

TEN YEARS OF SERVICE

FOOD FOR OTHERS

1995 TO 2005

By Sue Federico

TEN YEARS OF SERVICE

From the end days of 1995 and for the last ten years, the nonprofit known as Food for Others has been doing its best to provide assistance to the people in Northern Virginia who live in this area, but who for various reasons struggle to live in this area. Some are working and have a home but are paid so little they have trouble making it. Some have been getting by but have recently had a crisis that has pulled the rug out from under their tenuous living situation. Still others have come here for many reasons from other countries and are overwhelmed by the challenges of making it in this new place. Some are homeless. Occasionally, there has been someone who has been doing quite well and has had a complete turnaround in their economic situation. Many have always had to ask for assistance and many find themselves asking for help for the first time in their lives. Whatever the reason, Food for Others has committed to providing them with the basic necessity of some food and, hopefully, the message that someone cares about them as they continue to meet their challenges.

Creation

On Saturday morning July 8, 1995, a group of 21 people gathered in a conference room in the Fairfax County Pennino Human Services Building out of concern for those in need in the community. These people had been volunteering their time to provide food to low income people and people in crisis in the Northern Virginia community through an organization known as Lazarus at the Gate. Lazarus was no longer functioning in emergency food distribution as of June 30, 1995. Facilitated by Fairfax County Human Services staff, those present brainstormed ideas of how to continue the mission. In preparation for a 'Community Forum' scheduled for August 3, 1995 to address the issue, committees were set up. The committees were to study the appropriate organizational structure of a new organization, to develop new food sources and reconnect with former ones, to re-establish the food distribution network, to consider the physical operation concerns, to look into funding and staffing possibilities, and to garner community wide input and support. The Fairfax County staff pledged to assist the effort in any way possible. It might not have been fully realized by those present at the time, but a daunting task and a lot of imminent work had been set in place and the seeds of what would become Food for Others were planted.

The Fairfax County Department of Community Action had been in relationship with Mr. George McManmon, the founder of Lazarus at the Gate, and was already leasing the property used by Lazarus at the Gate at 2938 Prosperity Avenue in Merrifield, Virginia. The County committed to run the food program on an interim basis, and the warehouse became known as the Merrifield Food Site. Mrs. Susan Everett, the Fairfax County contract manager for Lazarus at the Gate, was assigned to the site to assist both organizations with the transition and to provide structure for volunteers to continue the food program on a day-to-day basis. There were two warehouse workers at the time. The interim period lasted six months.

At the 'Community Forum' held on August 3, 1995, an even greater number of people indicated a desire to continue providing food to the needy, but with a community-

based nonprofit organization headed by a volunteer leadership group. Because those present were from Fairfax County, Falls Church, and Arlington County an additional desire was expressed to continue the scope of service that Lazarus at the Gate had established to the entire Northern Virginia area. An Advisory Committee headed by Mrs. Faith McCormick was formed to address the complex issues ahead. It was decided that the new organization would incorporate under the name of Food for Others, Inc. Legal work was necessary, including configuring a Board of Directors and Officers, developing Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, filing incorporation and organizational applications, applying for 501©(3) status, and creating a formal affiliation with the Fairfax County Department of Community Action. Financial needs included developing a budget, establishing relationships with ongoing financial supporters, and developing a fund-raising plan. Operation issues required attention to hiring necessary paid staff and recruiting volunteers, for undergirding the food acquisition system and food distribution network, and for developing and managing the physical plant. The time and talents of many individuals were given to accomplish the task, and during numerous months of frequent meetings, all of these issues were tackled and met. Food for Others was incorporated in Virginia and endorsed by the Fairfax County Board in October, 1995. The transition period ended when Food for Others, Inc. began operating officially on December 11, 1995.

The new nonprofit was guided by a 16-member Board of Directors with Mr. Edwin Demoney as its first president. The warehouse was managed by a site manager and two warehousemen. Operations consisted of serving needy families referred to Food for Others, feeding the hundreds of people waiting at 14 food sites in Fairfax, Falls Church, and Arlington, and providing food to food pantries and soup kitchens. Although ten years later these continue to be the same operations of Food for Others, the operations have been tweaked and developed to improve the assistance given to families in the community. The difference can be seen in the numbers.

	FY 1996 (7 Months)	FY 2005
# of Emergency Packages Distributed from the Office	697	12,511
# of Pounds of Distributed Emergency Food	60,155	814,297
# of Supplementary Food Packages Distributed at the Neighborhood Sites	11,978	27,632
# of Pounds of Supplementary Food Distributed at the Neighborhood Sites	193,118	542,004
# of Individuals Receiving Food from Bulk Orders Provided to Associated Community Organizations	2,281	110,582
# of Pounds of Food Distributed through the Associated Community Organizations	171,287	443,611

In a press release on December 9, 1995, Mr. Demoney was quoted as saying, "This is a grand undertaking, and we feel we are just scratching the surface." This has proven to be true.

