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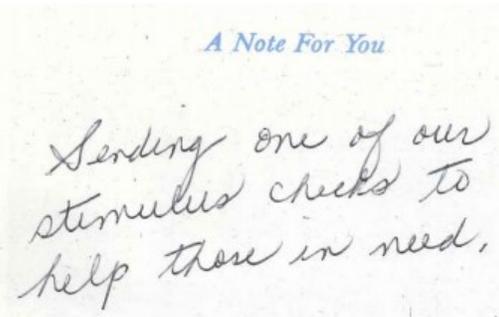
## Look for the Helpers

By Leah Paley, LARS Executive Director

Last month, while sifting through donation checks that recently arrived at LARS, I came across two notes that just about brought tears to my eyes.



One was from a donor who enclosed two checks—one was her monthly contribution and the other was an additional donation in honor of Tommy Raskin. This donor wanted us to use the money to do a special good deed for someone in Tommy's honor. For those who do not know this story, Congressman Jamie Raskin's son, Tommy, died by suicide earlier this year.



The second note was from a couple who decided to send one of their stimulus checks to us to help someone who needed it more than they did.

These simple and selfless acts gave me a glimmer of hope at a time when I (and I think most of our nation) was finding it really hard to be hopeful. I am so grateful to these two sets of helpers, who at a time of heightened tension and fear, chose to help members of our community who struggle to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.

To all of our helpers, *thank you* for moving our mission forward through your unyielding kindness and generosity, and for inspiring *us* to keep moving forward.

## Our Team is Growing!

We are pleased to announce the election of three new local professionals to our Board of Directors!

**Deborah Harris** is a retired government human resources executive with 30 years of human resources, diversity, and civil rights experience. She serves as a lay chaplain at a local hospital and a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. Deborah is a contract mediator, human resources and diversity/equity/inclusion consultant, and a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.

**Donna Koczaja** is Principal Professional Staff at the Johns Hopkins University/Applied Physics Laboratory in North Laurel, where she has worked as a mechanical engineer for the past 24 years. In addition to her work at JHU/APL she practices as a Registered Clinical Herbalist.

**Kellian Tonetti** is a Special Education Teacher at Glen Burnie High School and a foster parent living with her family in Laurel. Kellian holds a Master's Degree in History from the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Tricia Katebini, President of the LARS Board of Directors says: "We are seeking to diversify the strengths, backgrounds and experiences of our members to better represent the communities we serve, and we are thrilled to add these three unique individuals to our board!"

## Shelter for All: The Importance of Eviction Limits During COVID-19

By Faith Way, LARS Volunteer

A song plays as a pen etches a name onto the paper of a guestbook. No one wants to be here. Yet, here they are again, another funeral. As the United States enters its first full year since the arrival of COVID-19, experiences like this are not uncommon. This year, January marked not only the start of a new decade, but a new COVID record. According to Reuters, “The daily COVID-19 death numbers crossed 4,000 for the first time on Jan. 6” (Maan, Anurag, et al.). So, one has to ask, could such an astronomical number of deaths have been avoided?

The short answer is yes. “Housing Precarity & the COVID-19 Pandemic” states,

*“...policies that limit evictions are found to reduce COVID-19 infections by 3.8% and reduce deaths by 11%. Moratoria on utility disconnections reduce COVID-19 infections by 4.4% and mortality rates by 7.4%.”*

With many states mandating citizens to shelter-in-place, temporary relief from these types of daily expenses is necessary. The absence of work as a necessity to pay bills, makes sheltering in place for longer easier. There is no need for a daily commute or large crowded meetings with coworkers. Likewise, a hiatus for utility payments ensures that proven COVID-19 defenses, such as washing hands will always be a top priority. When combined, limits on both utility payments and evictions allow everyone the chance to do their part, regardless of personal finances, to help save lives.

With this in mind, another key component is consistency. Jowers, Kay, et al. state,

*“Had such policies been ... adopted as federal policy from early March 2020 through the end of November 2020, our estimated counterfactuals show that policies that limit evictions could have reduced COVID-19 infections by 14.2% and deaths by 40.7%.”*

For almost a year, millions of citizens have shown a sense of care not only for themselves, but their fellow neighbors. They have continued to shelter-in-place, only shop for essentials and distance six feet. But these have all been state mandates – individual things each state has called on its caring citizens to do. Citizens have shown that they are more than willing to do what it takes to help save lives. But they can only do what’s asked of them. To truly put this virus to rest—to save lives—officials must lead the charge and implement a federal policy to help the nation work as one.

### References

Jowers, Kay, et al. “Housing Precarity & the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impacts of Utility Disconnection and Eviction Moratoria on Infections and Deaths Across US Counties.” NBER, 25 Jan. 2021, [www.nber.org/papers/w28394](http://www.nber.org/papers/w28394).

Maan, Anurag, et al. “U.S. Exceeds 400,000 Coronavirus Deaths.” Edited by Howard Goller, Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 19 Jan. 2021, [www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-deaths/u-s-exceeds-400000-coronavirus-deaths-idINKBN2902GP](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-deaths/u-s-exceeds-400000-coronavirus-deaths-idINKBN2902GP).

### YOUR Impact in 2020:

- ⇒ **7,045 bags of food** distributed to families and individuals facing food insecurity.
- ⇒ **Over 150 evictions prevented** between LARS' rental assistance program (\$140,023 distributed) and the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program administered by LARS to the Laurel community (\$175,000+ distributed)
- ⇒ **Over 22,000 diapers distributed** for 250 babies

If you are able, please consider making a contribution using the enclosed envelope or online at [www.laureladvocacy.org](http://www.laureladvocacy.org) to continue making our services available to Laurel residents in need.

