

LARS Letter

Serving the Laurel Community Since 1987

Volume 26, Issue 2

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“I was used to doing it on my own...”

“...but I found out we need help from angels that are sent by God and that is what LARS is to me. I was feeling low from life's daily struggles of under-employment and not being able to feed myself. I was told about LARS after a conversation with a pastor. They [LARS] made me feel like a person and not just a number. I was greeted with a warm smile and genuine concern. The care was not just about my today needs, but my tomorrow and the road to a recovery. I was given career counseling, a great new resume, food, and

a new outlook on life and people. I was open to do something new and they were willing to offer the help to help me achieve my goals. Thanks for everything.”

— Mr. A

Mr. A came into LARS frustrated with the lack of employment options and struggling to find safe housing. After countless hours of job searching and nearly three months spent perfecting his resume and working on interviewing skills, Mr. A secured two

great jobs. He accomplished all of this while never being sure if he was going to have a place to sleep at night. He is proud to finally have an income, allowing him to start looking for a place of his own.

When a person is in a crisis situation, it can be extremely overwhelming to navigate the necessary steps to finding help and making changes. Mr. A received guidance from LARS, but his positive attitude and determination are what allowed him to take control and change his circumstances.

Laurel Community Garden Shares its Bounty



Above: Fresh rosemary, rainbow swiss chard, and cucumbers

Right: 7-lbs of radishes fresh from the garden, donated to LARS in June

LARS would like thank all of the gardeners who tend to our donated plot at the Laurel Community Garden, located behind the Laurel Presbyterian Church on Sandy Spring Road. Our clients have appreciated receiving such fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables! Special thanks to Suzanna Pieslak for initiating this wonderful partnership and for making frequent deliveries to our pantry this summer!



Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Virtual Walk

If you plan on donating to LARS this holiday season, please consider making a donation before November 3rd by **registering yourself and your family as virtual walkers** in our Help the Homeless Virtual Walk to Benefit LARS.

The Help the Homeless Program is a great way to make your donation go farther! All proceeds go to LARS and in addition to funds raised, LARS will



receive an incentive award from Fannie Mae. We must register 1,000 paid participants by **November 3rd** to receive the **\$10,000** incentive for our agency.

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we need your help to meet our goal! Please register your family today and make your donation count!

To help, go to:
[www.hthwalks.org/
goto/LARS](http://www.hthwalks.org/goto/LARS)

Laurel Historical Society Partners with LARS

If you've participated in the Turkey Trot in years past, you know it's about fun, family, friends, the thrill of the run, and of course PIE... but this year we've added something new! The Laurel Historical Society will be joining us to provide some fun facts about the rich history of Old Towne Laurel. If you are running the course, you might whiz right by the new signs throughout the course, but those who are participating in the 1 Mile Historical Fun Walk will learn some

fascinating things about the landmarks we pass! Kids, adults, Laurelites, and visitors alike are guaranteed to learn something new. Special thanks to Lindsey Baker and the Laurel Historical Society for lending us their time, resources, and knowledge to enhance this year's event!

See enclosed event brochure for complete details and paper registration form.

Registration is also available online at www.laureladvocacy.org!

Volunteers and committee members are still needed to help prepare for the Turkey Trot. Sponsors are also needed to offset the costs of the race or provide food/drinks for runners. This is a great opportunity to advertise your business or group name to a large local crowd!

Contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or lwelford@laureladvocacy.org for more information.

There are many ways to get involved at LARS during the very busy holiday season. Starting October 7th, LARS will begin accepting applications for the Holiday Program, which provides food and gifts for approximately 130 families each year. These families receive food for Thanksgiving and again in December, along with gifts provided by various community organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Holiday Help Needed!

HOW CAN I HELP?

- "Adopt a Family" by providing gifts and food for a family. We will match you with a family ranging in size from 2-7+, according to your preference. The approximate cost of this commitment is \$50-100 per family member.
- Donate gifts to be distributed to those who are not adopted.
- Donate gift cards to supplement gifts (local grocery stores, department

stores, restaurants, movie theatres, etc.)

- Donate Thanksgiving and/or holiday meals for families and seniors (see back page for list of needed items).
- Volunteer for a 2-4 hour shift to help sort food and gifts!

Contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or lwelford@laureladvocacy.org for more information.

Not Your Average Volunteers!

LARS truly could not function without its diverse network of volunteers and donors. These outstanding individuals not only inspire us with their generosity and boundless energy, but they remind us that there can be creativity in giving.

