Our Families Are Adjusting Thanks to YOU!

We hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and faring well as we all continue to adjust to the changes that COVID-19 has brought to our lives.

When things began to shut down in March, Britepaths’ staff, Board of Directors and volunteers realized that the families we serve would face overwhelming challenges. We moved quickly to provide food and supplies in the days leading up to the stay-at-home orders, and then began offering as many services as possible via mail, email, phone and internet.

Britepaths’ supporters and grantors understood that our neighbors who were already struggling would be more vulnerable than ever, and have stepped up in huge ways to help ensure that our families have food on the table and are able to stay in their homes while we all weather this crisis.

Amid all the challenges so many are facing, we have seen numerous reasons to be hopeful for our future. We share some of these stories with you in this special issue of The Pathfinder.

On March 15, as Northern Virginia began shutting down in response to COVID-19, Britepaths launched our Adjust. Give. campaign. Our goal was to raise $100,000 in 30 days to support families who were just beginning to experience hardships. Our community came through in a big way and we met our goal! Thank You to everyone who gave so generously. Learn more and view a video from Executive Director Lisa Whetzel at: britepaths.org/adjust-give.

We have since received $85,300 in grant funds, in addition to a substantial earmark of Federal CARES Act Funds from Fairfax County, to support vital services for clients and sustain our organization.

We are in a marathon, not a sprint, and all of us are facing an uncertain future. But thanks to our supporters and grantors, our families have stability, and we are so grateful to all who are helping make their lives better. Thank you!

COVID-19 Grantors

- Fairfax County Federal CARES Act Basic Needs Supplemental Funding
- Fairfax County Nonprofit Sustainability Grant
- Apple Federal Credit Union
- Bank of America
- United Way of the National Capital Area
- Universal Janitorial Services, Inc.
- Foundation for Financial Planning
- Northwest Federal Credit Union
- Commonwealth Consultants
- Womencare of Fairfax

Learn more about our grantors at britepaths.org/COVID_Grants.

Thank You, Supporters and Grantors!

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“These last couple months have been very trying, and you all have brought so much calm to a lot of uncertainty.”

— Ms. C, Workforce Development Client

Mission

Britepaths provides our Fairfax County area neighbors in need with short-term safety-net services and empowers them to work toward long-term self-sufficiency.

Services

- Stabilizing Families
- Building Resilience
- Supports for Children

Board of Directors

President: May Shallal, Fairfax County Office of the County Attorney
Vice President: Emily Barnes, George Mason University, Antonin Scalia Law School
Secretary: Sarah White, Fairfax County Department of Family Services
Treasurer: Ed Moore, Edelman Financial Engines, LLC

Directors:
- Angie Delboy, BHG Realty
- Karen Elliot, AARP Services, Inc.
- John McWilliams, Reed Smith
- Kären Rasmussen, No Child Goes Hungry
- Catherine Read, Creative Read, Inc.
- Dave Sands, PwC (Past President)
- Karen Wheeler
- Dave Wiemer, Conquer Cancer Foundation

Staff

Fairfax Office:
- Lisa Whetzel, Executive Director
- Christina Garris, Programs Director
- Shannon Bryant, Development Director
- Austin Leah Cooper, Finance Director
- Marcelle Miles, Financial Literacy Director
- Jill Beres, Workforce Development Manager
- Mila Cobos, Operations Administrator
- Gwendyl Harter, Data Architect
- Lynn Latimer, Grants Manager
- Linh Le, Federal Work Study Accounting Intern
- Carole Rogers, Financial Literacy Manager
- Shefali Ryan, Seasonal Programs & Volunteer Manager
- Diana Vallennia, Financial Programs Manager
- Heather Webb, Communications Manager

FEC at South County:
- Maria Jose Cantoni, FEC Director
- Dawn Sykes, FEC Manager
- Martha Borowski, Financial Coach and Trainer
- Natalia Ernicesi, FEC Assistant
- Joy Farrar Ayad, Adult Basic Education Instructor
- Sally Meyer, FEC Workforce Development Manager

Volunteer

In mid-March, Britepaths mobilized quickly to get food and supplies out to our clients so they could prepare to stay at home. We also worked to make as many services as possible virtual. The majority of our staff began working from home, and we closed our pantry and began mailing grocery gift cards to our Food Bridge clients.

We moved the Financial Literacy and Workforce Development services we offer through Britepaths and the Financial Empowerment Center at South County to virtual platforms or phone so that our mentoring work could continue and community members who are experiencing job loss and other financial impacts can continue to receive coaching and classes to help them adjust.

These are challenging times for our clients, who were already leading stressful lives before the shutdown, but also for our volunteers and staff, as we all adjust to a new normal. Here are some stories about how we're all adjusting during COVID-19. Learn more about these stories and view many more photos and stories at: britepaths.org/news/stories-covid-19.

Help Our Kids Be Ready to Learn

We have revised our Collect for Kids Back to School Program a bit this year to help local students in need be ready to learn whether they start school on-site or at home.

In partnership with Fairfax County’s Collect for Kids initiative, Britepaths is collecting funds to provide pre-packaged school supply kits to select Fairfax County Public Schools to be distributed to students with identified need.

Our goal is to raise $25,000 by August 15. The funds will help us assist at least 2,500 students. Through a special purchasing arrangement, $25 will provide all the necessary supplies for two children. Any amount you can give will make a big difference for children near you whose families are struggling.

Can You Help? Donate at britepaths.org or mail a check using the return envelope in this newsletter. Questions? Contact Shefali Ryan at sryan@britepaths.org or 703.273.8829.

Missing Our Friends

We were sad to have to cancel Artful Living: Connected, which had been scheduled for April 23. It’s unclear when we might be able to gather again at events. We are certainly looking forward to the day when we can celebrate again with our friends and supporters, like the employees of Sullivan, Bruyette, Speros & Blayney (below) who had signed up again as sponsors this year. Like many sponsors, they donated the funds to our Adjust. Give. campaign instead. Learn more about our generous Artful Living supporters at: britepaths.org/Art.

Stories from COVID-19

WDVM TV visited Britepaths in mid-March and talked to Carolina, a single mom with two little girls who had just been laid off from her job. Carolina has thanked us profusely for the food assistance she’s receiving. “Thank you so so much for all your support, guidance and advice during these hard times. I really appreciate all your help to provide food for me and my girls.”

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