Food Out

In 1995 the main thrust of the program was geared to volunteers taking food out into the community to sites in the various low income neighborhoods on weeknights. Food for Others was and continues to be unique in this manner of taking groceries and sandwiches to the street corners and distributing them on a no questions asked basis. Food taken to the sites is meant to be supplementary to what the people are able to obtain on their own in order to help them out a little, but in many cases this food has been a family's primary source of food. Heartwarming stories abound as volunteers have met those in the food lines in the heat, in the rain, in the cold and snow, and sometimes on a perfectly delightful evening. On becoming aware of other needs of someone at their site, volunteers have been known to go the extra mile to help with the situation. Friendships and trust have been built between people who might otherwise not have met. Indeed, the sites are an example of a wonderful microcosm of community.

Of course, whenever people are gathered together, and especially when, for some, life can be a struggle, occasional difficulties do arise. It can be an instance of a scuffle for food at a site to site distribution being suspended for an unresolved major conflict. These stories are also part of the history at the food sites. Volunteers and staff have always tried to deal directly and fairly with these situations and to turn them around for the good of those coming to that particular site.

More of the regular Food for Others volunteers have been involved in this activity than in any other. Some work as part of an organized group from their faith community or community organization. Others come as individuals. Some have been distributing food for the whole ten year period and before, with Lazarus at the Gate. Although this volunteer activity is a very rewarding one for the distribution volunteers, it can be a challenging effort, both physically and emotionally. Food for Others is grateful to all those who have answered the call to serve in this very important opportunity. This work could not have been done without the volunteers.

While Food for Others started with heavy emphasis on the neighborhood food distributions, clients coming to the Prosperity warehouse for assistance on a referral basis were a small part of the operation at that time. The program was available for those experiencing an emergency situation. Social service providers could refer a family in need to Food for Others for a week's supply of groceries. This assistance was meant to give the family time to find help elsewhere if the need continued.

Volunteers worked in the office, greeting and assisting people coming for food with a referral. Sometimes they had time to play cards or read a book between clients. There was time to visit with the client while they waited for their food package to be prepared and brainstorm ideas to help them with their many concerns. Processing a client consisted of helping them fill out some paperwork and then walking it to the warehouse staff who then filled the order. Office folks and warehouse staff alike recognized and

knew the people by name who came on a recurring basis. Friendships developed, and there was a family-like atmosphere. A language barrier was about the only challenge, and heaven forbid several clients arrive at the same time and create a back-up in the office.

During the early days, board member, Ms. Carol LeClair, volunteered as office manager of Food for Others for four days a week. In addition to taking care of the business details, Carol was often found at the reception desk herself. Her special knack for making a client feel welcome and cared for set the whole tone for the emergency food program. She was joined in the office for three days a week by Mrs. Suzanne MacDougall in fall of 1997. They were so faithful that, if either of these fine ladies were not there when a client came in, the clients would ask if anything was wrong with them. About 105 families a month came to Food for Others in the first year of operation.

The emergency food program has had the greatest growth of any of the operations at Food for Others during the last ten years.

	FY 1997	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001
# of Families Assisted with Emergency Food	1,128	1,847	3,142	4,802

This steady and deliberate climb in numbers was due to increased awareness of Food for Others in the community through the years; a good reputation among clients and referring agents of hospitable and helpful assistance received at Food for Others; the willingness of Food for Others to provide the documentation-intensive United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Commodities Program for the community; and, unfortunately, the increased number of people in the community finding themselves in an economic crisis. The numbers dramatically jumped after September 11, 2001.

	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
# of Families Assisted with Emergency Food	9,814	12,095	12,962	12,511

The economic downturn in 2000 and early 2001 started the pronounced rise in numbers of people coming for help, but the effects of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the Northern Virginia community nearly overwhelmed the emergency food program with the numbers of people needing critical assistance. With good leadership, excellent volunteer response, an outpouring of support in food and dollars from the community, and a cooperative network with nonprofit and government partners, Food for Others was able to provide an immediate response. Although time has passed and many effects of September 11 have subsided, most of the population that turns to Food for Others has not totally recovered. Food for Others continues to aid high numbers of emergency clients.

In addition to an emergency package of the regular food supply in the warehouse, Food for Others offers the above mentioned USDA commodities which can be supplied to an income-qualified client on the recurring basis of every thirty days. As many as 4000 eligible families have been on the USDA database to receive commodities. Staff member, Ms. April Frazier-Simmons, was hired in October, 2001 for the newly

created position of USDA Commodity Coordinator in response to this rapidly expanding program. While April keeps on top of all USDA records of recipients and product inventory, she is joined in preparing the food orders by hard-working warehouse employee, Mrs. Felicidad Senzano. Felicidad's hustle helps to keep pace with the flow of food required to process the orders in a timely manner.

