



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** 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: Loudoun County

Program Title: LCPL Fights Food Insecurity

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Peter O'Brien

Title: Division Manager, Communications

Department: Library Services

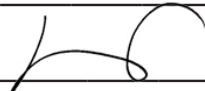
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Chang Liu

Title: Director, Library Services

Signature: 

Loudoun County Public Library Fights Food Insecurity



Loudoun Hunger Relief Executive Director Jennifer Montgomery

Criteria for Selection

1. This nomination details an ongoing series of solutions from Loudoun County Public Library to assist the 16,800 food insecure individuals in Loudoun County.
2. The programs detailed primarily promote cooperation between Loudoun County Public Library staff and Loudoun Hunger, the County's largest food pantry, but other organizations including JK Community Farm, the Western Loudoun Food Pantry, Loudoun Extension, Loudoun Master Gardeners, and private farms are also included.
3. Almost every program in this document is easily replicable by any library system in the country, simply by embracing the cause of food insecurity, and making efforts to share

information from local experts, bring in available community resources, and offer the optional donation of food in collaboration with staff-organized library programs. Costs are minimal with the exceptions listed, and marketing was all developed by library staff and printed in-house. Most staffing hours were accommodated into regular schedules.

The Issue

According to the latest data from the US Census American Community Survey, Loudoun County, Virginia is one of the wealthiest areas in the nation, yet hidden in this number and not mentioned in media reports are the 16,800 Loudoun residents who are food insecure.¹ Of those, 55% are ineligible for the government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For LCPL, this has been, and continues to be, an issue worth addressing.

Innovation, Partnering and Replicability for Other Localities

To help those struggling in our community, Loudoun County Public Library has developed several innovative food drives, programs, and special projects. Many of these were in partnership with Loudoun Hunger, the largest food pantry in the County. Others were with individual library branch staff with other nonprofits, or with library staff offering food and resources directly to our community.

As mentioned above, each of the programs in this document are easily replicable by any library system in the country, simply by embracing the cause of food insecurity, making efforts to share information from local experts, bringing in available community resources, and offering to collect food. Costs are minimal with a few exceptions listed in the Financing section, and marketing was all developed by library staff and printed in-house. Staff hours were largely accommodated in regular schedules.

¹ Feeding America Loudoun County 2021 data,
<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/overall/virginia/county/loudoun>

Efforts included:

1. Systemwide food drives.

Beginning in 2017, LCPL's largest efforts at reducing food insecurity have food drives for Loudoun Hunger². For three years, innovative "Food for Fines" drives were held at every location in our system, and provided patrons with \$1 off their



2019 Food for Fines food boxed for Loudoun Hunger

accumulated overdue fines (late fees) for every canned or non-perishable food item donated, with no limit to the total amount of fines that could be waived.

Food-for-Fines reached a peak donation level of 15,500 pounds of food in 2019, but the post COVID-era has demonstrated a new level of need in the community.

In the last two years, Loudoun Hunger Relief and peer groups have reported that service numbers have been on the rise due to high inflation, increased gas prices, rising rents and an end to federal COVID-19 relief. In 2019, LCPL eliminated borrower fines to decrease barriers to library usage, making the waiving of fines in future food drives impossible. Despite this change, library staff were passionate that the



2023 Loudoun Food Drive

² <https://www.loudounhunger.org/>

cause of residents in need was too important to let go, and in April 2023, an LCPL committee rolled out a revised program, simply titled “Loudoun Food Drive,” encouraging residents to drop off food and visit the <https://loudounfeeds.org/> resource. At the end, 6,221 pounds of food (roughly 5,184 meals) were collected from customers and staff: a great success in reviving such a worthwhile community service project!



Loudoun Food Drive 2023: Loudoun Hunger gathers 242 pounds of food donated from the Mubarak Mosque in Chantilly. The group was an LCPL programming partner and held their own food drive to supplement LCPL’s.

