

ArmInArm
better together **40** years

We Deliver!



Impact Report 2019-2020



25,205

Food pantry and Mobile Pantry visits, and home food deliveries were made (last year was 21,121)

258

Evictions were prevented

80

Utility shut offs were avoided

56

Security deposits were paid

14

Households received Housing Stability Case Management services

213

Clients received Representative Payee services

15

Community members jumpstarted their careers with support to gain employment

3

Workforce Development program members attained new jobs

39

Clients gained employment mobility and increased earning power with driver's license restoration

From the Executive Director



What a year! Among so many other things, 2020 marked Arm In Arm's 40th year serving the community. We had planned to celebrate this incredible milestone together at last year's spring event; instead, we were busy delivering bags of food door to door to suffering people in the safest way possible during a worldwide pandemic. Just as we transformed our model of food delivery, we also transformed our model of delivering rental, utilities, and mortgage assistance, helping people who had lost jobs and/or a place to live, had fallen ill, were homeschooling children, or were caring for sick loved ones. In the midst of social unrest, we witnessed the effects of injustice towards, and sense of alienation among, our Black and Latinx neighbors and looked more deeply at our own shortcomings in an effort to better understand each other and the root causes of inequity while striving to becoming more diverse. In the midst of these incredible challenges, we received an astounding amount of support from you, which we are continuing to put to use at record levels of service. In my introductory year to Arm In Arm, despite or perhaps precisely through these catastrophic events, I experienced a profound goodness in humanity: in staff members who continued to serve others even at some risk to themselves; in volunteers who came to pack and deliver food; in corporations, local foundations, and public institutions that rallied to support us; in partner organizations who were in it with us and helped us do things better together; and in the undaunted spirit of the people who are coming to us throughout this pandemic often with burdens so difficult to bear. I am so grateful for the faith communities who founded Arm In Arm, then The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, 40 years ago, and for the myriad communities, individuals, institutions, volunteers, and staff members over these 40 years who have become part of the Arm In Arm family, so that Arm In Arm might be here to help those suffering most in our community, precisely during times such as these.

David R. Fox, Ph.D.

From the Board Chair



It goes without saying that 2020 presented challenges too numerous to effectively encapsulate in the space that I have for this message. Instead, I am choosing to take the opportunity in this space to focus on a few of the things for which I am grateful in this 40th Anniversary year of Arm In Arm. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for you and the other individual supporters, corporate partners, and congregational stakeholders who have so generously given to Arm In Arm, have volunteered their time and talents, and have been advocates in support of our mission in the face of the unprecedented challenges of 2020. I am also grateful for the tireless work of the Leadership Team and Staff of Arm In Arm, each of whom demonstrated incredible flexibility as Arm In Arm was forced to constantly adapt its service delivery model over the course of 2020 and each of whom continue to strive to meet the increased demands of our neighbors in need. Finally, I am grateful for the work of my fellow Board members and for the willingness of Arm In Arm to continually evaluate and reevaluate itself in an effort to deliver the best possible service and to more effectively reflect the diversity of our community. The generosity of our supporters, the work of the Leadership Team and Staff, and the guidance of the Board has resulted in record service levels for our hunger prevention program and exciting new partnerships in our housing stability program that will help Arm In Arm meet the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors in 2021. I am truly grateful to be part of such a powerful team, to be a witness to your generosity, and to be privileged enough to thank each of you for your continued kindness and support.

Nicholas J. Valvanis

In the Midst of a Pandemic

Arm In Arm Responds

Dear Arm In Arm,

I'm so thankful for receiving a bag of non-perishable foods outside my door, twice a month, sent by your organization. This Wednesday I was so happy to find provisions for a Thanksgiving dinner—cranberries, gravy, stuffing mix, vegetables. I have saved a can of sweet potatoes and chicken from last month's delivery. As a senior, I am choosing to spend the holidays in my apartment- to stay safe during this pandemic. I will connect with my family and friends by telephone, while I enjoy my Thanksgiving dinner—thanks to you!