A cadre of wonderful, caring volunteers has come forward through the years to greet and process this growing number of clients. Some have given a couple of years of their time and many have come and stayed for years now. Gone are the days of playing cards and reading a book. The paperwork and stroll to deliver it to the warehouse is now accomplished on an intricate computer system. The office volunteers have graciously adjusted to the changing processes and have even contributed much needed input to the development of new recordkeeping and other office details. The speed and efficiency of the computer system have met some critical challenges of dealing with the processing and documentation of high numbers of clients, but the hearts and personalities of the office volunteers continue to provide a welcoming and caring atmosphere for those who walk in the door. These volunteers have given much of themselves, and Food for Others appreciates all of them greatly. This work could not have been done without the volunteers.

Functioning as a "food bank" for other community organizations was part of the operations of Food for Others in 1995 and that too has continued in the following ten years of existence. These partner organizations provide food to those in need in the circle that they represent. Food for Others has used the term "Special Groups" for these organizations. A Special Group has to demonstrate to Food for Others through documentation and observation that they fit the same criteria required to determine 501©(3) status and that they use sufficient safe food handling measures. The organizations do report the number of people they serve, in order to keep the data of service impact complete. In some cases, Food for Others supplies the total or largest part of the food these organizations distribute. In other cases, it supplements the supply of the food that the organization is able to obtain on their own. Food is distributed by the volunteers of these different organizations enabling everyone to be able to reach more people in need. It is, however, the case that some of these organizations provide volunteer support to Food for Others, too, on a regular basis or when needed. Food for Others has been pleased to support this network of groups as much as the food supply allows it.

A subset of "Special Groups" was created in 1997, when Food for Others initiated the project of distributing USDA commodities to elderly residents of federally assisted rental units. The staff of these buildings was trained in the USDA required distribution recordkeeping. The staff of Food for Others continues to order, inventory, and deliver the products to the building units, where the appropriate building staff takes care of the specific distribution. The USDA commodities are ordered from the Capital Area Food Bank along with the weekly order for the emergency food program at the Food for Others' warehouse. All USDA commodities are provided free of charge. Delivery was begun to Evergreen House in November, 1997, and in 1998 this project was delivering to five Northern Virginia housing sites serving 368 families. Although this project is labor

intensive, Food for Others has been pleased to provide this extended service to the elderly in the community.

Before moving on to the food acquisition side of Food for Others, it is necessary to comment on the flurry of holiday activity that goes on every year. From the beginning Food for Others has felt compelled to put out an extra effort to provide our clients with some sense of celebration during the holidays. The biggest efforts have been saved for Thanksgiving. In 1996, 260 Thanksgiving packages were given out. A package usually consists of a turkey or chicken, potatoes, stuffing mix, sometimes fresh or canned sweet potatoes, the traditional canned vegetables, canned cranberries or other fruit, a dessert, rolls, a direction sheet for handling poultry safely and a holiday greeting. Other items are added as available. Numbers were up to 715 packages in 2000, and reached a high of 971 Thanksgiving packages in 2003.

It is not always easy to work a special project into an already busy program, but it is rewarding! For months, staff and volunteers try to guess how many supplies will be needed for a given year and make attempts to obtain them. Networking takes place with government entities and other non-profits to try to project the holiday need in the community. Schedules for distribution are planned and re-planned. Planning is good, but it is almost useless in this case. A very low food supply has become a recurring autumn concern until November, when the community responds with food drives. When nail-biting time sets in, the necessary supplies seem to just magically appear at the last minute. Usually the supplies are coming in just as the Thanksgiving meal packages are being assembled for distribution. Now it is show time! Volunteers come to the warehouse to pack the bags. Office volunteers double up, giving more than their usual time. The warehouse staff shifts their priorities of duties, and extra volunteers show up to help them. People pour into the warehouse for their previously arranged holiday assistance, and the distribution volunteers pull up with extra transportation and help for their unusually large and cumbersome loads. After this extremely intensive three days in November, everyone seems to go away happily with a good feeling of celebration. That is the point!

Food In

Obviously, distributing food on such a large scale could not even be attempted without a consistent food source. This was a large concern of Food for Others when it began in 1995 and has continued to be a large part of the responsibilities of Food for Others since. For that purpose, relationships were developed with various sources of food to supply the warehouse on a regular and ongoing daily or weekly basis. Food for Others fully depends on the donated food picked up at local retail stores by a relatively small, but committed group of volunteers and its staff drivers, presently Marcos Bokajian and Indalecio Robles. Costco/ Price Club in Fairfax, fifteen Giant stores, eight Safeway stores, two Fresh Fields/Whole Foods, and Trader Joes have been the large retailer contributors of food through the years. A new relationship with the recently opened Wegmans in Fairfax was initiated on February 1, 2005, when Wegmans delivered a tractor trailer load of 17,000 pounds to the Food for Others warehouse. After such an auspicious start, Wegmans is now on the daily schedule of pick-ups by the staff. The

receivers and staff of all these stores are willing to make the extra effort to set aside and recycle products that would otherwise be regularly and easily discarded. Many of the store receivers routinely comment on how pleased they are to be part of the Food for Others process. There are also smaller specialty retailers who donate their products. These consistent, daily sources of food have sometimes carried the day when, periodically, Food for Others has run low and close-to-empty on its food supply.

