



**ArmInArm**  
better together **40+** years

**One day, one year, one mission...**

**Impact Report** 2020-2021

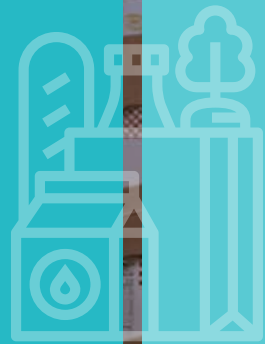
“We are seeing many of the same faces, but with the pandemic we are seeing many new faces. People bring by friends and family who could use a little help.”

—Mel Hopps, Arm In Arm Staff Member

## Yearly Number of Pantry Visits and Grocery Deliveries

FY21  
35,621

FY20  
25,205



## Dear Friends,

*Please allow me to take you on a tour of one day in the life of Arm In Arm....*

**On a Monday morning**, we opened for the first time in the new year. It was cold, with a chance of snow. Mel rolled up the garage door at our Hudson Street food pantry and our team began, as they had for more than a year, putting pre-packed bags of food on tables just outside the front door. On paper, things seemed bleak: a new variant of COVID was raging and it seemed we were short-staffed that day and low on volunteers. Did we have the capacity to remain open? But then, another staff member came over to help out and more volunteers simply showed up.

Families, regrouping again with work and virtual school, began trickling in. It's expensive to live in Mercer County, and the costs of living—rent, food, gas—have all gone up. So



have the number of visits to our pantries. But we have seen that by providing food, we take away other cost burdens for families and increase the likelihood that they can sustain themselves. One client shared, “If Arm In Arm provides me with food, I can use that savings of about \$40 to buy my child new sneakers for school.” Another year begins with additional challenges, but thankfully, **on that day, we were able to serve over one hundred families** at one of our pantries in Trenton.



**“It’s expensive to live in Mercer County, and the costs of living—rent, food, gas—have all gone up. So have the number of visits to our pantries.”**

—David Fox, Arm In Arm Executive Director



Alana Moonsammy, Hudson Pantry Coordinator

**As Alana distributed bags of groceries** to grateful families, Kim arrived. Faithful friend, long-time volunteer, and one of the Co-Chairs of Yes We CAN! Food Drives, she dropped off a bountiful late harvest collected from local farmers, enough to feed 50 families! As she often does, Kim came bearing donated children’s books as well as warm hats, gloves and scarves knitted by volunteers to send home with clients who were thrilled to receive them.



**Since 2008, Yes We CAN! Food Drives,** comprised of a group of volunteers who seek to alleviate hunger in our area, has collected donations and conducted food drives at the West Windsor Community Farmers Market and local grocery stores. The collected food is then donated to Arm In Arm to resupply its food pantries in Princeton and Trenton.



**In 2021 Yes We CAN! collected more than 33,000 pounds of produce and non-perishables for Arm In Arm clients (this is more than 16.5 tons, or more than 7 elephants).**



**“People across our County reach out to me, knowing Arm In Arm is here to treat them with dignity and respect. We can all fall on hard times. We all need a hand up. We cannot walk this life alone. When I needed help, Arm In Arm was a blessing for me.”**

*Luis Rivera, former client and current All Kids Thrive Navigator*



While the challenges presented by the pandemic resulted in rates of **50% absenteeism** at some schools in school year 2020-21, Robbins' students whose families received support through our *All Kids Thrive* program reported only a **12.4%** rate of absenteeism.



**“Hola!”** shouted Luis as he waved and made his way through the crowd. As a resident of this neighborhood, he knows everyone! Luis, the



