



Community Reach
of Montgomery County

NEWSLETTER December 2020

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

We want to wish you happy holidays and time with your loved ones, whichever holidays you celebrate and however you can celebrate in this very strange year. Thank you for sharing some of your time with Community Reach of Montgomery County this year. We look forward to continuing our work with you by our side in 2021. Happy New Year just a little early!



For sure 2020 has been quite a year

Everyone is working from everywhere

Our commitment to serve remains strong
the whole year through

Happy Holidays from us to you!



HOLIDAY GIVING - DECEMBER

Reach serves those in need in zip code 20854 for the December holidays every year. Because of the tremendous support of our neighbors, we were able to ask the Montgomery County Holiday Giving Project to add families to our list who were not being served by other organizations. Reach was able to help families in Bethesda, Wheaton, and greater Rockville in addition to those in need in Potomac. Our final list included 206 families with more than 500 children and teens - recently, the numbers in a regular year were about 100 families and 200 children.

Montgomery County Councilmember Andrew Friedson joined Reach on Saturday December 19th for the distribution at St. Francis Episcopal Church. Along with other volunteers, he loaded holiday meals in the cars of recipients and helped families choose toys for their children. As an uncle to many nieces and nephews, he has a lot of experience in choosing toys. The Councilmember's visit also provided Reach with a Youtube video that highlights Montgomery County's Holiday Giving Project and the part Reach plays in helping our neighbors. See that video [here](#).

Many, many supporters provided toys, food, gift cards, funds, and volunteer hours so that Reach could serve so many. The following is only a partial list of the organizations that donated food baskets, toys, and gift cards for December distribution. There were many more supporters, both organizations and individuals - too many to list here, but you know who you are and how much your donations meant to the families we served.



**Envision Health Chiropractic & Wellness * Little Farms Garden Club
Montgomery County, MD Section, NCNW * NIH Federal Credit Union
National Philharmonic * Rockville United Church * St. Francis Episcopal Church
St. Mary's Catholic Church * Stein, Sperling, Bennett, De Jong, Driscoll, PC
Temple Beth Ami * Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville**

Reach is proud to work with the very dedicated Montgomery County staff who organize and support the Holiday Giving Coalition as well as our Coalition partners. Together, we worked hard to serve the almost 13,000 families referred for December holiday assistance.

COVID TESTING & VACCINATIONS

The big story of 2020 - COVID-19. That story will continue as we usher in 2021, although hopefully the emphasis will more and more relate to the number of people who have been vaccinated rather than the number of new cases or deaths related to the illness.

As noted in previous newsletters, our Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic was selected to be part of the Montgomery County Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar project. Through that project, the Clinic focused on providing free COVID testing to anyone in Montgomery County.



However, the emphasis was to reach out to the Latino community which was experiencing higher numbers of infections than many other groups in the County. After testing, the focus will move to case management, and also to overcoming misinformation about COVID vaccines.

From the beginning of October through December 19th, the Kaseman Health Clinic provided weekend COVID testing. Drive-up testing took place at Rockville United Methodist Church and Rockville United Church. The Clinic administered over 5000 tests through this Montgomery County grant.

In December, two vaccines were approved for use in the U.S. With a small supply of doses available to start, the CDC has offered guidance on what groups should first be vaccinated, but each state will decide whether to follow the guidelines and how to distribute vaccine supplies. Montgomery County will follow the plan the State of Maryland has set forth and is receiving its vaccine supply through the State. It will be available to those who want to take it in the following order (more specific information can be found [here](#)):

- 1A: Frontline health care workers, staff and residents of nursing homes, and first responders
- 1B: Essential workers and residents over the age of 75
- 1C: Individuals over the age of 65

The County will move from Phase 1A to Phase 1B as vaccine supplies and those who wish to be vaccinated allow. Dr. Travis Gayles, County Health Officer, cannot provide a timeline for the move between phases as it is not known how many doses the County will receive at a given time, or the number of residents who will choose to be vaccinated. The expectation, according to the Montgomery County website, is that the vaccine will be available to residents outside the phase 1 categories sometime this coming Spring. The Kaseman Health Clinic is hopeful that it will be able to directly offer vaccinations to patients sometime in 2021.

