



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Montgomery County

Program Title: Millstone Kitchen: Neighbors In Need Program

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Angela Hill

Title: Assistant County Administrator

Signature: *Angela Hill*



Award Nomination VACo Achievement Award  
Category: Community & Economic Development  
Millstone Kitchen: Neighbors In Need Program

## Executive Summary

The Neighbors in Need program, housed in Millstone Kitchen, in Montgomery County, was born from the desire to address food insecurity and employment needs during the COVID-19 economic downturn. The program concept provides fully prepared meals, prepared in a local community kitchen by local caterers who were experiencing a shortage in work with most events on hold, and delivered by existing local partners to those in our community with food insecurity.

The idea started as a pilot program accepting donations and grew with partnerships from Montgomery County and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to access Community Development Block Grant funding. Since the beginning of the program, 18,880 meals have been delivered and funding has been expanded to support the program through June 2021. Although Neighbors in Need is still a thriving program, the successes continue to amaze our community.

We've partnered with two caterers who have actually hired staff during this time. There are seven distribution partners who pick up and deliver meals to those members of our community they serve. This includes senior programs, the local diaper pantry, and the local chapter of the YMCA. From July 2020 through mid-June 2021, 22,064 meals have been served, with 11,889 being served from July – December 2020.

## **Brief Overview**

Millstone Kitchen, in which the Neighbors In Need program is operated, is a unique amenity in Montgomery County. In 2012, Montgomery County partnered with local organizations to revitalize an older vacant school, Prices Fork Elementary. From that revitalization program, the former school is now a thriving community center comprised of The Prices Fork Apartments (Phase I and II), the Moon Hollow Brewery, The Millstone Kitchen, and El Ranchero. In 2020, Millstone Kitchen was able to remain operational and have a positive impact on both those experiencing food insecurity and on local businesses.

The idea started as a pilot program accepting donations and grew with partnerships from Montgomery County and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to access Community Development Block Grant funding. Since the beginning of the program, over 20,000 meals have been delivered and funding has been expanded to support the program through June 2021.

## Award Submission



Technically, it started with an old, vacant elementary school building. This building underwent a collaborative, revitalization in 2012. From that revitalization program, the former school is now a thriving community center comprised of The Prices Fork Apartments (Phase I and II), the Moon Hollow Brewery, The Millstone Kitchen, and El Ranchero. In 2020, a unique program, Neighbors in Need, that addresses

multiple community needs was launched in Millstone Kitchen. The prepared meals address food insecurity. The community kitchen, which was created to serve users in need of commercial kitchen space, is able to remain open. Local caterers use the kitchen to prepare meals while keeping their staff employed during a time where events were at an all-time low due to a global pandemic.

The Neighbors in Need meals program was designed to accomplish the following win-win-win:

1. Provide local food access organizations with prepared meals to feed vulnerable people through distribution systems already in place and well-executed.

2. Provide sustaining revenue streams for caterers currently operating out of the Millstone Kitchen and support the hiring of additional service workers at a time layoffs were expected in the service industry.
3. Support local small farms affected by the loss of direct marketing during the COVID19 crisis.
4. Keep the community kitchen, Millstone Kitchen, operating and open to provide business support services to the local small food business economy by coordinating the Neighbors in Need program.

**At the beginning of the program, the County worked with the local nonprofit who oversees Millstone Kitchen to develop the following goals for Neighbors in Need:**

**Plan and Design a Scaled-up Program:** This includes revising the Kitchen's Standard Operating Procedures to create a safe, new, and expanded workflow, securing a receiving and storage area for food donations, establishing a distribution area for the prepared meals, and identifying and securing partnerships for distribution expansion.

**Source Food:** This includes developing and managing the supply chain of food, which would include both food donations from programs such as Virginia Tech's Campus Kitchen program and food purchases from local farms and restaurants with excess inventory.

**Seek Additional Donations:** This includes finding and onboarding additional donors and grantors to continue to sustain the operations as needed.

**Source Labor for Meal Production and Delivery:** This includes working with two existing catering companies operating at the Millstone Kitchen to facilitate partnerships with local food producers and hunger relief agencies, coordinate menu planning for specific audiences, arrange ingredient purchases and storage, and prepare and deliver the meals. The caterers will specifically target purchases from local restaurants that have excess inventory and local farmers. Caterers will also have the ability to hire laid off restaurant workers with kitchen prep experience to support the preparation of these meals.

**Distribute Meals:** This includes connecting with local, trusted organizations that already have established food programs aimed at helping vulnerable groups. Six community-based organizations that serve 500 families combined and across three counties, are already interested in partnering to support delivery and distribution if funding is available to scale up this program. We budgeted for 600 meals per week, but it is estimated that potentially 750-900 meals could be served through this program every week. Finished meals will either be refrigerated or frozen until pickup or delivery.

**Build a Replicable Rural Model:** We see our program as an easily replicable model, and to serve that purpose, we are willing to play a leadership role. This would include reaching out to other community shared use kitchens across the state to walk them through the concept and startup process, as well as to create a platform (via webinar or virtual meeting format) for sharing ideas and troubleshooting issues. Many model

programs come from urban areas of the country and we would like to show what is possible in a small-town rural context.

### **Cost of the Program**

Montgomery County was able to secure Community Development Block Grant funds through the Virginia Department of Community Housing for the Neighbors in Need program. The first six months (July 2020-December 2020) were funded with \$135,433. In December 2020, the County recognized the program's success and asked DHCD for an additional \$135,000 for another six months (January 2021-June 2021). So far, private donations and \$270,433 in CDBG funds have been secured for the program.

### **Results/Success of the Program**



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partners who pick up and deliver meals to those members of our community they serve. This includes senior programs, the local diaper pantry, and the local chapter of the YMCA. From July 2020 through mid-June 2021, 22,064 meals have been served.

Montgomery County is proud to see our community come together, across many organizations to accomplish what we have with Neighbors in Need. It is a true partnership across public and private entities for the good of so many elements of our community. During a time when there was so much uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this creative program had a positive impact on those with food insecurity, as well as local businesses.



**Other info:**

**News coverage:**

<https://oldschoolpricesfork.org/news/the-millstone-kitchen-and-hazel-bea-catering-support-neighbors-in-need-during-covid-19/>

<https://oldschoolpricesfork.org/news/neighbors-in-need-program-expands/>

**Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvsOYtljxWQ>