

Give the Gift of Food to Your Neighbors in Need

“I just wanted to send my sincerest thank you to Britepaths. The groceries, cleaning products, and gift cards helped me more than I could have imagined. I have been fighting a losing battle dealing with reduced work wages and hours trying to maintain self-sufficiency. This assistance definitely helps me in ways I did not expect. With the gift card, I was able to purchase meats, breads, and fresh fruits and vegetables. This assistance provides more relief than I ever expected, and I am eternally grateful. Thank you so much.”

– A Fairfax area mom who received assistance through Britepaths’ Food Bridge Program.

Imagine what it must feel like to know that your child is hungry and that you are powerless to help them because you do not have enough money to buy food. It is surprising to many in wealthy Fairfax County to learn that a sizeable number of people who live very near us struggle to pay for basic necessities in our expensive area.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 174,000 Fairfax County residents earn \$50,000 a year or less, yet a study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition finds that it takes an annual income of \$69,000 to afford rent on a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Value. How can they bridge this gap?

In times of crisis, families who are struggling can turn to Britepaths’ Food Bridge Program for help. They are usually able to pay the bills each month, but if any crisis arises – a prolonged illness, a job loss or reduced work hours, a major car repair – they can be thrown into financial chaos. Families who are referred to Britepaths may receive an emergency grocery gift card and pantry supplies to help them immediately, and if they qualify, may be enrolled in a short-term program where they receive deliveries of food and/or grocery store gift cards to help keep hunger at bay while they use all available funds to pay off bills and get back on track.

Britepaths was able to provide supplemental food assistance to 320 Fairfax County area families in 2016 due to the support of caring community members who belong to churches, businesses and community organizations throughout the Fairfax County area. These organizations commit to one or more Sundays throughout the year on Britepaths’ Food Delivery Calendar. They collect donations of food and/or funds from their members and deliver food and supplies or grocery gift cards to approximately 30 families who live throughout Fairfax County on their designated Sunday. Other organizations donate funds or run food and grocery gift card drives to help Britepaths provide grocery gift cards for emergencies or to cover deliveries that are not covered by a group.

Britepaths’ supporting organizations typically spend \$2,500 on food and supplies or grocery store gift cards for a delivery. Organizations providing food and supplies are provided a list of most-needed items to help guide their food collection. In addition to food, Britepaths likes to

provide household cleaning products, toiletries and diapers to those with infants because these items can be expensive for families. The volunteers who coordinate and make these deliveries tell Britepaths’ staff how much they enjoy speaking with and meeting the families they are helping, and the families express deep gratitude for this outpouring of support.

While receiving Food Bridge assistance, Britepaths encourages clients to take a basic budgeting class and/or attending a free Financial Counseling Clinic.

Many clients receiving assistance are receiving mentoring through Britepaths’ Financial Mentoring Program or Project BRIDGE Program. They are working one-on-one with a volunteer for six months to a year with a goal of improving their financial outlook, bettering their job prospects and becoming financially self-sufficient.

Britepaths is fortunate to have more than 20 supporting faith communities that regularly

commit to cover several Sundays throughout the year, along with help from several businesses and organizations that provide donations once or twice per year. However, it is an ongoing struggle to maintain sufficient resources to assist all the families who qualify for assistance. Britepaths is seeking caring community members to help fill these gaps and ensure that our families have the assistance they need to get back on their feet.



CAN YOU HELP FEED FAMILIES IN NEED?

- **Be a Food Bridge Delivery Group:** Commit to an open Sunday on Britepaths’ Food Bridge Delivery Calendar.
- **Run a Food/Grocery Gift Card Drive:** Support Britepaths’ Food Bridge Program by organizing a grocery gift card drive at a local grocery store, at your work, or in your community.
- **Donate Funds:** Donate to the Food Bridge Program to help Britepaths purchase grocery gift cards at a bulk discount to give to Food Bridge clients for emergencies or to fill in gaps in the Delivery calendar.

Learn more: Visit britepaths.org and select “Food Bridge” from the Programs menu. Contact Christina Garris at cgarris@britepaths.org or 703.273.8829 with questions.



A Girl Scout Troop in Fairfax held a food and fund drive in September 2017 to support Britepaths’ Food Bridge Program.