—With many thanks and appreciation, Judy

Schools shut down in mid-March due to COVID-19, just two weeks after Alfrieda and her family moved into their home. As a contract worker serving Trenton Public School students with disabilities, Alfrieda was not guaranteed a paycheck, and the money dried up. With no savings, bills to pay, and 6 mouths to feed, she was in crisis. To make matters worse, she tested positive for Coronavirus and needed a place to quarantine away from her children—her recovery and the health and safety of her family depended on it. Arm In Arm was there for Alfrieda; connecting her to our Mobile Pantry for delivery of healthy food, referring her to other community resources to meet their many urgent needs, and walking her through the process of applying for unemployment benefits. And, with \$2,500 in assistance to pay back rent, this family remains stably housed. “At first I thought they wouldn't help me,” says Alfrieda. “There was nothing left. I had nothing to offer and I couldn't help myself. Some people don't care about what's going on with other people in the world. I thank God that Arm In Arm cares.”



Low-income neighbors served by Arm In Arm have been greatly impacted by COVID-19, both in terms of the health risk and the damage done to their stability. For a population struggling to make ends meet even in the best of times, this health crisis has exacerbated the issues of food and housing insecurity in devastating ways. Those that previously suffered the most were challenged even more, while many were facing crisis for the first time in their lives. This challenged us to become more inventive in assisting those struggling to find the resources to support their families.

In mid-March we pivoted, reimagining our method of distributing food. Through the heroic efforts of staff, we began to deliver directly to the front doors of clients through a 100% Mobile Pantry, reaching 7,158 households by the end of June, with many receiving delivery twice per month. Bulk deliveries have also been made to senior housing complexes, and Grab 'n Go events have been greatly increased, providing opportunities for clients to pick up bags of groceries at various locations throughout Trenton and surrounding communities. In addition, an agreement with the City of Trenton allowed our Outreach Workers to deliver food to the homeless and temporarily displaced.

In mid-July we pivoted once again to ensure accessibility to clients as our state began to reopen. Clients now have the opportunity to choose between picking up bags of groceries at our pantries or receiving home delivery. This hybrid system enables us to reach more people in need while placing a premium on health and safety, and through it reached some **15,000** households between mid-July and the end of December. In December alone, we served more than 3,300 families, including providing gift cards to 1,000 families to purchase a turkey, ham or chicken for their holiday meal, and providing vegetables to 1,000 families at the Rolling Harvest Event at the Cure Arena. This hybrid model has provided a lifeline during the COVID crisis, as we provide 3 days' worth of food for every family member in a household per visit.

We know that our community will suffer the effects of the pandemic for months to come, if not years. Our focus during this time is to increase our level of service and meet the growing and long-term need in an effective, nimble, and flexible way, with every effort made to protect the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and the neighbors we serve.



Adding Food Delivery to Reach More Households in 2020

FEBRUARY (PRE-PANDEMIC)
1,988 households served through 100% Pantry Model

MAY
2,650 households served through 100% Mobile Delivery

DECEMBER
3,325 households served through Hybrid Model (Pantry & Delivery)



Forty years of experience had positioned us to respond swiftly and deliberately, and we adapted our delivery of direct aid to be more effective and efficient. Now we are serving a record number of neighbors suffering the effects of COVID-19, providing comfort to a community struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof overhead in a time of great uncertainty.



Partnering to Help Our Neighbors Stay in Their Homes

Victor, his wife, and their two school-age children were living a comfortable life, working hard and saving for the future. Both parents were employed in food service at a club in Princeton, and their children were thriving in school when the pandemic hit. The club closed down, they were both laid off, and neither of them were eligible for unemployment. With no other recourse, they found it necessary to exhaust their life savings to pay rent and other expenses. When they came to Arm In Arm and Housing Initiatives of Princeton, they were three months behind on their rent. Their furlough letter anticipated a return to work but the start date was unknown. Arm In Arm and HIP's partnership, supported by the Princeton Area Community Foundation, made it possible for us to cover their back rent, and it happily coincided with first Victor and then his wife returning to part time work schedules.



