

Britepaths Needs Help to Provide Holiday Meals

Fairfax nonprofit is assisting 500 local families.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When people think of Thanksgiving and Christmas, they often think about the special foods associated with them, including turkey, stuffing, a wide array of side dishes and delicious desserts. But for families in Fairfax County struggling to put food on their tables, at all – let alone, during the holidays – special meals are completely out of their reach.

That's where Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths comes in – with help from the community. And if area residents, churches and other organizations are as generous as they have been in the past, then Britepaths will be able to make sure that 500 county families in need can purchase food for their Thanksgiving and December holiday meals and buy presents for their children.

"Due to the pandemic, Britepaths is assisting families this year by distributing gift cards that will allow parents in families referred to us to purchase food and gifts for their children," said Britepaths Executive Director Lisa Whetzel. "Donations of funds or gift cards are greatly needed to ensure that all families will receive help."

For more information and to make a contribution, visit Britepaths' Holiday Program page at <https://britepaths.org/our-programs/holiday-program>. Britepaths' new online donation form makes it easy for users to donate and also create their own donation campaigns to share with friends and colleagues.

In addition, gift cards or checks payable to Britepaths may be mailed to: Britepaths, 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please write "Holiday" on the check memo line. Anyone with questions may contact Britepaths at 703-273-8829 or info@britepaths.org.

Staff at a number of Fairfax County Public Schools with which Britepaths partners referred families with demonstrated need to receive assistance. Participating schools include those in the Fairfax High pyramid, and among the families served are those living in the City of Fairfax and central Fairfax County.

"We are nearing the end of another year that has been difficult for so many of us, and especially challenging for families who are struggling from lost income, illness and other effects of the pandemic," said Whetzel. "It is a heartwarming feeling to know your



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER WEBB

Mila Cobos, Britepaths' programs manager, receives a \$2,050 donation for Britepaths' Holiday Program from Mike Kimlick, representing American Legion Post 177 in Fairfax City. The money will provide holiday meals and children's gifts for 13 local families in need.

act of kindness can make a big difference for our neighbors during such a trying time. We hope community members will be inspired to make the season brighter for hardworking families who may otherwise go without holiday meals and presents for their children."

She also noted that Britepaths is grateful to its Holiday Program sponsors, American Legion Post 177 in Fairfax, the Peterson Family Foundation and the Fair Lakes Walmart. Britepaths is currently in its 37th year of providing assistance and a way forward for struggling individuals and families throughout Fairfax County.

During the pandemic, it's been providing greatly enhanced food and financial-assistance services to area residents in crisis, as well as virtual financial literacy, job-readiness services and more. Throughout the year, the organization relies on funding and volunteer support from businesses, individuals, community organizations and faith communities to provide services that stabilize families and help them build resilience against crises.

Mini-Grants for Youth-Led Projects to Reduce Stigma of Mental Illness

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) is once again offering mini-grants for youth-led projects to reduce stigma among their peers, with support from the Suicide Prevention Alliance of Northern Virginia which is funded by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. In addition to the goal of reducing the stigma around mental illness,

the mini-grants also aim to promote help-seeking behaviors. While mental health concerns and disorders are common, frank discussions about them are not a common occurrence. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.

These mini-grants will fund youth-planned, youth-led projects within Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City, to be completed by August 15, 2022. A total of \$6,000 is

available, for requests not to exceed \$1,000 each.

Proposals are due Monday, Nov. 29, 2021 and awards will be announced Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. For more information on the program, some ideas from previous awardees, and how to apply visit the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) website <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board/sites/community-services-board/files/assets/documents/2021-2022%20youth-led-mini-grant-rfp.pdf>

Northern Virginia Joint Transportation Meeting

Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 7 p.m.

<https://www.virginiadot.org/novatransportationmeeting>

You are invited to participate in a virtual joint public meeting held by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI), Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and Virginia Railway Express (VRE). According to Virginia Code, these organizations shall conduct a joint public meeting annually for the purposes of presenting to the public, and receiving public comments on, the transportation projects proposed and conducted by each entity in Planning District 8 (Northern Virginia).

The virtual meeting will begin with a brief presentation followed by a public comment period. During the presentation you can learn about various transportation initiatives, including:

- Virginia's Multimodal Project Pipeline Program
- NVTA's updates to TransAction and the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program; the NVTA Transportation Technology Strategic Plan; and the Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program (RM3P) in partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia
- NVTC's Commuter Choice program
- DRPT's funding opportunities, Six-Year Improvement Program and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRRA)
- VRE project updates

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the meeting will be posted at <https://www.virginiadot.org/novatransportationmeeting>. The team of VDOT, DRPT, OIPI, NVTA, NVTC and VRE representatives will make a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. highlighting their transportation programs, regional collaboration and receive public comments about Virginia's transportation network.

Give your comments during the joint meeting after the presentation concludes or submit your written comments by **January 7, 2022** by mail to Ms. Maria Sinner, Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Northern Virginia Joint Transportation Meeting" in the subject line.

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