota, or Indiana or is it being shipped out of New Jersey or California," said Whitlow.

The changes in food packaging and processing has meant higher prices and less options. For example, Progresso soups previously had over 30 different kinds of soup available for purchase in bulk, but that has shrunk to as low as 12 options.

DMARC guarantees all partner food pantries a list of specific items: things like peanut butter or pasta. As the organization continues to spend nearly \$200k on food a month many partners pantries are having to rely more on our inventory when those pantry staples aren't available through other sources.

With all of this change Whitlow is still optimistic about DMARC's ability to meet the need. This is especially true now with the capabilities of our warehouse facilities. After moving in spring 2022, ordering in bulk has become exponentially easier as we plan for 6 months out instead of 6 weeks.

"Previously we could've never could've taken a semi-load of canned fruit or pasta in one day and that saves us quit a bit of money. We might save 5,6, or \$7000 by ordering in a larger quantity."

Expanded fridge and freezer storage has also allowed for the warehouse to collect and safely store more large donations of food rescue or other bulk donations. Especially during the winter months, having 6 pallets of melons or 8 pallets of butternut squash donated helps provide more options while keeping costs down.



Where does our food come from?

See **page 12** for a breakdown of what is purchased, rescued, from the Food Bank of Iowa, and more.



As Pastor Lee Roorda Schott walked into the Iowa State Capitol rotunda, she was taken aback. Eventually, she found herself surrounded by other faith leaders and community advocates from across the state - all standing in solidarity with their neighbors.

The press conference organized by DMARC and other anti-hunger organizations was called to share how Iowans would be affected by significant changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through Senate File 494.

“Whether or not we need those benefits personally, every one of us is directly affected by these changes, and the use of our tax dollars to put up roadblocks against our neighbors accessing assistance,” said Schott.

“My humanity and my faith have made me a person who cares about my neighbors, and who looks for ways to bring justice, mercy, and good news to the poor.”

Schott served on the board of directors for DMARC more than a decade ago and has since stayed involved with the organization. In recent years that has meant getting more involved through advocacy work. Even though advocates face an uphill battle on some fronts, Schott is encouraged by what can happen when you show up in numbers.

“I’m grateful for the longtime influence DMARC has had in addressing hunger in the Metro. Faith communities make a difference through their financial and volunteer support, and through advocacy for policies and processes that would alleviate challenges that confront persons in poverty.”

"It makes a difference when we show up in numbers, as people of faith, and as people who care about human dignity and thriving. I appreciate DMARC's leadership in assisting us in living out these values and allowing our voices to be heard when it matters."

—Lee Roorda Schott, Pastor at Valley United Methodist Church, West Des Moines

INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT



Going into the summer **Audrey Martin** was a little nervous, but still, excited to be participating in the Iowa Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp. Her faith journey had been a bit rocky and she knew an experience like this would require some vulnerability.

On her first night of camp, after getting settled, Martin joined other campers on the bus to visit the Iowa Sikh Association and Gurdwara in West Des Moines. After sharing a meal and stepping out of her comfort zone, the idea behind why Martin was here became more clear.

“I did not know what to expect from the camp as a whole and I did not know any of the other campers at that point, but that visit brought us so close together so quickly, and the Sikh community was so welcoming,” said Martin.

The five day experience is a partnership with the Comparison Project at Drake University and students stay on campus during the camp.

Part of the personal faith journey for students like Audrey was the creation of a digital storytelling video project. Each day’s discussions and site visits help deepen that exploration as campers join worship services, meals, and conversations with their peers and faith partners in the metro.

“As someone who has been in Catholic school my whole life, I never really had much exposure to other faith traditions. I had learned about many of them conceptually, but connecting with members of these communities in person was an entirely different experience,” said Martin.