2. Library Programs and Special Projects

In addition to food drives, Loudoun County Public Library has developed innovative programs to help address food insecurity, and welcomed partnership programs with many nonprofit organizations.

- a. **2023 Civic Lab on Food Insecurity:** In the fall of 2022, LCPL hosted a staff development day presentation on Civic Labs by Central Rappahannock Regional Library in Virginia. The program enabled libraries to select important community

issues, and use pop-up interactive displays and resources to both survey and inform patrons. By December of last year, an LCPL staff group was researching food insecurity for our own Civic Lab, based on the model provided by CRRL³. LCPL hosted two 2023 civic labs,



engaging directly with residents on food insecurity, and providing them with resources and ways to help. (See *Supplemental Attachment* for examples.)

- b. **Community Dinners:** In April 2023, Sterling Library again held their much-loved Community Dinner program, which had become an annual community favorite for three years prior to COVID. The 2023 event was free and open to everyone, and included a catered dinner, live music, a photo presentation, and 6 different open-house stations throughout the library highlighting different programs and service departments, welcoming about 100 people from the local community. The entire



2017 Community Dinner

³ <https://www.librarypoint.org/>

staff at Sterling Library worked to plan and host this lovely event, which was funded by the Loudoun Library Foundation (LLF).

- c. **Healthy Cooking on a Budget Series, Nutrition and Cooking, and Food Insecurity programs:** These regular offerings include an ongoing four-part budget cooking series with Loudoun Hunger and Loudoun County Extension

Master Gardener volunteers, as well as related programs with staff and local farmers teaching patrons lower-cost ways to grow, harvest, cook and preserve healthy foods.



Planting food for the hungry at JK Community Farm

- d. **JK Community Farm Planting Volunteers and Other Offsite Events:** Multiple Loudoun County Public Library staff have utilized their official Loudoun County Government staff volunteer hours to plant vegetables for Loudoun

Hunger distribution at JK Community Farm, and donated food at offsite food collection events where LCPL was a participating partner, such as the 2023 Pollinator Festival, and the 2022 Banshee in the Reeks Festival.

- e. **Solanaceae Seed-Starting Drop-Ins:** Brambleton Library's Makerspace offered several programs on tomatoes, peppers and eggplants, and provided a six-pack of plants to every attendee. In 2022 and 2023, Cascades, Middleburg and

Purcellville Library also each offered seed exchanges, seed programs, and/or began vegetable seed libraries for patrons.

- f. **Teens Engaged:** Teen volunteers at Cascades Library hosted their own food drive in 2021. Brambleton teens participated in Bell Pepper Plant and Grow programs in 2022 and 2023, while this spring teens at Gum Spring decorated reusable cloth food bags for the Dulles South Food Pantry.

- g. **Summer Meals:** In a partnership with Loudoun County Public Schools, the Sterling Library branch of LCPL has returned in 2023 as one of the only non-school locations in the County hosting the USDA Summer Meals program for children under 18, providing a stable source of nutritious food for many of our community's most needy children. For two years prior to COVID, the library successfully hosted for the PowerFuel Meals program, with children required to eat onsite. As a result of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023*, Sterling Library can now instead offer up to a week's worth of USDA-provided meals for pickup, increasing the flexibility of the program tremendously. The USDA calls this one of the "monumental wins in the fight to end childhood hunger."⁴

- h. **Library Programs with Food Drives:** multiple staff programs have found creative ways to incorporate optional food donations at individual library programs. The following are examples only (*not a complete list*) from 2019-2023:
 - i. **Canned Food Igloos:** Rust Library hosted a passive program encouraging patrons to donate canned food, for the creation of a wintertime "Canned Food Igloo."