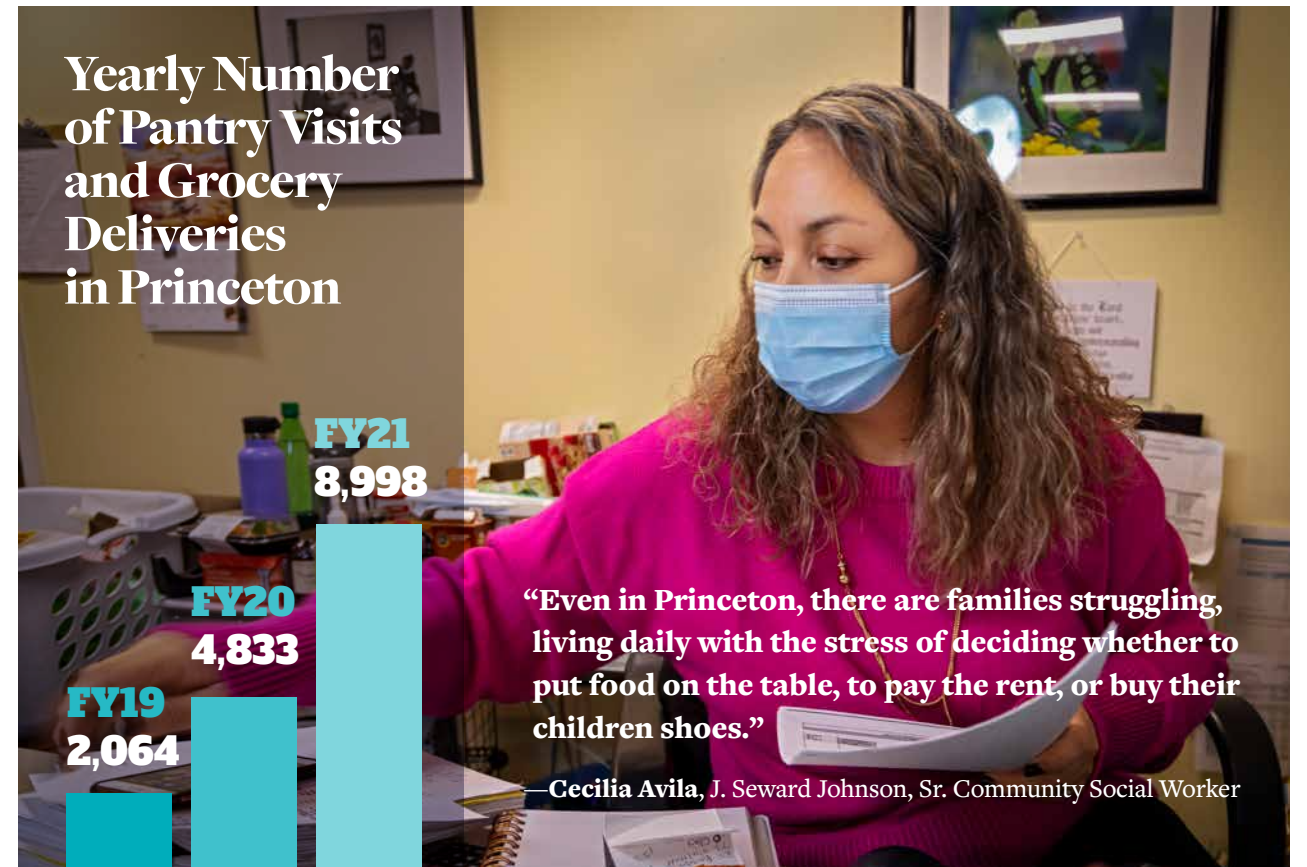
Navigator of our *All Kids Thrive* program, has been especially busy lately, helping families from **Robbins Elementary**

**School in Trenton** which has just returned to remote learning. In the fall, students were in school and he was focused on helping families

to complete required daily health screenings and access COVID testing, but now he is back to ensuring that families have internet connectivity so that children can virtually attend school. He shared with me the challenges these families face, some of whom are undocumented and all of whom are dependent on their weekly income to pay their bills. Some are now out of work while supervising their children at home, and Luis knows this will only exacerbate the great needs they already have. Arm In Arm is needed now, more than ever.

Meanwhile, at our food pantry in the lower level of Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, **Cecilia, Bernard and a team of zealous volunteers** were packing bags of food to deliver to families unable to access our pantry in person. Twice each month, many homebound neighbors in Princeton receive food from Arm In Arm: a great mix of staples (**thank you Mercer**

**Street Friends!**) which we augment through private funding to offer fresh produce, eggs, milk, meat, and at special times of the year, gift cards for families to buy what they want. Cecilia was also preparing for a Nutrition class she was moderating that evening, which would provide clients with valuable resources to help them to understand and navigate their SNAP benefits.



After wrapping things up at the Hudson Street pantry, I made my way to **East Hanover Street**. When I arrived at the pantry there, things were relatively quiet, save for **Margaret, our Director of Operations**, who was meeting with a vendor to ensure we had enough produce to provide for our community members at the next day's distribution. Normally, there would be a crew working hard to bag enough groceries for the next day, but,

with recent COVID concerns, we were short on volunteers. Thankfully, however, the food still comes in. I watched as the Arm In Arm truck pulled up in front of the pantry, and **Tyrone and Jammie** jumped out to begin unloading hundreds of pounds of food donated from recent holiday food drives. I reflected upon the generosity of our community friends and partners, and just how much that food means to the families we serve.

