

## 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*.

*"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

## Thank You, Supporters and Grantors!

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](https://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
- Womenade of Fairfax

Learn more about our grantors at [britepaths.org/COVID\\_Grants](https://britepaths.org/COVID_Grants).



### 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

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### Staff

#### Fairfax Office:

Lisa Whetzel, Executive Director

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Jill Beres, Workforce Development Manager

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Carole Rogers, Financial Literacy Manager

Shefali Ryan, Seasonal Programs & Volunteer Manager

Diana Vallenilla, 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 Ermicio, FEC Assistant

Joy Farrah Ayad, Adult Basic Education Instructor

Sally Meyer, FEC Workforce Development Manager

### Volunteer

*Network Up Mentors Needed.* More volunteer needs will be posted soon. Visit: [britepaths.org/get-involved/volunteer](https://britepaths.org/get-involved/volunteer).

## Stories from COVID-19

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](https://britepaths.org/news/stories-covid-19).



Britepaths has modified the Our Daily Veggies program for 2020. Through a partnership with Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture, Northern Virginia Health Foundation and Fairfax County, we are helping provide produce boxes to families in the Route 1 area of Fairfax County who are affected by COVID-19. Said one mom who received the box, "Right now I cannot buy fruits or vegetables for my girls to eat because I lost my job as a housekeeper. Thanks to the box of food, my girls get to eat more healthy food, which they enjoy, and we don't stay hungry."



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."



Britepaths and the Financial Empowerment Center at South County have long offered free Financial Counseling sessions at the annual Northern Virginia Housing Expo. This year's Expo went all-virtual in June. In the photo are some of our long-time volunteer Financial Counselors, who adapted nicely to offering sessions through Zoom starting on June 6.



Local photographer Janet Sifers raised more than \$1,000 to help our families through her Front Steps Project. She took photos of 40 local families, and they donated to Britepaths. In this photo is Britepaths Board Member Catherine Read's family.



### 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](https://britepaths.org) or mail a check using the return envelope in this newsletter. **Questions?** Contact Shefali Ryan at [sryan@britepaths.org](mailto: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](https://britepaths.org/Art).



UWNCA: #9661; CFC#82471  
Catalogue for Philanthropy

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