2020 presented an unprecedented challenge for people being able to remain in their homes. Many people, like Victor, lost jobs, couldn't pay their rent and as a consequence, simply could not dig themselves out. Just as we transformed our model of food delivery during the pandemic, so too we transformed our housing stability program. We wanted to help people before lock out notices were issued, because we know that when the evictions moratorium is lifted, the need will grow exponentially and people will be that much farther behind. Using the resources that were generously provided through this crisis, we established private partnerships, including a productive partnership with Housing Initiatives of Princeton and provided for by a generous grant from the Princeton Area Community Foundation. Through this partnership we are providing more aid per family than ever before to households with the ability to apply some of their own resources to establish their path to housing sustainability. **To date, 58 households have been served**, or are in the process of being assisted, to remain stably housed with an average payment of \$1,606. Many families will face economic hardship even after the immediate effects of the crisis have abated. In response, we have addressed an influx of clients who face homelessness when the

moratorium on evictions and foreclosures ends. Our housing team collaborates with clients over the phone and via Zoom to establish their housing stability and pay back rent before an eviction notice comes. Pre-pandemic, the average assistance per household provided was \$484. **From July through December, we helped 151 households remain in their homes with an average assistance amount of \$1,447**, allowing them to regain hope and financial stability.



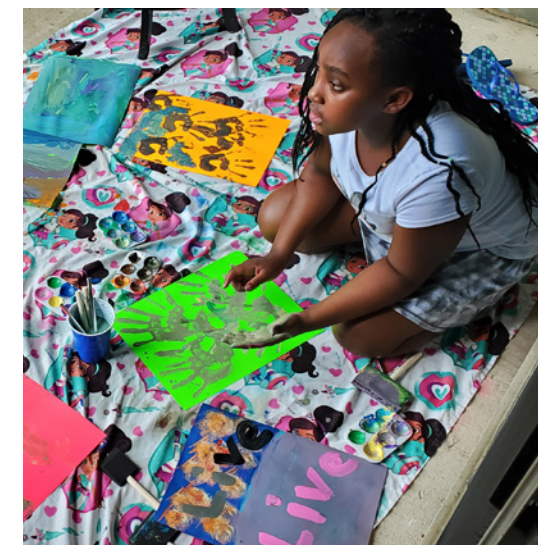
Still Standing Overcoming Barriers to Success

As a single mom, Lisa was struggling before the pandemic but then COVID hit her family not once, but twice. Lisa was sick, unable to work, and trying to navigate virtual learning for her children. Thanks to the *Still Standing* Program, Lisa wasn't alone. "When I thought I didn't have anyone to help me and my family, the *Still Standing* women were there for me. They were my family. They helped me to get through it and have taught me so much. My coach, Cynthia, has taught me how to fix my credit report and I am in the process of doing that so that I can buy a house for my family. I couldn't have gotten through this without them. Cynthia has been amazing and has had the biggest impact on me, she has been my rock."



Arm In Arm created the *Still Standing* program with support from The Fund for Women and Girls and in response to a need we saw in the community: to help single women take care of their families while moving toward financial independence. *Still Standing* participants truly struggle to make ends meet, and savings is almost non-existent for most. With guidance to understand personal finances and assistance managing a budget, we help these women take a critical step on the path to financial independence and self-sufficiency. We work with families to set goals, learn new skills, and change financial behaviors. In group meetings and through 1:1 coaching, we help participants to improve housing stability, individual and family well-being, education and job advancement, and financial literacy in order to foster self-sufficiency and improve academic performance by children.

Lisa's story demonstrates the positive impact the program is having. Single mothers carry a heavy burden and need support and a safe place to share their concerns and have their voices heard. These women often express that they feel isolated and alone in their challenges, and many simply do not know where to turn for help. With advocacy and access to needed community resources Arm In Arm is instrumental in helping them overcome many of the barriers to their success. The women in the program have come to rely on us, and know that we are available to them whenever they are in need. They are still standing!