⁴ USDA Summer Meals program <https://www.fns.usda.gov/blog/usda-celebrates-2022-summer-meals-champions-looks-ahead-summer-2023>

- ii. **Fun for Furry Friends:** This pet-based program focused on creating pet blankets and collecting pet food for needy pet owners in the county.
- iii. **Trick or Treat at the Library:** this annual fun event at Ashburn Library as of 2022 now incorporates an optional food donation program for Loudoun Hunger.
- iv. **The Family Table:** this presentation from the county's local Cooperative Market taught attendees how they ensure every family has food on their table. Food donations were accepted to benefit the Western Loudoun Food Pantry.

Financing

Costs for all food drives, regular programs and printed materials came from the regular annual division budgets for programming and communications. In general, most presentation-based programs required less than \$100 in materials or printed supplies.

Unique budgeted items include the following:

- Approximately \$100 or less in seeds and supplies for seed libraries, food education programs, plant take-and-grow programs, and pet pantry craft supplies.
- Approximately \$250 for 100 cotton reusable food bags, which were decorated and donated to the Dulles South Food Pantry.
- Approximately \$1500 was spent to host a community dinners at Sterling Library for 100 participants. This program has been funded with a Loudoun Library Foundation grant.
- New lidded boxes for systemwide food drives cost approximately \$2.00 each, and are reusable.

- Food drives at our annual themed event did not require additional funding, just inclusion of the collection in event marketing, created and printed by library staff. The event itself was sponsored by a grant from the Loudoun Library Foundation for \$5,000.

Staffing

Additional staffing required was short term and minimal in cost, as most staff simply shifted their hours to accommodate planning and hosting associated with the food drives and related projects and programs. With the 2023 food drive, the library’s courier team worked one additional special shift to pick up donations at each library branch, and deliver it to Loudoun Hunger across town in Leesburg.

Results

Although our efforts were seriously impacted during COVID, the summary of results demonstrate our continued commitment to serving those in need in our community, and our efforts to build upon our past success.

<u>Metric</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023 YTD</u>
Systemwide Food Drive Hosted	Food for Fines	Food for Fines	N/A COVID	N/A COVID	N/A COVID	Loudoun Food Drive
Pounds of Food Raised	8,900	15,500	*	*	*	6,221
Summer Meals Provided	1,211	2,685	*	*	*	In Progress
Food Education	5	20	4*	1*	15	13 YTD

Programs Provided						
Attendance at Programs	207	595	171*	27*	1045	748 YTD

- Programs, room capacities, social distancing and USDA summer meals were all affected by COVID from March 2020 through 2022.

In 2019, Loudoun Hunger Relief Executive Director Jennifer Montgomery said of the library's food drives, "Our County Library system is a fabulous resource for all Loudoun residents, and the system serves all in Loudoun equally regardless of economic status. **At Loudoun Hunger Relief, where we see those in the most need on a daily basis, we are honored to benefit from this effort by the Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL). We can't say enough about LCPL's dedication to serving our community.**"

Executive Summary

This nomination details an ongoing series of solutions from Loudoun County Public Library to assist the 16,800 food insecure individuals in Loudoun County.

The programs detailed in the document promote partnership between Loudoun County Public Library staff and Loudoun Hunger, the County's largest food pantry. Other organizations including JK Community Farm, the Western Loudoun Food Pantry, Loudoun Extension, Loudoun Master Gardeners, and private farms are also included in the list of organizations and individuals who provided collaboration with LCPL's efforts.

Almost every program in this document is easily replicable by any library system in the country, simply by embracing the cause of food insecurity, making efforts to share information from local experts, bringing in available community resources, and offering the optional collection of food in collaboration with staff-organized library programs. Costs for most programs were less than \$100, with the exceptions listed in the report. Marketing was all developed by library staff and

printed in-house. Most staffing hours were accommodated into regular schedules without overtime required.

Since 2018, we have directly served nearly 6,700 patrons through our programs, and donated over 30,600 pounds of food.

Brief Overview

Loudoun County, Virginia is one of the wealthiest areas in the nation, yet hidden in this number are the 16,800 Loudoun residents who are food insecure. Of those, 55% are ineligible for the government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For LCPL, this has been, and continues to be, an issue worth addressing.