**“Arm In Arm is truly a blessing because they really care about people. They helped me a lot, and are still helping me to get my license back. I am grateful to be able to give back, and help them serve others in the community.”**

—Jammie Wiggins, former client and current Hunger Prevention staff member



**23** Clients had their Driver's Licenses restored in FY21



I turned a corner to find Andre working at his desk. As Coordinator of our **License to Succeed program**, Andre helps clients with assistance to pay off tickets and fines, and prepare for exams in order to have their driver's licenses restored. For many neighbors, a valid driver's license is essential to finding a good job that pays a living wage. It paves the way for security and self-sufficiency. We know this because one former License to Succeed program member is now on the Arm In Arm staff as our Logistics Coordinator and Driver! **During the pandemic Andre's job has become more challenging.** There is a backlog in the MVC system, so Andre spends hours negotiating on behalf of the people we serve and becomes a real mentor to them. As I tucked my car keys away in my pocket and headed toward the stairs, I was reminded of how critical the ability to drive is in our own lives and how essential it is to caring for ourselves and our loved ones.

Making my way upstairs, I ran into Suzanne who oversees our **Representative Payee program**. She was gathering her mail, and there is always so much of it. She receives the social security statements, medical bills, etc. for 177 clients who have limitations that make it difficult for them to manage their benefits and consistently pay their bills, ensuring that their finances are kept in order and bills are paid so that they don't become homeless. As the only non-profit in Mercer County providing this service, Suzanne's work is vital to the safety and well-being of her at-risk clients. She's been working remotely for the past two years, fielding calls from clients and their family members during all hours to ensure they are well cared for.

**177** Clients received Representative Payee Services in FY21



**“I didn’t have my driver’s license for about 17 years, so I’m really grateful for Arm In Arm’s License to Succeed Program. It opened the doors for a lot of other things. I’m able to do a lot more, and, ironically, it’s come full circle because I work for Arm In Arm driving the truck.”**

—Tyrone Riley, former client and current Hunger Prevention staff member



**On the third floor, Michelle was taking calls** from people inquiring about assistance to pay their rent, mortgage, or utility bills. A real Trentonian, who cooks for the people on her block in her free time, Michelle fields about 25 calls a day and, after a brief screening process, connects clients to someone from our **Housing Stability team**. It might be Vanessa, who has a family of her own at home, but happily meets virtually with our clients on weeknights and weekends. Or it could be Lisa, who last year pioneered a way to connect Hamilton residents with special housing support. Maybe it’s Jessica, who manages the finances for our Representative Payee clients, but, in true “all hands on deck” fashion, has taken on some case management duties. Also on deck for housing support is Cecilia who, aside from coordinating

our Princeton pantry, serves our Spanish speaking families needing rental assistance. And there is Angie, who is also bilingual and serves our Princeton clients with year-long housing stability support. **As program director, Cynthia takes on the most challenging cases.**

Once in a while, even I get to weigh in, as in one extraordinary case last month when we provided \$10,000 in relief for a family of five who was over a year behind in rent. But this family passed the litmus test: they demonstrated significant need, and with the support we would offer, the ability to sustain themselves moving forward.

**FY20**  
**379 Clients received \$238,410**  
**in rental, mortgage and utilities**  
**assistance.**

**FY21**  
**267 Clients received \$509,219**  
**in rental, mortgage and utilities**  
**assistance.**

**Average assistance**  
**went from \$629 to**  
**more than \$1900**



Sometimes in our staff meetings the Housing Stability team surprises me by describing how referring clients to other pockets of outside support can help them more in the long run. For instance, our staff might refer clients to a state-sponsored utilities program that will forgive all past debt if clients can simply keep up with current bills for one year. **This is a game changer for so many families.** At one recent, action-packed staff meeting, Tia, who coordinates our *Still Standing* program for single mothers funded by the **Fund for Women and Girls of the Princeton Area Community Foundation**, shared some of the challenges