Working Creatively To Help All Kids Thrive

An active and involved parent, **Florida** was vice president of the PTO when our *All Kids Thrive* (AKT) work began at Robbins School. When the effects of COVID-19 began to be felt in her community, she turned to a trusted source and reached out to AKT Navigator, **Luis**, to help feed her family of 4. As more neighbors struggled with food and housing, **Florida's** big heart compelled her to open her home to another family of 6, one of whom attended Robbins School with her own children. A landlord had illegally evicted these new housemates from their home, shutting off their utilities and locking them out without the opportunity to collect their personal belongings.



Resources were spread thin, but **Arm In Arm** was there for each of them, assisting them in acquiring the internet essentials needed for all three children to attend school remotely and complete their assignments, and connecting with an anonymous private donor to get a mobile hot spot for the entire house. Food was delivered to both families, and with each visit, **Luis** would inquire about the children's schooling and encourage their success.

As the pandemic continued to ravage their community, **Florida** and her husband brought yet another family into their home, and again turned to **Arm In Arm**. Three families under one roof, they lean on each other. **Luis** is inspired by the resilience and fortitude of these families, "Ms. **Florida** is an angel for real," he says, "and we did everything possible to complement her angel wings. The fact that we are able to secure food for all the families in the house was a huge relief. Assisting them was some of the best compassionate work that we've done."



Our work with Robbins Elementary School in Trenton continues, now in year three of the *All Kids Thrive* program supported by the Princeton Area Community Foundation. **Arm In Arm** is embedded in the school community, providing social services and support to parents to improve their household stability which will in turn improve their child's school attendance and academic performance. In this unusual school year, we remain committed to removing barriers to children's attendance, and we are responding with flexibility and creativity in finding ways to stay connected to families and provide necessary services outside of the school environment. Meetings are now done via Zoom or phone, from car windows, on front porches, and over fences. Much of this support is focused on technology as families struggle with devices, signing in to remote classes, and securing online access. In the face of significant new challenges, we continue to meet people where they are, when they need us.

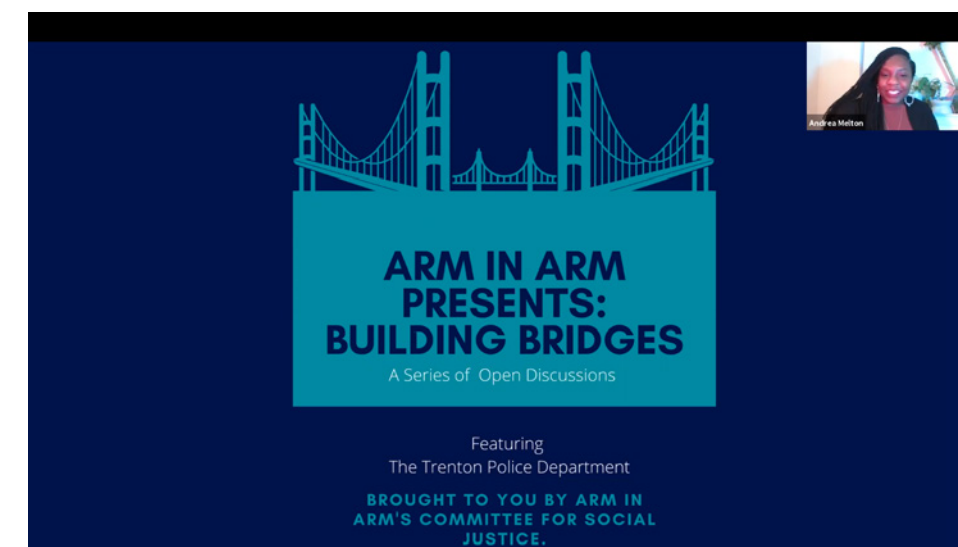
Making Noise In Trenton

Arm In Arm's Social Justice Committee was founded in the summer of 2020 after hearing the outpourings of cries for justice that came after the brutal murder of George Floyd. After a heartfelt staff meeting led by **Arm In Arm's** Social Justice Chairwoman, our Executive Director along with our Board members decided that it was time to make a change.