Food for Others continues to be grateful to those volunteers who do the heavy lifting with this volunteer opportunity. Some of them have transported food to Food for Others more than once a week. From 1995 until he moved in 2001, Volunteer, Mr. Gene O'Neill, set the food collection bar fairly high by picking up food at four different Giants on five days a week and always being willing to run anywhere else for an unexpected donation. While there has not quite been another Gene O'Neill, many have come forward to carry on this important aspect of the volunteer network. Food for Others appreciates them all. This work could not have been done without the volunteers.

The Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB) has been an excellent partner over the years in providing an ongoing source for the food needs. In addition to the USDA commodities, an order is placed weekly for desired items, and, if available, Food for Others is able to purchase food from them for their handling cost. Many times their bulk suppliers make the cost even less or free. A year-round abundance of produce has been included in their supply in the last few years. Because of the large amount of food coming to Food for Others from the Capital Area Food Bank, this food is delivered to the Food for Others' warehouse at least once a week. When the CAFB truck arrives everyone knows it. There is a lot of loud banging and clanking going on as Warehouse Manager, Charles Johnson, and his staff unload the many pallets of food in a delivery. While communicating directions, Charles is usually known to raise his voice a few times, too, as he does frequently during all daily warehouse business. When Food for Others started, the only facility the Capital Area Food Bank had was in D.C., but in November, 1998, the CAFB opened an additional facility in Lorton to better serve their member organizations in Virginia. Some food occasionally continues to come from the D.C. facility, but the Lorton branch is now the main provider to Food for Others and the staff keeps in constant contact with them to make the best use of their services.

Sandwiches have been the only prepared food used on a consistent basis by Food for Others. Faith groups, schools, community groups, and some individuals have made up the sandwich network over the years. Some of these groups have been making sandwiches since the days of Lazarus at the Gate. Sandwiches are used specifically when a volunteer becomes aware that someone is in need of immediate food. Otherwise, the sandwiches are distributed at the sites, given to Special Groups or offered to clients when they come to the office for food. Those who receive them often are glad for a quick bite, or use them to carry to work or for their children's lunches or snacks. Someone once made the comment to a sandwich maker, "I can't use my time to make sandwiches. That's easy and too time consuming. I need to do something more important with the little spare time I have." What could be more important to the one person who walks in the door at Food for Others, or steps up in line at a food site, or sits in an after school program provided by one of the Special Groups, who has not had a meal in a while?

Those who make sandwiches for Food for Others might just have provided the best vehicle in these instances to say someone cares about you.

Other donations toward food supply have been gratefully received over the years. Food drives by the community are a wonderful shot in the food supply arm. Right from the beginning, the Boy Scouts Food Drive in November, 1995 and the National Association of Letter Carrier's (NALC) Postal Food Drive the following May put some of the first food on the near empty shelves, as Food for Others got its start. Both annual drives have provided tens of thousands of pounds over the decade, and they continue to be on the yearly Food for Others' calendar. Some of the Boy Scout leaders have been present every year, and it is always a pleasure to welcome them back to the warehouse.

Long-time volunteers might remember the Food for All Seasons food drives. For two arranged weeks in the fall, Food for Others provided volunteers to man the assigned Giant food stores. The volunteers handed out pink food suggestion sheets to shoppers as they entered the store and were available to thank any shopper who put something in the food drive cart upon leaving. These food drives were labor intensive, but they yielded a great deal of newly purchased food. Food for Others participated from 1995 through the last year in 1998. If you remember these food drives, you need to be wearing your "longevity with Food for Others" badge. For just a piece of trivia, the leftover pink sheets are still being used as memo pads.

The holidays have always inspired many groups in the community to hold food drives, large and small, for Food for Others. In addition to providing a good stash from which to provide special holiday meal food supplies, these food drives have contributed to each winter's food supply. Then there are the community groups who hold a continuing drive for food contributions and deliver these contributions to Food for Others all through the year. All of these efforts are what community is all about, and they have all been appreciated by Food for Others.

Gleaning was an early activity at Food for Others, and it has grown to be one of the sterling efforts of the organization. Gleaning is going into the fields of willing farmers and harvesting the produce that they then donate to help provide nutritious, fresh fruits and vegetables to the less fortunate. In the beginning several trips a season, to Moormont Orchards in Rapidan, Virginia were the highlights of the fall calendar at Food for Others. Various community groups, families, and individuals under the guidance of board member, Mr. Dick Getman, traveled to the mountaintop orchard to spend the morning gleaning wonderful apples for Food for Others distribution.

These beautiful and fun outings yielded thousands of pounds of delicious fruit and took place from 1995 until 1999, when the orchard closed. At about the same time, in 1996, a new organization called Gifts from the Garden approached Food for Others about partnering with them to provide fresh produce for people. That organization had established connections with some major produce producers and were looking for a distribution organization to actually get the fruits and vegetables that they gleaned to the people in need. Some of their contacts were the Falls Church Farmers' Market and the United States Department of Agriculture Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland. It was only a season before Gifts from the Garden was not able to continue the project. They did, however, hand this beautifully started undertaking over to Food for Others. The growing season of 1997 yielded a large variety of produce from the Farmers' Market and

fresh tomatoes, corn, melons, peppers and other vegetables produced in Beltsville. In fact, more than 100,000 pounds of tomatoes arrived at Food for Others from Beltsville that season! That was definitely “the year of the tomato.” Under the leadership of Food for Others’ board director, Mr. Lauro Romero, people from several Arlington communities, who had received food from Food for Others, provided the harvesting work and were instrumental in making this first year a success.

