



## FACES BEHIND A RECORD YEAR

FOOD PANTRY VISITOR ISSUE

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**DWARC**  
UNITED TO MEET THE NEED

**THE  
VOICE**

# A SEASON OF GRATITUDE

BY RACHEL C. MURDOCK



We are entering my favorite time of the year, a time when I turn my focus to gratitude for what I have, and on how I can try to bring some joy and peace to others around me. I'm grateful that in the rush of the season, I have times to connect with and support others.

One of the ways I hope to do so this year is through my work at DMARC. As we approach the new year, we expect to see a higher need as we enter the season of winter cold, gifts, and gatherings. However, this year we are looking at record breaking numbers - higher than we have ever seen in the past. We keep thinking the number of visitors will level out, but it just keeps growing. Based on what we see, we expect to have 20% higher demand for our services this season.

Sometimes those numbers make it hard to remember that each of the 70,000 people we have served this year is an individual trying to manage life's challenging circumstances. In this issue, you will get to meet some of those individuals - our family, friends, and neighbors - who are experiencing these trying times.

Some are single parents facing higher expenses than they have had in the past in addition to the extra expenses of the holidays. Some are refugees or immigrants learning to be self-sufficient in a new country or using a language that is new to them. Some have an unexpected or chronic health condition that makes it hard to work or hard to get around, especially in the Iowa winters. Some face a job loss or a large medical expense that decimates their finances.

In my religious tradition, we have a writing that implores us to be generous to those in need. I'm sure many of you can say the same. It reminds us not to judge how the person came to be in want, but to remember that we are all beggars before God and that it is only through his grace that we have an abundance. In gratitude, we should share what we have with others.

In this time of unmatched need, can I ask you to share with those in want with an unmatched level of support?

Because of a generous anonymous gift from one of our friends, we are able to offer a true dollar-to-dollar matching gift through the end of the year. **Any donation, up to \$250,000, will be matched exactly.** We are so grateful for this wonderful offering from an individual inspired by the message in Psalms 91:4 and want to take advantage of every penny to serve the food insecure in our community. We hope you will consider a donation of any size before Dec. 31 to help us reach this goal.

Sincerely,

Rachel C. Murdock



**SPECIAL EDITION**

# THE FOOD PANTRY VISITOR ISSUE



***“There were 109 families here yesterday in one day. That’s insane!”***

The look of concern on LaWannah’s face is obvious as she reflects on seeing so many of her neighbors, like her, making the trip to the Urbandale Food Pantry on the first day of the month. What was once a busy day at the food pantry has now become commonplace in this moment where the level of need for food assistance can be described as nothing short of unmatched.

In order to understand the record-setting level of need we are seeing in this unmatched moment, you need to better understand the people behind the numbers. For many pantry visitors like LaWannah, the very act of coming to the food pantry and asking for help can be a difficult decision. The stigma of being judged lingers for many pantry visitors, especially those that are already shuffling so much of their time and energy to taking care of others in their household.

“I was a stay-at-home mom. I had raised my kids and lived a wonderful life and all of a sudden life just took it all away,” LaWannah said. “A lot of times people make the assumption that you just aren’t trying. They don’t realize that life happens. And it happens fast.”

**Continued on next page...**



***“A lot of times people make the assumption that you just aren’t trying. They don’t realize that life happens. And it happens fast.”***

**- LaWannah,**  
*Visits a couple time a year for healthy produce options*



***“Sometimes you just take things one day at a time. That’s why places like this exist: for people that need help.”***

**- Teresa**

*First time pantry visitor,  
Mother*

LaWannah had to start over at the age of 38 when she found herself having to navigate the loss of her mother, her car getting totaled, and separating from her spouse all in the matter of a few weeks.

Today, LaWannah always goes out of her way to bring a smile to the pantry staff because she knows that someone else could just as easily be having one of the worst days of their lives.

The relationships she made with pantry staff made a difference in helping to get through tough times – especially when others let her know she was not alone.

“They know me by name and they’re really friendly. They know my preferences and we talk to each other about how we are doing and feeling. It makes a difference,” she said.



