

CHO Newsletter

Serving the **DUNN LORING, MERRIFIELD, OAKTON & VIENNA** Areas

Organized in 1969, supported by churches, civic organizations, businesses, and individuals, the Committee for Helping Others (CHO) provides simple, loving charity to persons in need of goods and services that they are unable to provide for themselves or obtain from government sources.

Thoughts From the Chairman

MAY 2020

In a span of roughly three months, the world has been brought to its knees, not by an ambitious military power, but by the coronavirus bug. Governments across the world have shut down normal life for their citizens, totally or partially, in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

These drastic measures appear to have had some success. There is hope that the rate of the disease's spread is decreasing, although we are likely to see permanent changes in the way we live and short-term restrictions on our activities for some time.

As nature's springtime beauty continues to dazzle, the economy has almost come to a halt. Schools and public places are closed. Many folks are working from home, and they are the lucky ones. Restaurants and retailers are closed or limited to delivery or pickup, putting millions out of work. Over 24 million people have applied for unemployment insurance in a month, equivalent to over 4 years of similar applications in normal circumstances.

Many people, not knowing what the future will bring, become much more careful with finances, and often donations to non-profits drop off dramatically at times like this, even as requests for help increase dramatically. However, we at CHO have been truly humbled by the increase of recent donations, especially from individuals. We are grateful to all of you.

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So far CHO has weathered the storm, but we have had to make changes. We've had to shut down our food pantry and clothes closet except for dire emergencies to help slow the spread and keep our volunteers safe; we are mailing grocery store cards instead. We continue to respond for requests for financial aid and demand has been high.

We pray that everyone will be safe and not contract the virus. We appreciate your past support and hope that in your heart you'll feel a tug to help us out as we move forward.

Peggy Noonan, the journalist who composed Ronald Reagan's famous "Challenger" address to the nation, recently wrote. "In times like this Trust in God, and talk to Him." Sound advice.

Stay safe *Ollie*

COVID-19 UPDATE

The streets of our small towns are nearly silent. Dear friends adapt their work and businesses to stay afloat in safety however they can. Our religious partners gather their flocks under social distancing laws by meeting in Spirit over the Internet. With closed schools, no open libraries or parks, no networking cafes, and great numbers of citizens whose employers have suspended work, we have more time to focus on our neighbors inside our small world as the greater world at large begs our compassion.

CHO volunteers are working to help our neighbors during this difficult period, but do so behind the scenes. We've adapted our operations for the interim. Our primary concern is the health and safety of clients and volunteers.

◆ **Food Closet:** Nutrition is essential to health and life, and the need for food assistance has never been greater. *CHO is providing grocery gift cards to those who need food instead of packaged goods that would require handling and visits to distribute.* CHO is working with BELONG! and the Fairfax County Schools to coordinate food distribution. The Food Closet volunteers will refer clients to the schools when they are in the appropriate area and help when the schools cannot. Clients may request food assistance by calling 703-281-7614. Leave a message in box #1, or email cho@cho-va.com.

Can you help us with \$25 food cards for CHO to send to the hungry? It's an excellent way to support individuals and families who lost work and are struggling to find food. Please mail grocery card donations to: CHO, PO Box 233, Vienna, VA 22183. On behalf of our hungry children and families, thank you!

◆ **Meals on Wheels,** run by The Fairfax County Agency on Aging, feeds adults 60+ years of age and

people with disabilities that cannot shop or prepare meals. *During the pandemic meals that are adequate to last one week are being delivered once weekly,* rather than in multiple trips. Although CHO volunteers have driven for Meals on Wheels, at this time, only county personnel are driving.

If you know someone who may qualify for food through this program, have them call the Fairfax County Agency on Aging at 703 324-5409.

◆ **CHO Emergency Services** provides emergency financial relief to pay bills such as rent, utilities and medical help. Although some emergency legislation and corporate actions have reduced evictions and utility cutoffs temporarily, the need for financial assistance is great at this time. If you know someone in the Dunn Loring, Merrifield, Oakton and Vienna area who needs help, suggest that they call 703-281-7614 Box # 4 or email: cho@cho-va.com. Please note – under county rules, we can only provide direct assistance to those in the geographical areas listed above. Those in other areas should call 703-222-0880 and the Fairfax County Community Services Program can direct them to assistance. See the article describing how CHO works with CSP on page 5.

YOU ARE THE DIFFERENCE

Your support can allow CHO to help when our neighbors reach out to us for assistance. Our donors are the lifeline for our community in these difficult times.