If this all sounds very familiar, it might just be because obtaining the produce from the Falls Church Farmers’ Market continues to this day, and that gleaning at the USDA farms at Beltsville has reached award winning proportions under the knowledgeable, creative, and hardworking leadership of another Food for Others board member, Director of Programs and Projects, Mrs. Pam Koch. Pam connected with Food for Others in 1997, “the year of the tomato.” That was impressive enough for her to quickly volunteer her services to work on the 1998 gleaning season. Having been an agriculture major at the University of Maryland, the Beltsville project provided Pam with connection with the field she loved (pardon the pun) in a place she knew. Pam has since almost single-handedly turned this into a side business of Food for Others. It is now known in the community as ‘Harvest for the Hungry.’ Every winter she stays in touch with the staff at the USDA facility and works to schedule dates and volunteers for the next growing season. At the same time she coordinates the efforts needed from the Food for Others’ volunteers and staff to transport the produce to the warehouse for distribution. The past few seasons have all ended with a major Girl Scout service day when hundreds of Girl Scouts spend a Saturday at Beltsville to hear from the scientists about their work, to go into the fields to pick crops, and to learn from Pam about the hunger needs of the community. It’s no wonder that Pam was a finalist out of hundreds of nominations in the 2003 Redskins’ NFL Community Quarterback Award for service to the community. Food for Others received a contribution of \$1000 in Pam’s honor. Thanks go to all the hundreds of folks that have gone into the fields under Pam’s leadership to glean the hundreds of thousands of pounds of produce that have gone through the doors at Food for Others to those who have thoroughly enjoyed them. This work could not have been done without the volunteers.

Other unique contributions to the food supply have been developed during the ten years. As early as December, 1995, Food for Others has periodically received truckloads of potatoes, white or sweet, from an organization known as the Society of St. Andrew. The first potato drop in 1995 was 25,000 pounds, and some have been as much as 45,000 pounds. This organization makes arrangements with growers all over the United States to donate the produce that they grow for major retailers that does not conform to the rigid standards for these markets. Whatever the reason, the Society of St. Andrew believes in capturing this source of nutrition from going to waste and through its Potato Project, connects it with organizations that can provide the potatoes to those in need. Board members and the dynamic duo of Food for Others, Mr. John Baldus and Mr. Dick Kuiper, were instrumental in developing this relationship. In addition to coordinating volunteers when a truckload was delivered to the Food for Others’ warehouse, they have been known to drive trucks all over the state of Virginia to receive thousands of pounds of potatoes for Food for Others. In recent years, several churches in the community have received, bagged, and donated truckloads of potatoes from Society of St. Andrew to Food

for Others. Potatoes are widely used in all cultures and are received with pleasure by those served by Food for Others. This has been a welcome connection.

An offshoot of the Society of St. Andrew has been the organization of Hunters for the Hungry. In the winter of 2000/ 2001, they began providing venison to Food for Others to distribute to the clients. Together with the Fairfax County Deer Management Program, a program funded with state funds and administered by Fairfax County, frozen venison from 678 deer was donated in that year. The Fairfax program provides venison for families with children under the age of 18. Meat in any large quantity is very infrequently donated, so the venison, which is high in protein and low in fat, has been an important and nutritious contribution. Food for Others provides recipes for those who are not familiar with venison.

Speaking of nutrition, in an effort to ensure some highly nutritious food basics for distribution, the Board of Directors of Food for Others made the decision in 1999 to purchase milk and eggs. Funds for this effort were obtained from grants from churches and foundations, and a relationship was established with a dairy to obtain the products at the best possible cost. The project began with providing one gallon of milk and a dozen eggs to every emergency client coming to the warehouse. In the spring of 2000, Food for Others received notice of grants from the United Way Community Services Funds in Fairfax-Falls Church and Arlington that allowed the program to expand to the sites. Although available funding for this project has fluctuated through the years, Food for Others has always provided the dairy products to emergency clients and serves the low-income sites in the community with these products as funds permit.

Finances

Best intentions are wonderful, but best intentions usually do not meet all of the realities of a situation. Among other very important elements of the development of an organization, it really does come down to dollars, unfortunately or not. In the case of Food for Others, this new nonprofit needed some kind of financial backing to begin to function in 1995. As part of its demonstrated and unwavering commitment through the years, Fairfax County supplied that original need. Food for Others entered into a contract with Fairfax County in November, 1995 to use 2938 Prosperity Avenue in Merrifield, Virginia, as its base of operations. The 10,730 square foot warehouse space was already being leased by Fairfax County. In addition, Food for Others received a grant from Fairfax County to assist with employee salaries and start-up needs. This was the start of an ongoing partnership, where in return for financial support provided through Fairfax County Community Development Block Grant funds, Food for Others provides the community with an exponentially valued service to its struggling citizens. Food for Others is grateful for this important partnership.