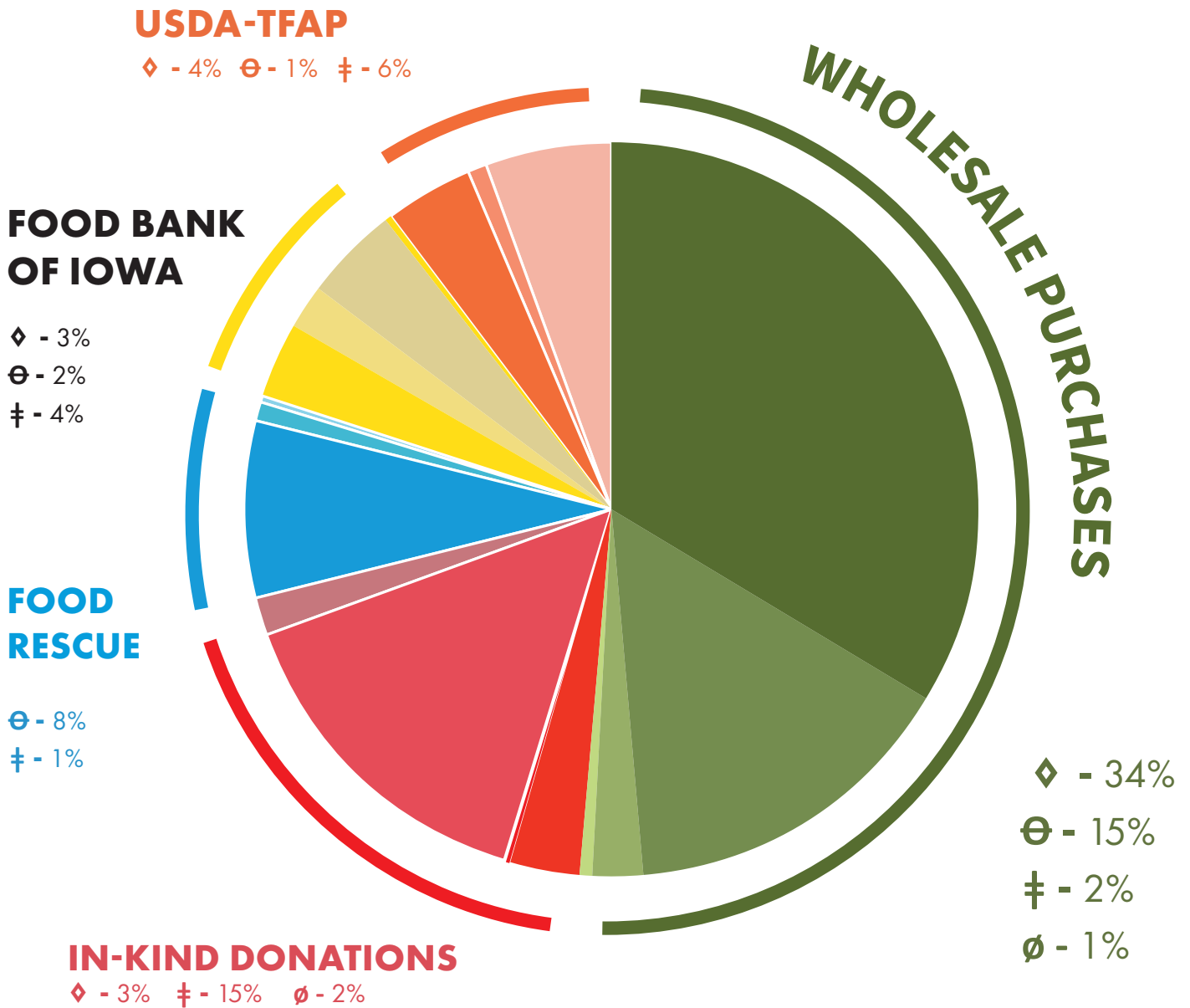
For Martin, the search for interfaith engagement and the bonds made with campers continue today. Martin’s advice for future campers: “Get out of your comfort zone: try the food, talk to the people, and definitely dance at the bhajan!”

“I became more aware of the similarities between every system of beliefs and that all are built on love... there are so many ways to worship, and all are unique and valuable.”

— **Audrey Martin**, Camp participant & first year student at Drake University

WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM

From July 2022 to June 2023, Nearly 5 million pounds of food and non-food items were distributed by the DMARC Food Pantry Network from the following sources.



Percent of pounds distributed: ◇ - Monthly packaged items ⊖ - produce

‡ - Meat/meat substitute/dairy/egg/cheese ∅ - nonfood items

DISTRIBUTION BREAKDOWN:

- Purchased over **2.1 million pounds of food.** That is equal to 52% of all items distributed. In FY 2019 purchased items were only 36% of all items distributed.
- Distributed **over 1 million pounds** of produce items through the DMARC Food Pantry Network.
- Rescued over **527,000 lbs** of food items.
- Obtained over **358,000 lbs** of food and non-food items from the Food Bank of Iowa.
- Distributed over **124,000 lbs** of nonfood items (basic hygiene supplies, pet food, period products, etc).
- Distributed over 417,000 lbs of food through the **USDA's The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).**
- Received and distributed over 816,500 lbs of donated items through in-kind donations to DMARC.



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Because of you ...

Over \$150,000 was raised through



Spring Greens 2023 brought together some of our biggest supporters to help us raise over \$150,000 in support of DMARC's mission. Thank you to all of the attendees, Sponsors, Volunteers, and Donors who helped make this happen. A special thank you to Event Chair Lisa Logan, Event Co-Chair Brenda Holt, and all the members of the planning committee for making this a special evening.



Your Legacy. Our Community.

DMARC would like to celebrate the lives of the following donors who provided support to our mission in their will or estate this past fiscal year. Every donor who leaves a legacy is automatically a part of DMARC's **Just One Legacy Society**. We are proud to recognize the lasting impact that these individuals have chosen to make through DMARC.

\$ 79,317
donated in 2023

**CORA C. HAYES
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YOU DROVE OUR WORK FORWARD

The grassroots efforts of community partners helped us fill the shelves across the DMARC Food Pantry Network.

- Over 120 groups held a food and fund drive in FY23.
- Your efforts generated 78,808 food items and 16,900 non-food items.
- You also raised \$66,151 in additional financial contributions.



...we are able to meet the need.

FINANCIALS

PROGRAM SERVICES EXPENSES

Food Pantry Network	\$4,879,346	82%
Advocacy and Education	\$142,645	2%
Interfaith Engagement	\$62,415	1%
Program Total	\$ 5,084,406	

SUPPORTING SERVICES EXPENSES

Fundraising	\$437,108	7%
Administrative	\$463,272	8%
Total Expenses	\$5,984,786	

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Individuals	\$1,510,636	19%
In-Kind Contributions	\$2,156,691	27%
Grants	\$1,590,815	20%
Congregations	\$592,224	8%
Organizations/Groups	\$318,353	4%
Events/Miscellaneous	\$179,437	2%
Planned Giving	\$71,187	1%
Miscellaneous	\$63,677	<1%
Gain on sale of property	\$1,288,401	16%
Investments	\$104,843	1%
Total Support*	\$7,876,264	
Total Net Assets	\$9,659,737	

* In FY23, \$153,621 of collections were made against the 'Feed Today, Change Tomorrow' Capital Campaign.

Working Together to Meet Basic Human Needs for the greater Des Moines community.

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