Give online at cho-va.com, or mail to: CHO, PO Box 233, Vienna, VA 22183.

◆ **Clothes Closet and Furniture Programs** are suspended currently, except in dire cases (e.g., loss from fire or fleeing domestic violence). Call 703-679-8966. Email: cho.clothes.closet@gmail.com.

◆ **Transportation Program:** Suspended currently.



CHO ACTIVITIES REPORT - JANUARY - MARCH 2020

FOOD CLOSET: The Food Closet distributes basic

food items collected from our community, but only food cards are being distributed at this time. The Food Closet takes referrals from Fairfax County, area churches, and individuals. During the first three months of 2020, we helped 206 families and 758 people.

FURNITURE: The Furniture Program, which collects and distributes gently used furniture, helped 19 families with about \$1450 worth of furniture in the first three months of 2020. The program is closed at this time. CHO is planning to use two storage sheds loaned from the town of Vienna as a temporary measure as it considers ways to replace its warehouse.

CLOTHES CLOSET: The Clothes Closet, which collects and distributes clothing, operated in late winter 2020 but is currently closed except for extreme emergencies.

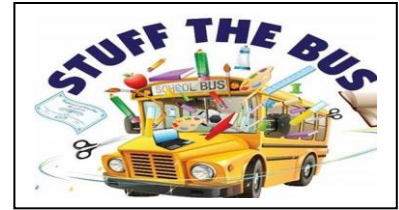
EMERGENCY SERVICES: Emergency Services helps individuals and families to meet emergency rent, fuel, utility, dental, and medical bills and other miscellaneous aid. For the first three months of 2020, we provided \$28,900 of emergency aid. The major expenditure for emergency services continues to be rent.

MEALS ON WHEELS (MOW): MOW provides meal deliveries to persons having difficulty preparing their own food. 2,082 deliveries were made in the first 3 months of 2020.

VIVA VIENNA! HAS BEEN CANCELLED

The Rotary Club's traditional Memorial Day fundraiser for charities, including CHO, has been cancelled. Check the town of Vienna website, www.viennava.gov, at a later date to see if it will be rescheduled.

CHO had a very successful Stuff the Bus event on February 1 at the Vienna Maple Avenue Giant



Food. Volunteer passed lists of needed food to willing shoppers, and the store gathered goods in one location for easy "shopping." We collected about 1,846 pounds of food and household items, and \$340 in cash. Many thanks to the management & staff of Giant Food, CHO friends who stopped by to donate, and the volunteers from CHO, Fairfax County Transit and Fairfax County Community Services.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS !

Navy Federal Annual 5K: September 15

Join the 5K run sponsored by Navy Federal Credit Union on **Saturday, September 15, 9 am, at Navy Federal in Vienna.** Proceeds from the event will benefit CHO. There is a non-refundable registration fee of \$10-\$18. The race is scheduled rain or shine, but check for changes due to coronavirus concerns. www.runsignup.com/Race/VA/Vienna/NavyFederalsAnnual5K.



CROP Hunger Walk: October 4

This year's CROP Hunger Walk will take place **Sunday October 4, at 2 pm at CHO.** The Walk raises funds for international and local hunger relief, and supports CHO. For general information see crophungerwalk.org/vienna. For more information on the Vienna Walk or to volunteer, contact Rev. Kristen McBrayer at Emmaus United Church of Christ, Vienna. www.emmausucc.org.



2019 Christmas Store

CHO's Christmas Store spread cheer to many who would otherwise not have been able to provide their families with holiday gifts and treats.

While it is impossible to measure the joy the Store brings, this year we helped 181 families -- 667 people, including 344 children, as well as families who could not attend that day. Eighty-eight (88) volunteers contributed to the effort -- a lot of Christmas love !

The late arrival of the bike truck caused some anxiety among waiting children and the bike volunteers, but everyone pulled together to unload the 130 bikes and deliver them to a happy crowd.

Churches, civic groups, local clubs, as well as many kind individuals, donated gift cards, clothing, ceramics and other items to supplement the toys provided for the children. Our Lady of Good Counsel's generous donation of grocery cards allowed our clients to enjoy something extra for their holiday meals. Many thanks to all volunteers and donors and to Vienna Presbyterian Church for allowing us to use the church for this event.