Financially and legally sound practices were established early. Even prior to the official start of the organization, Food for Others' first Vice-Presidents, Mr. Warren Hottle and Mr. Walter Hall, worked together to develop detailed plans and practices of responsibility. Complete financial transparency of even a penny spent was adopted as a means of showing the stewardship of funds entrusted to Food for Others by all donors.

Although the financial dealings have continually expanded through the years and have required more and more professional oversight, the original practices have continued to serve the organization well. Board members Ms. Carol LeClair, Mr. William Jones, and at present, Mr. Carmine Carullo have served as treasurers of Food for Others. Volunteer, Mrs. Mary Hacker, has graciously performed professional bookkeeping services since 2000 and has given expert guidance to the management team in improving the recordkeeping system or in averting potential problems. Food for Others has also complied with the required yearly audit done by outside professionals.

Director Edwin Demoney picked up the financial responsibility ball early in the story of Food for Others. In addition to continuing to distribute food at neighborhood sites in Arlington begun years earlier, and while serving for many years as the first President of Food for Others, Mr. Ed Demoney has worked tirelessly to keep abreast of the expanding needs for funding necessary to undergird all the facets of Food for Others as the organization has grown. He has continued this effort as the organization's first part-time Executive Director from 2001 to 2004 and as the Director of Fundraising on the board until the present. Ed has been aware of donations, purchases, and expenditures. He has known the specifics of the budget and how that is playing out in a given year. Ed has pursued grant possibilities and written many, many requests for proposals. He has spoken to groups of possible donors, including many United Way and Combined Federal Campaign appearances, lifting up the value of supporting the critical mission of Food for Others. He has overseen the necessary stream of reports that comes attached to the good news that Food for Others has received a grant or had a proposal approved. Ed has been a critical member of any task force or committee established by the Board of Directors of Food for Others for a financially linked purpose, because he knows the needed details. As former President, Mrs. Suzanne Federico, and current President, Mrs. Anne Suter Zimmer, have served their terms and tackled the issues of Food for Others, surfacing during their tenures, Ed Demoney has been a trusted partner and provided the assurance that the financial health of the organization was sound. Why, Ed was so serious about helping Food for Others' finances that in September, 1996 he gathered financial sponsors and ran across the entire width of Virginia from the West Virginia border to Roosevelt Island in the Trail Race across the Commonwealth. He raised \$2,700. That's for real! Ed Demoney would never want this said, but Food for Others might not even exist today without all that he has done to keep the doors open and the food flowing.

Ed Demoney's and others' successes are represented with the many financial connections and relationships developed during the years at Food for Others. The partnership with Fairfax County was followed with support from Arlington County, beginning in FY 1998, enabling Food for Others to expand its staff by one to four employees at that time. Good news came in 1997 with the approval of Food for Others' participation in the Combined Federal Campaign and then again for the additional participation in the United Way Campaign in 1998. Besides these large providers of revenue, Food for Others has received financial support from a variety of other sources, including foundations, faith communities, organizations, businesses, and caring individuals. Together, they have permitted Food for Others to obtain sufficient operating funds to continue the increase in quantity and improved quality of the food distributed and to provide for the necessary equipment and low administration costs.

A variety of interesting fund-raising functions have taken place through the years. A lot of effort was put into the January, 1998 Souper Bowl, where the NFL encouraged contributions of dollars and/or canned goods to nonprofits on the day of the big game. Also in 1998, Food for Others became associated with the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Walk and has continued to put effort into this large endeavor in the succeeding years. The 2004 Walk, complete with its hunger education component, was highly successful.

In 1999, Food for Others initiated two fundraisers. Beginning on March 6, 1999, Food for Others has held the Potomac Overlook Trail Run every year in March. This typically cold early morning event has been a lot of fun over the years. In preparation for the first run, T-shirts were made up with the current logo on the front and the Food for Others' mission statement on the back. After all, don't all "runs" have t-shirts? T-shirts in various colors have been for sale for \$10 ever since. Warehouse manager, Charles Johnson, has been the impetus behind the success of these sales. They really do provide a good way to lift the mission to the attention of the community.

In 2002, two new fundraisers provided support. In April, Empty Bowls, an event sponsored by an association of potters, the Clay Connection, chose Food for Others as one of its three beneficiaries. The potters donate their handcrafted bowls for purchase by attendees, who then enjoy a meal of soup and good bread. The bowl then goes home with its new owner to stand as a reminder of those who experience hunger. It is a popular but humbling evening.

The other fundraiser of 2002 was Mr. John White's hike of the entire Virginia portion of the Appalachian Trail. A Woodson High School senior, John solicited sponsors for his effort that summer, and then donated the funds to Food for Others. To top it off, he earned an additional contribution from ExxonMobil. The Volunteer Involvement Program of ExxonMobil provides \$500 grants to nonprofit organizations when employees (John's proud dad) or their family members provide 20 hours of volunteer time. What an example of what one person can creatively do to ultimately help those in his community less fortunate than he is.