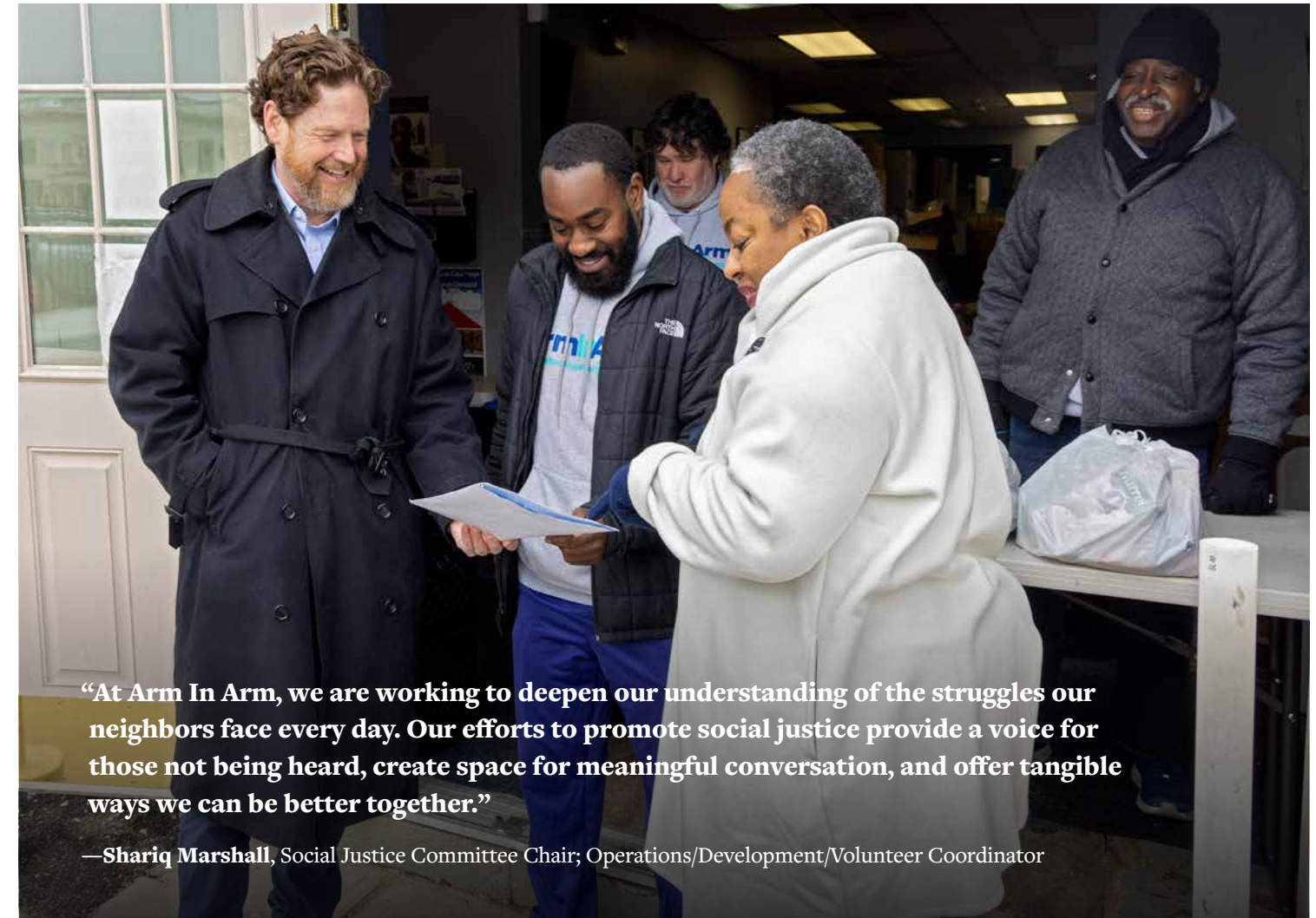
these women are experiencing. We heard about the impact of the pandemic on their families, about illness, job insecurity and the difficulties of trying to make ends meet with children learning remotely from home.

Once a recipient of rental assistance, Tia became a participant of the ***Still Standing*** program, which focuses on the needs of single mothers through monthly group meetings, individualized coaching, encouragement, instruction in gaining financial independence and best practices for positive growth. Tia brings a wealth of personal experience that helps inform the work she now does at Arm In Arm.



