



JULY 2020 REPORT: PANDEMIC RESPONSE

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since early March 2020, Communities Together’s team has worked quickly, carefully, and creatively to adapt our work to the evolving needs of our residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the most vulnerable communities with greater force, both physically and economically. We have moved to virtual work and service, for the most part, even as we have coordinated with our partners to provide food, household supplies, educational and recreational materials, and activities to the people we serve. Pivoting from our long-range plan to aid the self-empowerment and community building of our residents, we made their **basic human needs our top priority**. Having conducted an initial **all-resident survey as well as follow-up check-in calls**, we developed activities and virtual programs to serve our children, youth, family leaders, and our elders.

Responding quickly to the pandemic, our innovative team has managed to adapt and sustain our service to our residents at a high level. Their success is nothing short of remarkable. Team members have gotten to know many residents through their calls and through their coordination and direct provision of food and supplies. This is a noteworthy and valuable development that builds **trust and cooperation among residents, our team members, and our property managers**. In future months, as we test and establish new programs, the trust built through those relationships will prove essential and helpful.

We begin with a summary of the pandemic’s **Impact** (Section II) on our residents. Hunger, a lack of access to nutritious food, income loss, and therefore rental debt led the list of impacts. The report turns next to our **Response** (Section III) to the pandemic to date. Working with our partners, we were able to arrange for the delivery for about **20,000 meals** to residents, and we set up a **rental assistance** program to help residents seeking governmental aid. Working with Camp Fire, we were able to kick off an **out-of-school virtual enrichment program** for children in mid-July. Building on our service through July, the report’s third section sets forth our **Plans** (Section IV) for the coming months. Leading the list are **rental and food assistance**, sustaining the **out-of-school enrichment** program, the provision of **technology and online access**, and a **community building** pilot project. The report concludes with a case for **Investment** (Section V) in Communities Together. We thank you for your time and consideration as you review our impact and our plans. In our view, *nothing could be more important to human welfare and a sustainable society than the self-empowerment and community-building of the neighbors we serve*. Finally, attachments to the report provide our communities’ locations as well as additional details of our Response to the pandemic as well as our Plans.



II. THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT

OUR "RESIDENT NEEDS SURVEY"

Since March 2020, the Communities Together team has worked to carefully and creatively adapt our work to the evolving needs and changes in our resident communities. As seen across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic collapse has affected the most vulnerable communities with greater force and impact, both physically and economically. During the early months of March and April, we partnered with all of our communities' management firms to **survey residents in all of our communities** to understand the challenges they were facing. We have used these surveys to guide our efforts over the past four months to provide resources to address families' expressed needs.

The pandemic brought severe public health challenges to our communities, followed immediately by the drastic effects of the resulting deep recession.

The pandemic's effects on our communities differed greatly among Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia, and among families as opposed to elders, and among residents according to their immigration status.

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON OUR MARYLAND FAMILIES

The pandemic and the resulting deep economic collapse hit our Maryland families hardest. **Major findings** from surveys of our Maryland communities included the following effects:

- ❖ **Hunger:** with a high demand for nutritious food,
- ❖ **Income Loss:** most are in the "informal sector" and do not have the option of working from home or receiving paid leave,
- ❖ **Health Needs:** with on-site COVID-19 outbreaks,
- ❖ **Barriers to Education:** lack of computers for distance (remote) education,
- ❖ **Rental Debt/Eviction Potential:** stemming from an inability to pay,
- ❖ **Fear/Anxiety:** regarding accessing local resources, and
- ❖ **Denied Public Benefits:** At the five Maryland family communities (University Manor, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, Langley Gardens, and Auburn Manor), we also found that their status prevented many families from **accessing public benefits** during this crisis. Such benefits included the **federal stimulus check, unemployment benefits, and rental assistance** programs.

Hunger and Food Insecurity Among Maryland Families

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many residents who were already on the border of food insecurity have found themselves without basic resources to feed their families. When we surveyed residents in April, **75 percent** of families requested additional information about local food resources. Our family communities in Maryland were already food deserts, making it even more difficult to find healthy affordable food during the crisis.