A golf tournament benefiting Food for Others was held by SGI in 2003. Board members provided assistance with the work of the tournament. After that event, board member, Sami Satouri, encouraged the development of a golf tournament by Food for Others. The first two annual Food for Others' Golf Tournaments, held in May of 2004 and 2005 were the latest addition to the list of fundraisers. Sami, other board members, and several creative and hardworking volunteers have worked to make the tournaments a very nice and profitable event.

These are just some of the ways that concerned community members, board members, and volunteers have provided support to such an important mission. Usually a fundraising event takes a lot of time and a great amount of effort. Sometimes the effort yields disappointing results, and sometimes the event is a roaring success. Every effort and its resulting contribution have been greatly appreciated.

Publicity

With all this incredible work being done and all these interesting occasions and activities taking place, a good board of directors always thinks there should be some

publicity going on here. Food for Others has been featured or at least mentioned in numerous newspaper or newsletter articles. Usually the article has to do with the work being done at Food for Others. Several times a reporter and cameraman from a local television station have been to the warehouse to film what is done there, and Food for Others has been on the evening news.

On August 13, 2002, Food for Others was featured on Washington D.C.'s Channel 9 news at 6 P.M. The focus was on how Food for Others has helped those affected by the events of September 11. The filming began with the day's volunteers picking potatoes and squash at the Beltsville farms. Then Executive Director Mr. Ed Demoney spoke of the continuing number of 9/11 people needing help in Northern Virginia. Filming continued at the warehouse, featuring employee, Marcos Bokajian. Marcos had lost his job at National Airport after September 11 and had been hired by Food for Others in October, 2001. He spoke of the satisfaction of helping others, despite the hard work involved with the job. Everyone was pleased with the story.

No offense to Ed and Marcos, but the story of all stories, that Food for Others had everything to do with, yet nothing to do with, appeared on all the morning news programs, in Parade Magazine, and in several Washington Post articles as the story unfolded. In February, 1997, a young woman received food assistance from Food for Others. Attempting to open a can of Campbell's Cream of Asparagus soup that she had received at the warehouse, she had great difficulty getting it to open. Suddenly the lid popped off and out spilled jewels, gold, silver, rings, a bracelet, and a Rolex watch. The soup can was really a safe designed to trick burglars. She contacted Food for Others, and asked if anyone had reported something missing. None of the staff or volunteers at the time knew of such a report. After having "the loot" appraised, the young woman then contacted the Washington Post which published enough of a description to give the proper owners a chance to step forward. There is no way Food for Others could identify the donor of one can of soup in the large amount of food donated from so many sources over a stretch of time. Fortunately, the Post article did catch the attention of the real owners, who, after providing a full description of the pieces, reclaimed their valued possessions. The appraised value was about \$7,000, but the greater sentimental value stemmed from the fact that much of the jewelry had been purchased by the husband for his wife, while he served in Vietnam. The young woman received a reward and a pair of earrings from the couple. Food for Others was atwitter with its first brush with notoriety, and all was well that ended well. Staff members at the warehouse still check the incoming stock for Campbell's Cream of Asparagus soup, but so far – only soup!

Volunteers

Speaking of appraisals, when all is said and done, the volunteers of Food for Others have been worth their weight in gold, literally and, more importantly, figuratively. While operating costs have always demanded more and more support, administrative and fund-raising costs have remained low, less than one percent, for most of the history. This stems from prudent financial management, but it would not be possible without the value of the many volunteer hours contributed by the network of caring community members who are the volunteers of Food for Others. The records show that 207,564 hours have

been provided by volunteers for a calculated worth of \$3,076,254. Government entities, public and private foundations, businesses, and individuals look at this percentage when they make their decisions on giving financial support to the organization. Not only does the low percentage indicate a good stewardship of funds, but it indicates high stewardship of time given by a large number of community members, thus showing their expression of the worth of Food for Others. Volunteerism in all aspects of the organization, from food acquisition to food distribution, from management to scrubbing the warehouse floors, contributes to keeping the costs down and the outreach effort the largest it can be.

Although the importance of this 'spreadsheet view' of the value of the volunteers is worth noting, the true value can hardly be put into words. Volunteers are the backbone, the heart, the arms and the legs of Food for Others. The volunteers are critical to what happens at the warehouse and from the warehouse. Food for Others could not have the intake and outreach it has without them. Food for Others could not even exist without the tireless efforts of its volunteers. The volunteers of Food for Others do not even do what they do for thanks, but ask a person who has received food assistance and a kind word from one of them, and they can tell you their worth.