Joan Broadway: Joan has been purchasing and donating much-needed pantry staples, household goods, and school supplies to LARS on a weekly (sometimes daily!) basis since the beginning of the summer. How is she able to donate so much, so frequently? Is she a billionaire? Does she just love helping LARS? Well, yes, she does love helping, but Joan's real secret is that she's been clipping coupons for a cause! She is armed with a big book of coupons and the patience to visit all the local stores at just the right times to get the best deals. Joan always wows our staff with her "deals of the day," from \$0.10 bacon to \$0.02 baby food. Joan says one of her best deals of all time was scoring 70 free boxes of instant noodles, which are extremely helpful to our clients with limited cooking facilities. If this hasn't inspired you to start clipping your own coupons, feel free to drop them off at LARS... Joan will certainly put them to good use!

Linda Burrows: Linda has been a tremendous help to LARS over the past year, volunteering in our pantry every Monday night and helping out at the Laurel Winter Shelter. Linda has kept the pantry in tip-top shape, shelving new donations and making it MUCH easier for case managers to find specific food items for clients during the week. We wish Linda all the best as she begins a new journey in Rhode Island with AmeriCorps. Thank you for your time and dedication to LARS!

Thomas DeVore: Mr. DeVore has made it his mission to ensure that the littlest ones at LARS are taken care of by donating diapers, wipes, formula, and baby food every month. Baby products are requested by many of our clients with large families living on tight budgets, who are overwhelmed by the cost of diapers and formula. Thanks to Mr. DeVore, we are able to lighten the burden!

Thank you to ALL of our volunteers, donors, sponsors, supporters, and friends for all of the unique ways you give to LARS!

To find a way to get involved at LARS, contact Charles Smalls at 301-776-0442 ext. 28 or csmalls@laureladvocacy.org.

LARS Staff

Lauren Cohen, LSWA
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Ernestine Gibson
Case Manager

Lynette Greenwood
Office Manager

Shelly Kessler
*Case Manager/
LARS Walk Coordinator*

Emily Kleeman, LGSW
Transitional Housing Case Manager

Charles Smalls
*Case Manager/
Volunteer Coordinator*

Laura Wellford
*Program Coordinator/
LARS Letter Editor*

If you would like to have your name added to or removed from our mailing list, please contact:
lgreenwood@laureladvocacy.org

Help us go green by joining our electronic mailing list!
Sign up at
www.laureladvocacy.org

Grant Funding Available for Howard County Residents

As many of you know, LARS serves four different zip codes in the Laurel area, spanning parts of Prince George's (20707 & 20708), Howard (20723), and Anne Arundel (20724) Counties. Our grant funds for Prince George's County are extremely limited as we await further information from county officials. Additionally, we lost an eviction prevention grant which had been

providing us with about \$12,000 yearly. While the majority of our clients reside in the PG County zip codes, we do see many individuals and families seeking assistance from the Howard County section of Laurel. We are pleased to be able to assist qualifying clients residing in the 20723 area with a new Community Service Partnership Grant, awarded to us through the Howard County Department of

Citizen Services. This \$25,000 grant is designated for eviction prevention, utility assistance, and first month's rent for homeless individuals/families and those at risk of becoming homeless. We are excited to be able to help our Howard County clients get back on their feet, and we continue to seek out alternative resources to recoup the diminished funds available to clients in other parts of Laurel.

**LAUREL ADVOCACY &
REFERRAL SERVICES, INC.**

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Scan to become a virtual walker and help LARS reach its goal of registering 1,000 walkers for this year's Help the Homeless initiative! Or visit www.hthwalks.org/goto/LARS



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Receive LARS updates and event reminders by subscribing to our e-newsletter at www.laureladvocacy.org.

LARS Food Pantry

Food donations can be dropped off at LARS during business hours:
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday from 9:00-2:00pm and Monday evenings from 5:00-7:30pm.

Items that are especially helpful include:

Canned soup, canned fruit and vegetables, pastas and sauces, peanut butter and jelly, cereal, oatmeal, "just-add-water" pancake mix, tuna, Tuna Helper, macaroni and cheese, and other staples.

Please check expiration dates!

We are also in need of plastic grocery bags to distribute food!

For more information about donating to the LARS pantry, coordinating a food drive, or volunteering, please contact Charles Smalls at 301-776-0442 ext. 28 or csmalls@laureladvocacy.org.

As part of our annual Holiday Program, LARS will be putting together meal kits for over 130 families during Thanksgiving and again in December (in addition to our normal food distribution). This means that we will need lots of extra holiday-specific food: canned sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, instant potatoes, gravy, stuffing, cornbread mix, pie filling/desserts, and especially frozen TURKEYS and HAMS.

The last day to donate Thanksgiving food is **Friday, November 22nd**.
The last day to donate holiday food (and gifts) is **Friday, December 13th**.

For more information about LARS' holiday needs or to volunteer during the Holiday Program, please contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or lwellford@laureladvocacy.org.