Rental Debt Among Maryland Families

As we found in our surveys with residents, the **majority of our Maryland families lost hours, were furloughed, or fell sick and lost their jobs** after the COVID-19 pandemic hit our region. Many residents in our communities work in industries that were closed and unable to continue paying workers who were furloughed – restaurants, construction, landscaping, home remodeling, childcare, etc. As mentioned above, many of our families not only lost income, but do not qualify for employment benefits nor received a stimulus check. This has caused many families high **anxiety and fear of eviction**, as families fall behind on their rent. Losing not just one week’s pay but more than four months of pay has put them in an almost impossible position to be able to “catch up” without any external assistance.

While some families have taken advantage of public programs for rental assistance, **families who are “mixed status” or do not have permanent resident or citizenship status in the US have been excluded from many public assistance opportunities.** This is one of the biggest challenges we are facing and will continue to face as **these families have no way to get out of their debt**, even once they return to work.

THE PANDEMIC’S IMPACT ON WASHINGTON, DC FAMILIES

For the most part, we have not had to bring additional services to our DC communities. Washington, DC has done a good job of providing resources to families, including rental assistance, and we are working with them. There have been job losses, however. Our survey and follow-up calls have confirmed that, except for those who have been identified as COVID-19-positive, most of our families are accessing meals and groceries at the distribution sites close to their homes. To date we seem to have a low reported COVID-19-positive rate. **3 Tree Flats, Metro Village, Royal Courts, and Savannah Heights** are within a short walking distance of Food Distribution Sites. Families have been able to access these resources through the schools, city recreational programs, local churches, World Central Kitchen distribution sites, and other local groups who are feeding those in need. Families that have needed grocery delivery were given specific names of programs that would deliver. Many are federal employees who have not lost pay or benefits or service industry workers who were recently brought back to work. Several residents are receiving unemployment.

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON OUR ELDERS

The senior communities we serve, located in both Maryland and Virginia, are less affected economically by the deep pandemic recession, since the great majority of our elders are supported financially by public benefits such as returns from Social Security, stimulus checks, and governmental health benefits. Some of our elders are still working. Unemployment is low among our elders. Summer is usually associated with fun activities, gatherings of friends and family and, of course, sunshine! The pandemic has canceled many of these summer events. Unfortunately, library services, services by houses of worship, and other outdoor activities have been canceled on account of the pandemic. During survey and follow-up calls, many elder residents have shared feelings of social isolation and even depression. Few of them have anyone else with whom to chat. Among our elders there is a great deal of frustration as to why common rooms such as the gym and community rooms are still closed. Some residents do not understand the dangers of contracting the COVID-19 disease. They are tired of staying at home. Some are distraught and benefit from “a listening ear.” In one elder community, for example (Potomac Woods), 35 percent of the elders who spoke to us by phone acknowledged that they were feeling “a little depressed” or lonely. They are experiencing social isolation borne of the public health “stay at home” orders.

Some elders do not have access to enough funds, transportation, or nutritious food. Working with community partners, we distributed meals on a regular basis to our elders. Seniors who have vehicles were able to take advantage of local food distributions to supplement their nutritional needs.

III. OUR RESPONSE: MARCH TO JULY

In response to the pandemic and the consequent collapse of the economy, Communities Together has worked diligently to **1) bring resources** to our residents, **2) provide information** about local resources on a regular basis, and **3) connect residents to programs** and organizations for assistance. We accomplished these services through direct contacts by Communities Together and Camp Fire staff members and Interns. Our teams made calls to each resident to assess their needs and provide information and referral as needed. This approach allowed us to address individual needs rather than apply a cookie cutter approach to our services.

While this has been a challenging time for all, Communities Together has grown in its breadth of programming, becoming better known to residents, increasing our presence in the public sphere, and even increasing our engagement efforts with residents. Like every other human institution, Communities Together had other plans when the global COVID-19 pandemic hit our region. The Board and staff quickly worked to shift our plans for 2020. We aligned our funds and time to the highest priorities of our residents, whose needs quickly changed, and we designed programs and activities that are COVID-safe.



The Communities Together team has worked hard to **bring food on-site** when possible, and to **bring distributions closer** to our families with the greatest risk of hunger.