REAP FACTS AND FIGURES

Reach's Rockville Emergency Assistance Program (REAP) is our area of service that receives requests for financial assistance. Due to the economic impact of COVID, REAP has seen dramatic increases in the number of calls from the community. The amount of financial assistance needed to bring rent and utility payments up to date for each caller has practically doubled as well. Most of these requests are from families where one or all bread-winners have lost their jobs or had their work hours severely cut due to COVID closures.

People are also calling with requests for financial assistance in areas such as child care and moving expenses. These are expenses where assistance from government grants and contracts is not generally available. In order to help residents with these expenses, REAP must rely on private donations.

In addition to financial assistance, REAP provides referrals to and information about other social services. After a drop in the last several years for food program

referrals, this year there has been a marked increase. Although many food organizations accept self-referrals, callers who have never before needed assistance are unaware that they can call organizations directly, and often don't know what programs are available. REAP is also getting calls from people looking for affordable or free behavioral healthcare. Program director Odeth Berlin stated "Clients are very emotional and stressed about not being able to provide for their families and some have expressed that they feel hopeless."

Other safety net organizations refer clients to REAP and the number of those referrals is increasing as well. REAP has recently received requests from Catholic Charities, Rockville Help, Salvation Army, Interfaith Works, Upper Montgomery Assistance Network (UMAN), and others to provide financial assistance to people they serve. Pepco and Washington Gas are also sending customers to REAP who have exhausted the utility's resources for assistance, or are unable to commit to a repayment plan. For more information about the services REAP offers, please see the [REAP webpage](#).



YEAR END DONATIONS



If you have not yet completed your year-end donations, please consider supporting Reach or one of our five areas of service. Here is a little of what happened at Reach this year:

[Rockville Emergency Assistance Program \(REAP\)](#), received a call from a single mom of two who had been working two jobs and covering her bills, was laid off from one job and lost many hours at the second. REAP helped her find food, rent and clothing resources. With the family's basic needs covered, mom not only found a better paying job, but also financial assistance to return to school and complete her nursing degree.

[Senior Reach Program](#) got creative to help cover clients' needs during COVID - getting groceries and medication without leaving their homes, and finding ways to connect with others. A volunteer group ran errands for our clients and new volunteers stepped forward to call seniors so they felt less isolated. School students created videos and electronic greeting cards we shared with our seniors. Many volunteer groups stepped forward to rake the yards of our seniors who live in houses.

Our [Permanent Supportive Housing Program](#) has been rolling along. One Rockland House resident provided facemasks she had sewn to Clinic patients. Two new residents joined Rockland House and are adjusting well. That, in itself, was a real victory in this very strange year.

[Language Outreach Program \(LOP\)](#) moved all classes online within two weeks of live classes being closed. LOP also learned online courses are easier for some students to attend, so it expects to provide this as an alternative when in-person classes resume. Tutoring for the children of our students became more important with online school, and shifted to one-on-one schoolwork assistance over the internet. Summer graduation was successfully held over Zoom.

[Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic](#) now serves Medicare insured residents as well as those who receive Medicaid or are uninsured. Patients currently answer health questions when setting appointments and have their temperatures taken when they

arrive at the Clinic. Telehealth appointments are offered. The Clinic is part of the Montgomery County Latino outreach program, "Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar (For Our Health and Wellbeing)."

[Community Reach of Montgomery County](#) is even more focused on social equity. Our diversity and inclusion statement pinpoints the importance of cultural awareness and appropriateness in our organization, and we are examining our work for unintentional bias. We advocated for our constituents to complete the U.S. Census and vote in elections, in order to advocate for themselves, their values and ideas.