Arm In Arm's Social Justice Committee is comprised of Staff members who are dedicated to being agents of change. Their efforts include not only educating Staff, Clients, and Board members about the racial and social injustices that our community members face with a special focus on how these experiences fuel food, housing, and job insecurity but also, trying to build bridges between the neighbors we serve and our local government and law enforcement officials to end racial discrimination and to make our communities places where people might thrive.

To heed this effort, the committee is hosting a series of online forums titled Building Bridges that feature different community partners and organizations. The first forum featuring the Trenton Police Department focuses on creating a concrete relationship that can foster positive change. In this forum they will discuss unrest due to social and racial injustice, rules and procedures, and proactive ways to enact change. These forums will be recorded and posted on the **Arm In Arm** website for all to watch.

Arm In Arm stands with all who have suffered racial discrimination and we emphatically reject any system which serves to entrench the privilege of one group above another simply because of their race, color, or religion. Knowing that change begins at home, our organization-wide response engages Staff and Volunteers to act as agents for positive change towards a more just and equitable community. Interested in joining our efforts? Email andream@arminarm.org for more information.



Making It Count: Census 2020

Arm In Arm brought together a group of twenty area nonprofits to ensure an accurate count for Trenton in the 2020 US Census. This coalition, the Trenton Area Non-Profit Complete Count Committee, set out to reach the most difficult to count parts of our population—young children, people of color, undocumented immigrants, non-English speakers, low-income individuals, persons experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities—and see that the Trenton community receives its fair share of federal funding. Our mission was to promote awareness of the importance of a complete count in our area, and to facilitate completion and submission of the Census for many community members.



As was the case across the country, our Census efforts were extremely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing stay-at-home order. The plans we had developed were based on the idea that we would have consistent, in-person contact with many of the individuals in our area that are most difficult to reach. Although we had laid the groundwork by educating our clients in the months leading up to March, the pandemic shutdown hampered our efforts to conduct an important piece of our planned activities. Once again, Arm In Arm pivoted.

As social distancing restrictions and the necessary safety precautions began to impact our reach, we shifted the bulk of our efforts to sending Census materials out in every bag of food that was distributed through our Hunger Prevention program. We engaged hard to reach households by hosting “Grab ‘n Go” Mobile Pantry grocery events, with required on-site completion of the Census. These events allowed us to expand our impact beyond the clients we regularly serve and augment the Census outreach work being done by our non-profit coalition partners. Our efforts helped contribute to New Jersey’s success:

- New Jersey was one of 18 states to achieve a Self-Response Rate of 69.5% or above
- New Jersey had its best Self-Response Rate in 30 Years
- 14 New Jersey counties were in the top 50 self-responders in our Census region which includes all states from New Jersey up to Maine, plus Puerto Rico

Because of these efforts, New Jersey will ultimately be more accurately represented both at the federal and state levels and will undoubtedly receive more federal dollars for the programs and services so important to our community for the next ten years. Better together!

Representative Payee Program Preventing Homelessness

The signs were there when Lara was very small. Grave emotional issues lead to angry outbursts, violence, and eventually substance abuse. Eventually, a final diagnosis of borderline personality disorder was handed down. Lara’s mother Karol exhausted all available options to help her daughter, but their relationship was strained and marred by abusive behavior and despair.

When Lara began receiving SSI benefits, Karol was responsible for doling out this money to cover Lara’s expenses, yet she knew the money would ultimately be used to support Lara’s habit and not to pay for rent, food, or clothing. Karol felt she could no longer support Lara on her self-destructive path.