The Pandemic has yielded some noteworthy benefits, too. Communities Together staff members and partners have seen a change in the way we are perceived by residents. The residents seem to have a higher respect for our work and are more fully engaged with the staff than they were prior to the onset of this coronavirus pandemic. This is a very important and powerful development and bodes well for our future work. We have seen the following changes:

- ❖ Residents reach out to our staff in response to our work during this period and have requested assistance for a variety of needs.
- ❖ Residents identify other residents in need of services and report these needs to our staff members.
- ❖ Residents have reached out to make suggestions for resources that may be needed and, in some cases, to volunteer to assist with food distribution or other community outreach.
- ❖ Staff members are seeing more respect from residents and managers as they work with residents. Residents clearly feel more comfortable with Communities Together team members they have gotten to know.

Our **Response to the Pandemic** over the past four months is summarized below:

Maryland Families: Our Response, March to July

Food



Working with our partners, Communities Together has secured easy access to daily meals for all children and youth at our Maryland family communities. At this writing, we have helped deliver about 20,000 meals to our residents. Communities Together has worked to build strong partnerships and provide an instant response for families facing dire needs of all types. We have also educated our

residents about local food resources and access to benefits. This work has been crucial for the recovery and progress of our residents. By accessing free food sources, families are able to stay healthier during the pandemic and focus their time and energy on other necessities, specifically that of rent payments, during a difficult season.

General Assistance, March to July

Through the partnership we have developed with Council Member Deni Taveras, Catholic Charities, and other major stakeholders in advocating for the Langley Park and Hyattsville communities, we **advocated for economic relief programs** for our residents.

In April, Prince George's County opened an **emergency fund** for residents who did not qualify for unemployment benefits or government assistance. We guided **over 40 families** in the application process to apply for this small but valuable **cash assistance card**. We also referred families to CASA de Maryland and their Solidarity Fund.

Rental Assistance, March to July

Communities Together has been working since the beginning of the pandemic to direct residents towards rental assistance services and guide them through application processes in order to alleviate some of their challenges. In the months of March and April, CTI worked closely with Catholic Charities and other nonprofits in the area to find **rental assistance for families with extreme needs**. However, with such high demand, most nonprofit organizations ran out of funding before the end of April. This created a new challenge, as there was nowhere to seek assistance. For example, in the second week of May, Communities Together worked closely with Res 1 to **assist about 100 residents** at Queens Manor, Quebec Arms, Langley Gardens, Auburn Manor, and Penn Mar with their applications for the PG County **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**.

In May and June, through our partnership with Camp Fire, Communities Together was able to assist our residents with the **Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Relief Program (EARP)**. This program was designed as an **"alternative to the stimulus check" for families who were ineligible for federal** assistance. We have been working one to one with residents who applied from our communities in order to gather all paperwork and process their applications. We are hopeful that this program will be a great benefit for many of our residents, as many families are desperately looking for ways to pay off their debt as they return to work.

DC & VIRGINIA Families: Our Response, March to July

Food for the Quarantined

For those who are **COVID-19-positive**, we have worked with housing managers to help them acquire the necessary **food** to keep residents quarantined and our communities safe.

Rental Assistance

We do not believe that any of our Washington, DC residents will require rental assistance. They are still being paid, or they are on retirement benefits, or they receive vouchers, or they are on unemployment. By and large, our residents in DC do not have U.S. immigration status issues.



Resource Guides

3 Tree Flats, Metro Village, Royal Courts, and Savannah Heights are all getting an updated resource guide as the programs change and different services pop up around the District. As numbers and needs change in different wards, different programs are set up to assist residents. Managers are dispersing them as received and we have received several phone calls from residents seeking help to access different programs. Our goal is roll them out to all of the communities.

SENIOR COMMUNITIES: Our Response, March to July

Communities Together offers our elder residents many opportunities to engage in activities and events that bring pleasure, inspiration, and self-esteem. This summer, we have undertaken **follow-up calls** with all of our elder residents. Communities Together is in the midst of a Senior Summer Call Initiative where every senior resident will be called by a Communities Together or Camp Fire staff member or Camp Fire volunteer. These wellness calls also ask residents about their interests, their technology connections, and how they are doing overall. ResOne and Communities Together staff members conduct **wellness calls** on a regular basis as well.

During this pandemic we have changed our focus from direct service programming for seniors to remote **virtual programming and outdoor programs**. Activities have included puzzles, reading materials, art materials, and comfort bags. We chose many of the supplies and activities for their ability to provide seniors with stimulation and connection to online programs and resources.