**“I was just trying to get my feet on the ground. I have 4 children, single mom, trying to make it happen. Arm In Arm helped me get caught up with my rent and ahold of my finances. Now as the *Still Standing* Program Coordinator, I get to help other women the same way I was helped.”**

—Tia Barron, former client and current Arm In Arm staff member



**“At Arm In Arm, we are working to deepen our understanding of the struggles our neighbors face every day. Our efforts to promote social justice provide a voice for those not being heard, create space for meaningful conversation, and offer tangible ways we can be better together.”**

—Shariq Marshall, Social Justice Committee Chair; Operations/Development/Volunteer Coordinator

Next on the meeting’s agenda, we heard from **Shariq** who, in addition to serving on both the **Hunger Prevention and Development Teams, leads Arm In Arm’s Social Justice Committee.** With great energy and plans to continue our organization-wide response to

racial and social injustice, we all agreed that we have our work cut out for us in 2022. We know that these issues fuel food, housing, and job insecurity—**the three pillars of our mission**—and we are determined to build bridges and make our communities places where people thrive.

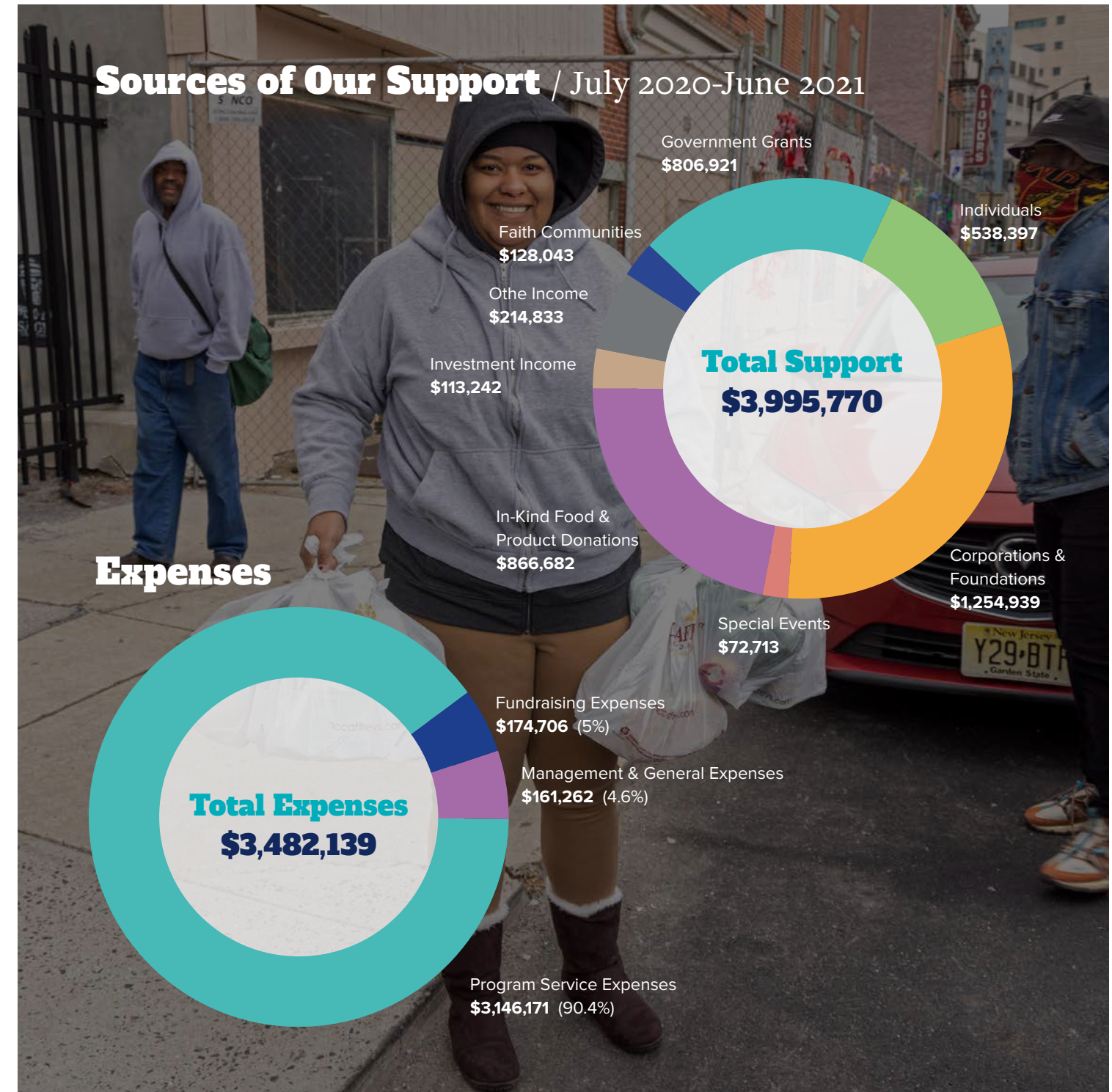
As I moved into afternoon meetings, connecting with Maureen and Keating to discuss grants and development, **Maureen shared some great news!** Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we will have the funds to purchase a new refrigerated van and software system, both of which will enhance our capabilities and allow us to serve more food to more neighbors in more ways. Plans are underway for our **This Is Still Home** event, which we will be able to conduct in-person. We are fortunate that Matthew Desmond, who joined us for last winter's event, plans to join us again on May 4. Our Director of Administration, Sun Hae, confirmed this is the case as she made her way through the building to pick up packages, ensure that the heat is working, and check that we have enough PPE to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.