***“You find the good even in the bad. I was dealt a really bad hand.”***

**- Samantha,**

*Stay at home mom of two  
and abuse survivor*

## **A Regular Shopping Experience**

Laural spent most of her morning hanging paintings in her apartment. With the many hours she has put into each piece, it would be a shame to let them sit in a box much longer.

Laural is a recent Iowa transplant, moving from Southern California to Johnston to be closer to her sister as she recovers from hip replacement surgery.

She finds hope in the small things - like the beautiful view of the neighboring farms from her apartment windows.

“I felt like life was over and now I can get back to being productive,” said Laural.

Laural recently visited the Johnston Partnership pantry for just the second time hoping that she could find supplies for baking.





***“When we come here it’s not just because it’s free; it’s because we really need it. I’m a shy person when it comes to asking for help, but sometimes I have to do it.”***

**- Abeir,**

*Mother of 8 who moved to Iowa as a refugee a decade ago*

She has found much joy in baking while having to spend more time at home, even though these items are more pricey at the grocery store.

“At first I was kind of unsure of myself coming to the food pantry, but everyone was friendly and it was simple to sign up. Everything is so expensive, rent is so expensive, and I am living on social security.”

### **Stigma: Who is Deserving of Help**

Often times, we are asked who is the ‘typical’ food pantry visitor? While there is no typical person, there are many common traits that can paint a better portrait of who is visiting a food pantry.

According to the recent ‘Portrait of a Food Pantry Visitor’ Report some of the most common traits of pantry visitors are a white - not hispanic woman, who graduated high school, does not receive SNAP benefits, has at least one child, is living below the poverty line, and only visits a food pantry once per year.

**Continued on next page...**



***“I felt like life was over and now I can get back to being productive.”***

**- Laural,**

*Recovering from a hip replacement*



***“It’s hard to humble yourself and put yourself in that position where you are at the mercy of a stranger. When you come to the pantry they don’t make you feel like any less of a person.”***

***– DH,***  
*Recently used a pantry for the first time*



Often times, a major life change or unexpected expense can push you into a bind where low barrier options for help like a food pantry can be a lifeline. But despite DMARC having no income or residency requirements, the stigma of asking for help can be one of the biggest barriers for someone to utilize a pantry.

For Rebecca and her family, every little bit counts. She has been visiting the pantry to shop for items for her three kids including things like detergent and food for their two cats.

She recently was let go in May after having to undergo a major surgery. While she is thankful to be starting a new job, her time and budget are even more limited than before. Rebecca had to take time off work for the day to even get to the pantry and her other appointments. Even though it has been difficult, she is optimistic looking to the future. Her family is finally getting to move into a new home.

“I’m just thankful for the food I got today. It is really nice that people volunteer and help out where they can. I really appreciate that.”



***“My first time visiting was a breeze.  
They help out with items that people really need.”***

***- Magan, Pantry Visitor***

QUESTIONS? Contact Leslie Garman, CFRE:  515-277-6969 x215  LGarman@dmарunited.org

Special opportunity:  
**UNMATCHED NEED =  
UNMATCHED SUPPORT**

**OUR GOAL: RAISE \$250,000  
BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR**

Your donation is always multiplied because of DMARC's buying power, however, this year, thanks to an anonymous donor inspired by Psalm 91:4, **any gift you give to DMARC from November 1st to December 31st will be MATCHED, dollar for dollar, up to \$250,000!**

This is a true dollar-for-dollar match, however. If together we raise \$100,000, DMARC will receive a matching gift of exactly \$100,000.

**Join us**



**SAVE THE DATE:** Our signature fundraising event returns Thursday, April 10 at the Krause Gateway Center.

**Other ways to give**

There are many ways to help your neighbors in need outside of just giving cash this year.



**Give a gift of stock or securities.**

**Donate a vehicle.**



**give through your IRA.**

Working together to meet basic human needs for the greater Des Moines community.

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**YOU'RE SUPPORT WILL GO  
TWICE AS FAR  
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.**

Any gift given to DMARC from Nov. 1st to Dec. 31st will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$250,000 thanks to an anonymous donor inspired by Psalm 91:4.

Donate online at:  
**DMARCUNITED.ORG**