Board of Directors

Because so many wonderful people have come forward to serve in a large way or a small way, it is impossible to name them all. Hopefully, all of the contributions have been alluded to in covering the various aspects of Food for Others. Although some have been mentioned in the telling of the story, one very important group of people needs special coverage. That is the Board of Directors. Way back at that meeting in Fairfax on July 8, 1995, it was decided that the only way to move ahead was to find a number of committed people representing various aspects of the community to come forward and work together to make the new endeavor happen. In this age of busy schedules and various claims for a person's time, 37 people have come forward to fill that role at one time or another over the ten years.

The board functions within the guidelines of the corporation's by-laws. These by-laws suggest that a board member be actively involved in at least one of the volunteer functions of Food for Others. This means that, not only are they studying the issues, developing action plans, and implementing those plans, the board members are participating in picking up food, distributing food, managing the office, working in the warehouse, or contributing a unique effort to the program. Numerous board members have done some of all of those things. This has insured an intimate knowledge of the issues and concerns brought before the board.

Speaking of action plans and implementation, the Board of Directors developed its first strategic plan in 1998 to identify the critical needs at the time and to look to the future. The board repeated the process again in 2002 to confirm progress on the already identified issues and to continue to look ahead. All actions taken have been to improve the many aspects of the operations, enabling the organization to better serve the needs of the hungry in Northern Virginia. The professionalism brought to all the tasks accomplished by the board has served the organization well. The expressions of concern

for others and the camaraderie shared on the board have demonstrated the heart of the organization.

Staff

Through the years, the hard work and dedication of the many volunteers has been ably assisted by an equally dedicated staff. Early on it was realized that total function could not rely solely on volunteers. Although management of the organization and many office duties have been covered by volunteers for most of the ten years, the warehouse process has required a consistent day to day knowledge of safe food handling procedures. Food for Others has been fortunate to find truly hardworking individuals to accomplish this work, who have come with the desire to participate fully in helping others.

When the doors opened, it was only possible to hire three individuals. Mr. Indalecio Robles was one of them. He is the only continuing employee and has worked in various aspects of the organization, both in the warehouse and in the office. The acquisition of the first van added driver/warehouse person to the list of job descriptions, and one of the three employees at the time fulfilled that role. As the organization got its footing and the workload grew, especially with the addition of the Beltsville project in the summers, new funding permitted the addition of a fourth employee in 1997, who drove the second donated van, as well as worked in the warehouse. That complement of employees sufficed for numerous years, but the continued growth in numbers of people turning to Food for Others for help, particularly after September 11, required even more relief for the four full time employees. At that time the warehouse staff increased to six. Many times it has been a juggling act to match funds available with staff needs. Part-time help has been hired at critical times to help ease the load. At all times, the staff has worked beyond the call of duty with little time for breaks to meet the demands of the program. Currently, there are five full-time warehouse employees. In addition to Mr. Robles, they are Mr. Charles Johnson, Mrs. Felicidad Senzano, Mr. Marcos Bokajian, and Ms. April Frazier-Simmons.

The impact of growth not only affected work in the warehouse, but the office workload grew in amount and complexity. It became more and more obvious that Food for Others, for better or for worse, had grown up to be a full fledged nonprofit with all the fulltime attention to business that that entails. Internally, not even the addition of the new computer system could make the difference. In addition, required attention to external connections with the government and business communities was needed. As much as a handful of volunteers tried, it became more and more difficult to cover all of the bases in a consistent manner with only volunteer management.

In 2003, Mr. Ed Demoney became part-time Executive Director to develop the position. He continued in the role until 2004, when Ms. Roxanne Rice was hired as the first full time Executive Director. Roxanne was not a stranger to Food for Others. She had formerly worked at the Fairfax-Falls Church United Way, administering the Community Service Funds that supported the milk and eggs program. Representing the United Way with numerous community connections, Roxanne was known and highly thought of by several board members. Also, before taking the position, Roxanne had been a volunteer with the organization. It is fortunate that Ms. Roxanne Rice was available when Food for Others was ready to take yet another big step into its future.

Then, in May, 2005, Food for Others took the additional step of hiring Ms. Liz Reinert for the position of Director of Operations. Liz came to Food for Others for an internship, as part of her course work for a Masters in Nonprofit Management at George Mason University. Now, as Food for Others begins to move into its next ten years of service, Roxanne and Liz, in partnership with the Board of Directors, will provide management for the pages of history still to be written.

Closing

Whew! When Mr. Ed Demoney spoke of “just scratching the surface” back in 1995, who could really have imagined all that would take place in the life of Food for Others. With all the foreseen and unforeseen details just reviewed, it has been what Ed mentioned as “a grand undertaking.” Many changes have taken place, but the basic objective has not changed, that of helping those in need of the most basic necessity of life – food. The mission statement of Food for Others developed during the first strategic planning process in 1998 states:

Food for Others mission is to obtain and distribute free food to the hungry of Northern Virginia and support food programs of other community-based organizations. We provide a channel for people to help their neighbors by actively volunteering their service.

Simply stated, it is neighbor caring for neighbor. As the first ten years of the nonprofit known as Food for Others is celebrated, this rendition of its history is dedicated to all those families and individuals who have approached Food for Others in their time of need and to all who make up the body of Food for Others who have in some way accepted that honored opportunity to help them.