**Arm In Arm offers a lot for people in crisis:** food; rental, mortgage, security deposit, and utilities assistance; longer-term housing assistance and case-management; license restoration; support groups for single mothers and their families; financial management and nutrition classes; and Representative Payee services to help the most vulnerable manage basic needs.

But these are all really manifestations of one basic gift we share, which is **hope**. Our clients often say first, "I am grateful for the way Arm In Arm treated me." More transformative than **what** we offer is **how** we offer it. Our many discreet services are part of a larger fabric of care: how can we help our families through another day, another month, another year? Our assistance in providing the basic needs of food and housing opens the door to other forms of support that change lives. Each neighbor we serve is capable of achieving stability. We walk this path with them each day, serving them with dignity and offering them solutions and resources that improve their lives today, and offer them the promise of a better tomorrow.

Thank you for sharing **one day** in the life of Arm In Arm with me. In **one year** you have played an integral part in our work to provide relief and assistance to more families than ever before. Thank you for walking this path with us. United, with **one mission** to care for neighbors in need, we truly are better together.

**David R. Fox**, PhD., M.Div.  
*Executive Director*



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Detwiler/Bull family  
Donald Dickason  
Ann & Brown Elmes  
Debbie Endo  
Carol Fagundus  
Betsy & Ben Ferrer  
James & Pat Foo  
David R. Fox  
The Front Steps Project  
Aaron Gaynor  
Suzanne Gomez  
Kris Grabell  
Lindsay Guinan  
Mary Hardesty  
Laura Heil  
Vladi Highland  
James & Viola Isaacs  
Garret Jensen  
Pamela Jensen  
Sophie Jensen  
Keating Johnson  
Molly Johnson  
Katharine Anne Farrell

John F. Kelsey III  
John & Peg Kemmerer  
Vincent Kiechlin  
Krysia & Peter Jaffe  
Kim Kyte  
Concetta Lapergola  
Lara Longworth Gaere  
Maureen Ilort  
Michael Madigan family  
Sally Maruca  
Ricky May  
Frank McDonald  
McMaster Carr Order Entry Department  
Miki Mendelsohn  
Cynthia Mendez  
Deb Moses  
Jordan Moses  
PDS's 100th Day Celebration  
Muriel & David Petri  
Pierra Le Gorrec  
Ronald Rabel  
Nancy Richardson  
Luis Rivera  
Dennis Robert  
Andrea Sacchetti  
Louise Senior  
Silverman family  
Catherine and Christopher Sims  
Deborah Thomas  
Deb Toppmeyer  
Noah Tulsy  
Shirley K. Turner  
Fred Weber  
Lisbeth Winarsky  
Verse Speaking Choir at Wirtherspoon St.  
Presbyterian Church  
Yang Gang  
Kim Kyte & the Yes We CAN! volunteers  
Ann Zultner

#### Matching Gifts

BlackRock  
BNY Mellon  
Bristol-Myers Squibb  
Ford Foundation  
Google  
Johnson & Johnson  
Merck Foundation  
Microsoft  
NewRez  
NRG Global Giving  
Pepsico  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
State Street  
Vanguard