In general, we focus on developing **virtual programming and outdoor programs** for residents. Communities Together was able to give all senior residents in all six apartment communities “little Communities Together bags” which contained a cloth mask, directions how to wear and wash the mask, some puzzles, a packet of pocket tissues, a “tips on sheltering in place” flyer, a bottle of water and a few little sweet treats. Several residents from all six communities have called and emailed our staff to thank them for the little bags.

IV. PLANS for 2020-21

The pandemic and the resulting economic collapse have modified our plans and challenged us to look at alternative program delivery methods. Adapting to the economic and health impacts of the pandemic, we are now focused on vital programmatic goals to help our residents survive the full extent of the pandemic and the consequent deep recession. Derived from our residents’ basic human needs during this extended crisis, our top goals respond to the remaining gaps in the region’s socio-economic safety net for families and seniors living in affordable housing.

Four priorities lead this list:

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PLANS FOR 2020-21



COMMUNITIES TOGETHER INC

Eviction Prevention: The CTI Rental Assistance Fund

Communities Together is providing and coordinating rental assistance for residents accumulating significant debts and facing eviction. Rental delinquency courts are slated to resume their operation on August 1st. Some residents can qualify for the federal assistance made available through the counties and DC. Residents who have lost their usual incomes and who cannot produce the documentation required for federal assistance are facing eviction. We will also continue to assist our residents in learning about, and applying for, federal rental assistance offered through the counties and Washington, DC.

The **CTI Rental Assistance Fund** will be focused principally on immigrant families. Most of the families that failed to qualify for governmental rental aid are Latinx families in Maryland and lacking some U.S. documentation. We have established **criteria** for families to qualify for the Fund. The Fund could be used as a matching incentive and aid for residents who are slowly paying back their debt as well. We will start to provide those rental assistance payments to property management firms in the first week of August.

At this writing, our staff believes that 20 to 30 families will meet our criteria for rental aid from Communities Together. Some families owe as much as \$4,000 and are still having to make do without income. We have developed a Rental Assistance Fund, subject to Board approval, that would provide up to \$2,700 in initial assistance to qualifying families: \$2,500 for rental aid and \$200 for utilities. We envision the Fund providing additional rental payment matches in future months should residents continue to meet our criteria.

Communities Together has already raised \$100,000 for this critical need. We have a verbal commitment of another \$50,000 from our partners to be used to match funds from other potential donors.



Emergency Food Aid Plans

We will continue to work with our partners to provide food to residents. We want to develop a small emergency fund to meet crisis needs that may be identified as we work with unique resident situations. Communities Together can help fill gaps by a) identifying which families required more and better food, b) raising funds and providing an emergency food supply, and c) coordinating food deliveries by our partners with families and management firms. We estimate our emergency food supply costs in the coming months at approximately **\$5,000**. If our families' employers began to close again, residents' food needs could rise once more. In that event, we are positioned to be able to respond quickly with the aid of our emergency food aid partners and our funders and donors.



Out-of-School Enrichment Program

We have teamed with Camp Fire to launch a virtual out-of-school program on July 15 to engage our children and youth at family communities. We expect that this program will continue in some form into 2021 since most or all schools will provide education virtually through the remainder of 2020. Out-of-school programs can support educational success, help to bridge the achievement gap, and build social-emotional skills. Our program will be able to support children and families as they return to school through tutoring and assistance for students who might be struggling with the virtual setting as well as students who are already challenged by language barriers, lack of home support, and similar issues. This summer virtual program, which is remarkably rich and creative, will also serve as a way to stay connected with families. With sufficient financial investments, we will carry it forward into the fall, depending on the needs and interests of our youngest residents. The program could prove to be a crucial form of support to families with children, since some schools are planning to operate virtually as well. The program gives children and youth both educational and recreational outlets and relieves their parents and guardians of the burden of supervising them all day long. Most of the usual summer camps are closed. This program fills a critical need for families, allows some parents and guardians to do their jobs, and provides a crucial source of psychological respite for the children and youth who are able to attend. We are not charging the families for their students' participation. **CTI is seeking \$30,000 from sponsors to help pay the cost for staff, production costs and supplies to send children and youth to virtual Summer camp.**

Technology and Internet Access Plans

Chromebooks are an easy-to-use, lightweight, and durable technology. They would provide residents confined to their community a portal to the world – a psychologically powerful social connection and a material form of self-empowerment. Setting up a “loaner” system with Chromebooks would be one way to test our larger objective, which is to assist our residents in accessing resources, news, information, entertainment, education, friends and family, and so much more. In time, after the pilot project is concluded, we might move to provide Chromebooks to residents who need them. Each Chromebook, with software, would be approximately \$300. In this experiment, we plan to buy 10 for each of the 12 family communities and provide them as “loaners” initially, for a **total initial investment of \$36,000**.