Thank you to those who have already supported us with a year-end gift. Thank you also to those who will make a gift to Reach or one of our areas of service in the coming days. We cannot help the most vulnerable in Rockville and Montgomery County without your help!



LOP WINTER SESSION INCLUDES ONLINE CITIZENSHIP, ESOL, & CONVERSATION CLASSES

Classes for the winter session of Reach's Language Outreach Program begin the first week of January with online courses. New this session is a winter English as a Second Language (ESOL) course at the intermediate and high-intermediate level. The ESOL course will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings beginning January 5th.

ESL

English as a Second Language

Citizenship test preparedness courses are more important than ever as the U.S. Citizenship test includes 28 additional questions that can be asked, as well as changes to some of the answers to previous questions. Anyone who filed an application after December 1, 2020 will be asked questions from the new test, and the current Civics practice test available at the U.S.C.I.S. website has not been updated to cover the new test. The LOP Citizenship class will begin on January 4th and will be held online Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays each week.

Two Conversation classes will be held during the winter session. The first course is appropriate for students who are speakers at the beginner, intermediate, or high-intermediate level of English. Classes will be online on Tuesday and Thursday evenings beginning January 5th. On January 4th, the Conversation Computation course - focusing on computer skills - begins. That class will meet online Monday and Wednesday evenings.

For the full schedule in English and Spanish, as well as information about enrollment, please see our [LOP webpage](#).

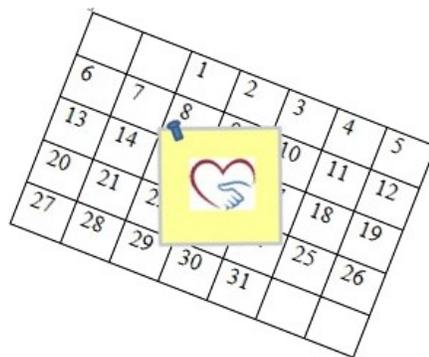
Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, April 24, 2021

REACH ANNUAL GALA

Virtual Event

More information including Sponsor opportunities available soon



SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

JOIN A REACH COMMITTEE - Development, Finance, Faith Advisory, and Governance currently all meet online as standing committees. Help determine the success of Reach through your service. Short term committees also need new members. The Annual Gala committee will begin meeting in January to facilitate the April 24th Gala.

WRITER/EDITOR/INVESTIGATOR to help build out our procedures manual for a few departments and programs that are not yet completed. Interview staff to determine how tasks are accomplished and who is responsible for what. Help them explain their work in layman's terms and then put it in writing for them.

CLIENT INTAKE COORDINATORS for Rockville Emergency Assistance Program (REAP). Are you a compassionate, detail-oriented person with a desire to help those in need? Work a four-hour shift weekly during business hours (ideally from 9am-1pm or 1pm-5pm) to help us assist Rockville residents facing eviction; provide County residents with referrals for low-cost dental and other services; and much more. Training is provided. DURING COVID CLOSURES, volunteers can assist remotely by collecting information from callers and providing basic answers to questions.

INTERPRETERS at the Kaseman Health Clinic to help Spanish speaking patients clearly communicate with some English-only medical providers. May be able to serve online during COVID closures. Help us ensure that our providers and patients can communicate clearly. Confidentiality is required.

DONATIONS REQUESTED:

For Kaseman Health Clinic and Housing Program:

C-Fold Paper Towels, Paper Towel Rolls, Hand Sanitizer, Antibacterial Hand Soap, Trash Bags, Disinfecting Wipes, Scouring Powder, Window Cleaner, Facial Tissue, Bleach, Toilet Bowl Cleaner, Dishwashing Liquid, Toilet Paper



For more information about these opportunities and others, please visit our [Volunteer Page](#) or contact [Andrea Kempner-Wink](#) at 301-637-0172.

Thanks to Our Reach Board of Directors!

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DONATE TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY

STAY CONNECTED:



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