#### Gifts In-Kind

America's Grow A Row  
Dennis Anderson  
Aramark  
Bristol Myers Squibb  
Bryn Mawr Trust  
England Logistic  
Englishtown Presbyterian  
Farmers Against Hunger  
Giant Market  
Girl Scout Silver Start Project  
Graceway Presbyterian Church  
Gray Family  
Darrea Hoffman  
Holy Trinity  
Honeybrook  
The Jewish Center of Princeton  
Khufu Court  
Klatzkin and Co.  
Lawrenceville School  
Mercer Street Friends  
Montgomery Public Schools  
Morven Museum and Garden  
NJ Department of Transportation  
Carol Olivieri  
Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville  
Present Day Club  
Princeton Friends School  
Princeton Public Schools  
Princeton United Methodist Church  
Princeton University  
Rolling Harvest  
Jeff Sands  
South Brunswick Food Bank  
Seashore Produce USDA Farmer to Family  
St. Frances  
St. Paul's  
Stony Brook Garden Club  
The Common Market  
Trenton Public Schools  
Trinity Church, Princeton  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
of Princeton  
Wegmans  
Weichert Realty of Princeton  
Whole Foods  
Yes We CAN!

#### Arm In Arm Staff

Cecilia Avila  
Tia Barron  
Lisa Beamer  
Allison Bronander  
Jessica Choi  
Margaret Cowell  
David R. Fox  
Andre Gause  
Suzanne Gomez  
Mel Hopps  
Maureen Hunt  
Keating Johnson  
Sun Hae Kim  
Vanessa Lagares  
Shariq Marshall  
Michelle McNair  
Cynthia Mendez  
Alana Moonsammy  
Tyrone Riley  
Luis Rivera  
Bernard Sweet  
Angie Vargas  
Jammie Wiggins

#### Arm In Arm Board of Directors 2020-2021

Nicholas Valvanis, *Chair*  
Elizabeth Koehler, *Vice-Chair*  
Deborah Toppmeyer, *Secretary*  
Sallye Zink, *Treasurer*  
Adrian Colarusso  
Ken Barbuscio  
Michael DeCicco  
Victor Gibbs  
Laura Heil  
Camille Hernandez-Burt  
Dayron Proctor  
Eric Schwartz  
Warren Wilson  
David R. Fox, *Ex-Officio*  
The Rev. Dr. Dave Davis, *Ex-Officio*  
The Rev. Paul Jeanes, III, *Ex-Officio*

*Special thanks to volunteer Bob Meola for taking many of the photographs seen in this report, as well as to Phillip Unetic of Unetic Design for his beautiful design.*

## Dear Valued Supporters,

Amidst the uncertainty and difficulties we all continue to face in 2022, both at home and abroad, we want to thank our amazing supporters, partners and stakeholders for caring for our neighbors in need. It is your efforts that underpin every “day in the life” of this wonderful organization.

**Thank you to those who have given** to Arm In Arm, those who have volunteered and to the advocates of our mission—for your resources, time and talents.

**Thank you to the staff and leaders** of Arm In Arm, whose passion, work ethic and adaptability have been both admirable and effective in meeting the increased needs of Mercer County families.

**Thank you to our fellow Board members** who spend time and resources to help ensure we’re best serving our community, while maintaining the highest level of ethical and financial standards, in partnership with the staff.

It is through the generosity of our supporters, the work of the leadership team and staff, and the guidance of the Board that we continue to achieve record service levels for our hunger prevention program and new partnerships in our housing stability and job support programs.

We are honored and grateful to be part of this incredible team, to witness your generosity, and to thank each of you for your ongoing selflessness and support.

With deep appreciation,

Elizabeth Koehler  
*Current Board Chair*

Nicholas J. Valvanis  
*Board Chair, 2019-2021*



## 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 approximately 5,000 households comprised of more than 10,000 Mercer County residents are offered food through some 35,000 pantry visits and grocery deliveries, receiving more than 250 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.



### License Restoration and Workforce Development

Our License to Succeed program has proven to be an essential resource in our community and is needed now more than ever, as the job market opens up again and low-income neighbors take steps to re-enter the workforce. As one of only several agencies in Mercer County, NJ to offer license restoration services we help more than 25 adults each year receive the financial and administrative assistance they need to restore driving privileges and secure a license. With our assistance to help clients pay off tickets and fines, and prepare for exams, we are increasing the likelihood of them obtaining and maintaining employment, thus paving the way for financial security and self-sufficiency.

**Arm In Arm is among just 4% of charities to receive Charity Navigator's prestigious four-star rating for financial accountability and transparency.**



[arminarm.org](http://arminarm.org) / 609-396-9355



#### In Trenton

123 East Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

48 Hudson Street, Trenton, NJ 08609

#### In Princeton

61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ 08542