In the case of our elders, we are proposing providing Amazon **Fire 7 tablets**, which are very easy to use, very lightweight, and, at \$150 per tablet with software and instruction, very affordable. They are equipped with the Alexa system and serve as good “readers.” They provide Internet access as well. We are thinking about starting with ten tablets for each community, and we would loan them out as appropriate. That would be **an initial investment of \$10,500 total to cover our seven senior communities**.

Lack of access to Internet connectivity is an issue for residents in all of our communities. It constitutes a large barrier to their success, growth, and well-being. **Providing WiFi for every one of our 19 communities** would cost \$8,000 per location, for a total of **\$152,000**.

Community Network Building Plans

Communities Together is eager to get back to its core mission: the self-empowerment and community building of our residents. We have accepted a proposal from our former coordinator, Duncan Ferguson, to test the use of virtual technology in a community network building project at one of our locations – the **Laurel Lakes Apartments**, an elder community. If we are to succeed at this challenging work during the pandemic, we have to be able to innovate and experiment. The project will use video conferencing technology to conduct community building training sessions leading to networking sessions. A trained community building expert, Duncan Ferguson will train the Communities Together and Residential One staff members as well as the most promising members of the Laurel Lakes community in facilitation techniques so that they can run “Network Nights” themselves in time. Initially a two-month test, the project will be extended if we find enough measurable results. In time, we hope to develop this program to reach every one of our 19 communities.



We are raising funds from sponsors to make this project possible. The cost of the two-month trial period would be about **\$5,000**, a very affordable pilot project.

Resource Guide Plans

Building on the resource guides already provided to *3 Tree Flats, Metro Village, Royal Courts, and Savannah Heights*, we plan to provide similar guides to residents at every community. The guides are a critical resource as programs change and different services pop up around the region. Working with the management firms, our staff will create and update the guides, which vary from community to community. With a new school year quickly approaching, we are staying in close communication with the school boards to ensure that our families have access to information, can register new students, and can receive any technology necessary for their continued studies. **\$5,000 would pay the cost of our interns** to work with CTI staff to produce the resource guides.

V. INVEST in COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Many of our society's highest costs and challenges arise from the deprivation in which so many of our neighbors live. In human terms, the toll is unimaginable for most of us. It is a burden with which no resident of the United States should have to live.

What's more, the plight of our neighbors in affordable housing is a root cause of many of our society's highest costs. Caught in a spiral of ever-present crisis, it is extraordinarily difficult for some of the neighbors we serve to overcome the barriers they face. These burdens are interwoven. One challenge begets another.

We all pay a high price for this situation. We pay through federal, state, county, and city programs. We pay through charitable donations. We pay through voluntary activities. Companies pay for these same costs – the cost of doing business. From the micro- to the macro-economic level, the multiplier effect of deprivation is enormous.

Some investors in community-building and self-empowerment do so purely out of a basic sense of compassion. Compassion, borne of empathy, is the one elemental value common to every world religion and most philosophies.

Others invest in solutions to deprivation in order to move society toward justice and equity. There are good reasons for philanthropy and investments premised on compassion and justice: they have been the most critical ingredients in every successful and sustainable society.

Still others make an investment in order to help the larger society reduce its collective costs. From an economic perspective, such contributions to others' welfare are "pennies on the dollar." Comparatively small interventions at the grassroots level, at the unit of the family, yield huge dividends. Those dividends are found in the city, county, state, federal, and nonprofit



costs **avoided** when a family has a steady income, shelter, food, a decent education, social and community engagement, pathways to a productive career, and enough wealth to weather emergencies, among other things.

Communities Together attacks these systemic issues at their roots – at the human level of our fellow residents. This year, pivoting to meet the most basic needs of those we serve, we ranked shelter, food, education, technology, and communication highest on our chart of resident needs. In so doing, we have laid the groundwork for future community-building and self-empowerment programs to come.