To help the residents struggling in our community, Loudoun County Public Library has developed several innovative food drives, programs, and special projects. Many of these have been in partnership with Loudoun Hunger, the largest food pantry in the County. Others were planned with individual library branch staff and other nonprofits, or with library staff offering food and resources directly to our community.

Each of the programs are easily replicable by any library system in the country, simply by embracing the cause of food insecurity, making efforts to share information from local experts, bringing in available community resources, and offering to collect food. Through LCPL's initiatives since 2018, they have directly served nearly 6,700 patrons and collected over 30,600 pounds of food.

Supplemental Attachment:

Food Insecurity

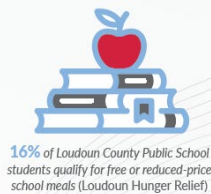
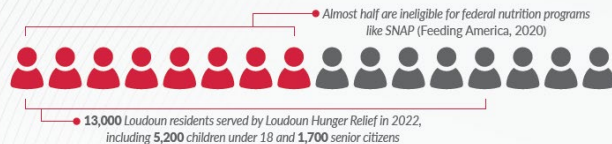
Facts, Resources, and Ways to Help



What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is a lack of consistent access to sufficient food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity can be a temporary situation or can last a long time (Feeding America, 2022). More than 34 million people in the United States, including 9 million children, are food insecure (USDA, 2022).

Loudoun County has 16,000 food insecure residents



What are the effects of food insecurity?

Food insecurity is associated with negative impact on:



The hungry in Loudoun are those you'd expect: seniors on fixed incomes, immigrant families, low-wage service workers, those experiencing a housing crisis, a medical crisis or a mental health crisis. But there are also people you wouldn't expect...The truth is that hunger is just below the surface, or one or two paychecks away, for up to 26,000 households in Loudoun County (Loudoun Hunger Relief).



Ways to Help

Your support matters! Help ensure that nutritious food reaches everyone in our community:

VOLUNTEER

Loudoun County's network of pantries and other food providers welcome extra hands to do the work. Sample volunteer activities include:

- Picking up grocery store donations
- Assisting pantry visitors
- Sorting and stocking food items
- Delivering meals to neighbors in need
- Planting and harvesting fresh foods
- Preparing food boxes
- Helping with administrative tasks, such as data entry

If you are interested in volunteering, contact any of these organizations:

- Loudoun Hunger Relief (loudounhunger.org)
- Loudoun Cares Volunteer Center (loudouncares.org)
- Loudoun Feeds (loudounfeeds.org)
- JK Community Farm (jkcommunityfarm.org)

DONATE TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Donors of food items and financial gifts make it possible for nonprofits to distribute tens of thousands of pounds of food each year and to better reach our community.

- Participate in Loudoun County Public Library's Food Drive, April 22-30: library.loudoun.gov/FoodDrive
- Help eliminate student meal debt in Loudoun County Public Schools: Send a check, made payable to "County of Loudoun," to:

Loudoun County Public Schools
Attention: Cindy Utterback
21000 Education Court, Suite 313
Ashburn, VA 20148

Please include a note that the money is for the School Nutrition Donation Fund and provide your phone number or email address.

LEARN ABOUT LEGISLATION

If the issue of food insecurity matters to you, see how organizations and their volunteers work with elected officials to educate them about hunger in our community.

- Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's Public Policy Efforts: (brafb.org/get-involved/advocate)

Additional Resources

These resources will provide you with more information about food insecurity and help for those in need:

- Loudoun County Food Assistance: This includes Food Assistance Sites, SNAP (formerly food stamps) and WIC (loudoun.gov/4405/Food-Assistance)
- Feeding America (feedingamerica.org)
- WhyHunger.org: Enter your zip code and find out where you can get food (networks.whyhunger.org)
- FoodPantries.org (foodpantries.org/co/va-loudoun)
- FreeFood.org (freefood.org/c/va-leesburg)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (health.gov)
- World Food Programme (wfp.org)