Representative Payee services are designed for situations just like this. With another entity to act as a go-between, eliminating the need for Karol to oversee Lara’s finances, there was a chance to rebuild their relationship and give Karol the space she needed to reclaim her own life.

Representative Payee Program Coordinator Suzanne met with Karol and listened. “I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, unable to function at work. Suzanne took the burden away and helped me put up appropriate boundaries. She rescued me. This is a fantastic service and so needed in the community. I’m so grateful to have Arm In Arm for their kindness and non-judgmental posture. It is helping me as much as my daughter.. the Rep Payee program has given me the space to separate in a very necessary way—in a way that saved my sanity.”



Arm In Arm’s Representative Payee Program serves individuals and families whose heads of households have limitations that make it difficult for them to manage their SSI/SSDI benefits and consistently pay their bills. Therefore, they are at-risk for eviction and homelessness. As the only non-profit in Mercer County providing this service, this program is vital to the safety and well-being of at-risk clients. It takes into account the comprehensive needs of individuals and families, collaborates with community partners, offers clients security, and encourages health and self-sufficiency. Over 90% of clients enrolled in our program have a serious and persistent mental illness, and many have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. We receive benefits on their behalf, and pay their monthly expenses. Representative Payee Programs have been found to have significant positive effects on an individual’s ability to live independently, and are associated with an improved ability to meet basic needs, reductions in homelessness and victimization, and better adherence to medical and behavioral healthcare treatment.

Arm In Arm / Our Mission



Food

Ensuring food security with three food pantries, home food delivery, and mobile pantry services, we offer clients three days' worth of food for every member of their household with each visit. Each year, more than 4,500 households comprising 10,000 Mercer County residents make some 25,000 visits to our food pantries, receiving more than 210 tons of food, including staples like rice, cereal, pasta, canned fruits and vegetables, and fresh produce and meats. Our own garden adjacent to our downtown location yields up to 900 pounds of fresh produce every year, which is distributed in our pantries.



Housing

Preventing homelessness and promoting stable housing for low-income families throughout Mercer County, our services support as many as 600 households a year with emergency financial aid to prevent eviction, foreclosure or shut-off of utilities or to restore housing after an episode of homelessness. We also offer case management support, including a temporary rent subsidy and connection to needed community resources, for as many as 30 households striving for long-term housing stability. Representative Payee services are also available, offering financial management assistance to individuals who need support in managing their personal financial affairs.