Behavioral economists and sociologists have amply demonstrated that **people who gain agency – a sense that they have power – are far likelier to work hard for their advancement and to care for their own community.** They are likelier to succeed in their education and career, take care of their families and neighbors, contribute more to their local economy, pay taxes, avoid crime, take care of their health, participate in politics and government, and achieve a higher sense of fulfillment and happiness. In other words, with **self-empowerment leading to community-building**, people find themselves on a virtuous path of progress. Individual progress begets community progress.

The upward movement of individuals and communities we are describing here is foundational to societal progress. It is the **antidote to societal decay and economic collapse.**

Moreover, this type of deep **systemic change, in a person and in a community, can be so transformative that it removes the necessity, later, of “band-aid solutions.”** That is, the systemic changes arising from self-empowerment and community building – done right – allow society, and government, and charities, and individuals, to **avoid the high “downstream” costs of deprivation.**

We invite you to study our work, ask us your questions, and **invest in our happy team.** Below you will find a reprise of our top four priorities, together with our request for your investments.

Eviction Prevention: Invest in CTI’s Rental Assistance Fund

Communities Together is looking for **sponsors** for our Rental Assistance Fund for short-term rental assistance. Communities Together will be able to **match funds from other donors up to a level of \$50,000.** We will seek to raise additional funds as well.

Please consider helping our residents remain in their homes!



Invest in Our Emergency Food Assistance



We estimate that the total current cost of emergency food supplies at approximately **\$5,000**. That small investment by our donors and funders will help every family get through the pandemic and recession for the coming twelve months.

Please consider joining us in addressing this critical human need.

Invest in Our Out-of-School Enrichment Program: We are seeking sponsors to send children and youth to the program, seeking to raise a total of **\$30,000** to fund the program's operations in July and August. Please consider **sponsoring children and youth** in this one-of-a-kind enrichment program.

Invest in Our Technology and Internet Access Project

- Providing our residents with **Chromebook "loaners"** entails a **\$36,000 investment** initially.
- Our **Amazon Fire 7 tablets** pilot project for seniors would require an initial investment of **\$10,500**.
- In order to make **WiFi** available to all residents in all of our 19 communities, we would need an **investment of \$152,000**.

For all of the foregoing reasons and more, Communities Together invites you to join us in ***investing in the Technology and Internet Access for the people we serve.***

Community Network Building Pilot Project: The cost of the two-month trial period would be about **\$5,000**, a very affordable pilot project. ***Please consider sponsoring this service to the elders of our Laurel Lakes community.***



COMMUNITIES TOGETHER INC

Attachment A

Communities Served: 19 (approximately **10,000** residents)

Family Communities: 12

Maryland sites: 7

Langley Area: Langley, University, and Quebec

Auburn, Friendly Gardens, Penn Mar, and Queens

Washington, DC Sites: 4

Southeast DC: Royal Courts and Savannah Heights

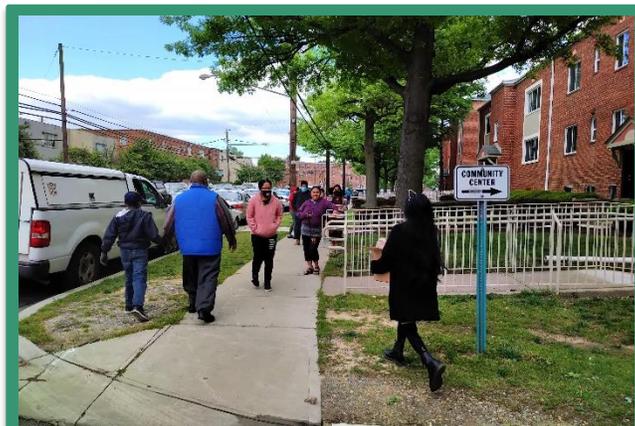
Northwest DC: 3 Tree Flats and Metro Village

Virginia Site – Mosby Heights (Harrisonburg)