Our Institutional Members: Emmanuel Lutheran Church

We are proud to highlight a long-time CHO partner, Vienna's Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

First a little history. The first church services at Emmanuel Lutheran were held in Copp's Garden Room on the upper level of Marco Polo restaurant (sadly gone now) on Maple Ave. on November 27, 1955. A member of the church, George Copp, donated the meeting place and his daughter Bonnie Copp served as pianist. In May 1956 the church organized officially with 48 members. The Copp family donated 2.5 acres of land on Maple Avenue for a new site, where the church sits today, serving roughly 500 households.

Emmanuel is a very welcoming church. Open to all races, genders, and sexual preferences, they encourage people to attend just as they are. Casual clothing is fine; the important thing is to worship together. Pastor Tony Prinsen has been senior pastor at Emmanuel since 2018.

Their website defines a Lutheran as follows:

"Lutherans are Christians and followers of Jesus' teachings. We believe we are saved by God's grace of unconditional love, forgiveness, and eternal life given through Jesus Christ. As people of God's grace, we are called to love God, God's beloved creation and ALL of God's children. We live out our faith by serving others and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ for all."

CHO thanks this wonderful church, and looks forward to working together for many more years.



Pictures at left: Bike delivery and volunteers preparing to sort donations.

CHO'S EMERGENCY SERVICES

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, CHO's Emergency Service provided emergency rent, medical, utility, and other assistance totaling approximately \$102,000 and \$127,000 in 2018 and 2019.

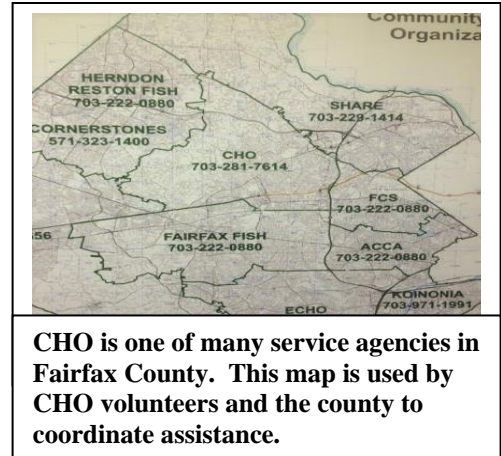
Volunteers receive calls directly on the CHO phone line or from social services agencies in Fairfax County. CHO limits assistance to \$500 to \$600 over a twelve-month period for clients in Vienna, Dunn Loring, Merrifield, and Oakton. Other charities have different limits, and some organizations, like the individuals they serve, can run out of money at the end of the month. The dollar limit enables us to help more people and gives us flexibility to provide assistance quickly. We do give some assistance to those who live out of our service area, using a coordinated system organized by Fairfax County.

When volunteers take calls directly, they discuss the clients' needs and assess how to help. Local churches sometimes request assistance for members, as do schools, homes for new mothers, and Oxford Houses for persons recovering from addiction. Sometimes we will call or refer clients to the St. Vincent DePaul Society of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Vienna so they can pay amounts needed that are over our limit. We use a service established by Dominion Energy to make an immediate pledge online and prevent service cutoffs. During the coronavirus emergency, most utilities are not cutting off service, but in the past we have encountered situations where quick help prevents some very cold nights or the loss of power in refrigerators used to store insulin or other medicine. Many clients need dental care and in addition to helping with bills, we keep a list of clinics that provide free or lower-cost services.

CHO also works with Coordinated Services Planning (CSP), an arm of Fairfax County's Neighborhood and Community Services. CSP staff members work with various charities like ours to combine resources to cover a high rent or a medical bill. While CHO can provide emergency assistance funds, the specialists at CSP have the wherewithal to help clients find longer-term solutions. Their multilingual staff can assist callers in 17 languages. CSP has experienced an enormous increase in calls across various industries and income levels – a 118% increase in call volume for the first three weeks of April compared to last year.

“During these uncertain and challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are humbled to be serving our community with their needs,” said CSP Program Manager Aimee Garcia.

CHO is honored to work with CSP and all who make life a bit easier for those experiencing hard times.



NOTICES:

EMAIL NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION: If you wish to receive a copy of the newsletter by email rather than paper, let us know by emailing us at cho@cho-va.com. Email copies help save us printing and postage costs and are in **color!**

DONATION ADDRESS: Please send donations to CHO's Post Office Box - P.O. Box 233, Vienna VA.22183. Do not send donations to any other address provided to you. You can also give online at cho-va.com

Thank you!

C.H.O.
P.O. BOX 233
VIENNA, VA
22183

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Merrifield, VA

Yes, I'd like to support CHO. Enclosed is
my check for \$_____

I'd like to volunteer for:

My name and address are:

Send to CHO, PO Box 233, Vienna VA 22183

CHO
May 2020