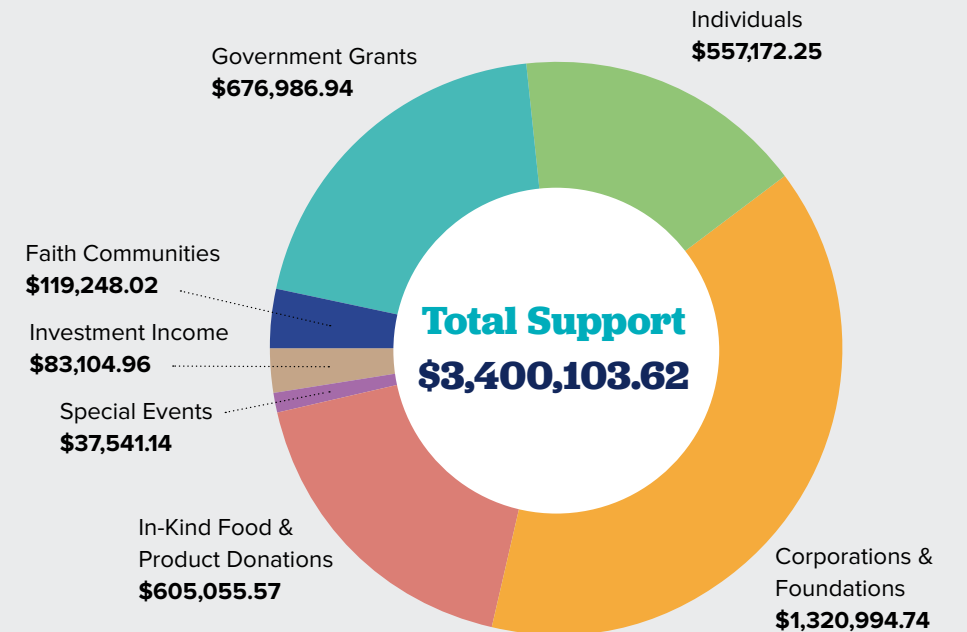


Job Support

We offer training in our food pantries for customer service in a retail environment, as well as safe food handling and inventory management to some 20 adults each year. Our case manager assists the participants with job search, résumé and interview preparation and support to remove any barriers to employment, such as child-care and transportation. We are one of only several agencies in Mercer County, NJ to offer driver's license restoration services through our License to Succeed program in which more than 40 adults each year receive the financial and administrative assistance they need to restore driving privileges and secure a license, greatly increasing the likelihood of obtaining and maintaining employment and thus financial stability.

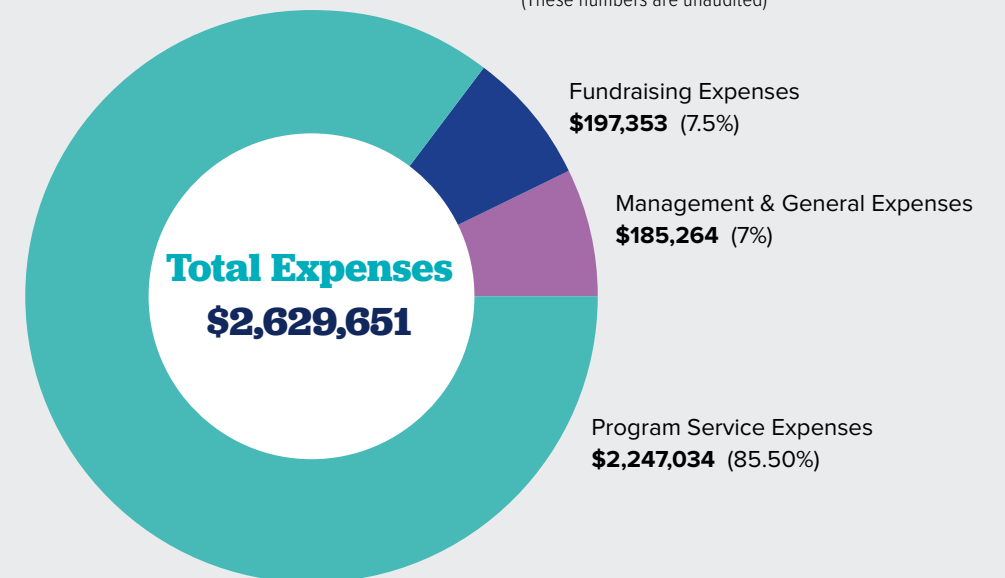
Sources of Our Support / July 2019–June 2020

(These numbers are unaudited)



Expenses

(These numbers are unaudited)



Our Supporters / We Thank You!

Institutions

Accenture
 All Kids Thrive Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation
 Amalgamated Charitable Foundation
 Amazon.com
 Anne & Gerald Freedman Charitable Foundation
 Axis Capital
 Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
 Battle Against Hunger
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Congregations

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church
 All Saints Church
 Church of St. David the King
 Fellowship In Prayer
 First Presbyterian Church of Dutch Neck
 First Presbyterian Church of Hamilton Square
 First Presbyterian Church of Plainsboro

First Presbyterian Church of Trenton
 Graceway Presbyterian Church
 Hopewell Presbyterian Church
 Living Waters Church of the Nazarene
 Lutheran Church of the Messiah
 Morrisville Presbyterian Church
 Nassau Presbyterian Church
 Pennington Presbyterian Church
 Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville
 Princeton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
 Princeton United Methodist Church
 St. Paul's Catholic Church
 Trinity Church Princeton
 Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton

Individuals

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 Marion Alberty
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