Elder Communities: 7

Maryland sites: 3 -- Clinton, Ft Washington, and Laurel Lakes

Virginia sites: 4 -- Madison, Mill Park, Potomac 1, and Potomac 2





Attachment B – OUR RESPONSE: DETAILS, March to July

FAMILIES IN MARYLAND: OUR PANDEMIC RESPONSE, March to July -- DETAILS

Food

Through our strong partnership with Camp Fire, we were able to use their contacts and partnerships and meet the nutritional needs of the community. Food provided included groceries for residents identified with COVID-19 issues, lunches for children under 18 (in some cases delivered directly to our properties), hot meals (provided by World Central Kitchen and Neighborhood Restaurant Group), and food boxes and lunches provided through grants from the county to a variety of partners who had set up sites on two of our properties where other residents could gain access. Churches, Catholic Charities, the school systems, Maryland Parks and Planning, Washington Area Food Bank, local governments, and local law enforcement hosted food pickups throughout the community in all areas of Prince Georges and Montgomery County. In Washington, DC there were food distributions in all areas of the city with special emphasis in Southeast DC. Our residents were able to take full advantage of these distributions. We prepared flyers and distributed them on a regular basis to residents on all properties.

With the re-opening of many businesses in May and June, our residents' food needs subsided. This summer, we have been able to diminish some of the food supply coordination we were conducting last spring.

Together with St. [Camillus/St.](#) Francis International School and District 2 Councilmember Deni Taveras' office, CASA de Maryland, and others, Communities Together has **advocated to bring more food access into the Langley Park** corridor. Through these efforts **we have secured meals for children and adults, as well as produce boxes for families** directly across the street from our Quebec Arms Apartments property and within walking distance of our Langley Gardens apartments.

At University Manor, CTI has **distributed information about local food available** for residents. We have worked closely with St Camillus Catholic Church, the MANNA Food site at Clifton Baptist Church, CASA de Maryland, and Adventist Community Services.

CTI has partnered with CAFÉ at Queens Manor to **increase food access on-site** for our client-residents in Mt Rainier. Food partnerships have included Capital Area Food Bank, District 2



Councilmember Deni Taveras' office, Brighter Bites, and the Mt Rainier CERT team. CAFÉ hosts several meal distributions for kids, a food pantry, and produce box distributions on a weekly basis to serve families at Queens Manor.

At Auburn Manor, CTI has worked closely with LLYC/MMYC, as well as Greater Riverdale Cares and Council Member Danielle Glaros' office to **ensure food access** for residents. We have **shared weekly food distribution updates and provided information about SNAP benefits for families** at Auburn Manor.

While many residents can access these food resources, we have also worked one on one to serve specific families in need through the **delivery of food boxes and meals**. From March through June, we have worked with Catholic Charities, MMYC, the Neighborhood Restaurant Group, and the Audelia Community Response Team to get food quickly to families who are in quarantine. These services have gone to residents at Auburn Manor, University Manor, Quebec Arms, and Langley Gardens. During the early months of the pandemic, we partnered with CASA de Maryland to deliver weekly grocery boxes to **40 families** in Langley Gardens, Quebec Arms, and University Manor **for 6 weeks**. We partnered with the senior divisions of both Prince George's County and Montgomery County to sign our seniors up for **weekly meal delivery** through their senior meal program. We were able to sign up **over 30 seniors** across our three Langley Park communities.

In collaboration with Res 1 staff, we have also **organized the delivery of meals and grocery boxes** to at-risk families on a larger scale. Through the generous donations of the Neighborhood Restaurant Group, we **distributed 100 grocery boxes** to families at Quebec Arms and Langley Gardens in May, and **over 500 meals to families** at Quebec Arms, University Manor, Langley Gardens, and Queens Manor during May, June, and early July. Finally, Communities Together **advocated for school lunch** programs for our families on-site during the summer months to increase access for children, especially as parents start to return to work. Through our advocacy with the school district, we **ensured that school meals are delivered** to Langley Gardens, Queens Manor, Auburn Manor, and Penn Mar starting June 29. (Quebec Arms and University Manor are within 1 block of schools that currently offer daily student meals).

Rental Assistance

Despite our advocacy with the county, Prince George's County has still not released information about rental assistance for mixed status homes, excluding many of our residents who applied for this program at Quebec Arms, Langley Gardens, Queens Manor, and Auburn Manor. CTI worked closely with University Manor and Friendly Gardens to **inform residents of the program and process** those who qualified. This program had a very low income cap, disqualifying many residents from the assistance. However, CTI was able to work with **12**

residents to complete their applications, all of whom have since received their emergency assistance relief check. After re-evaluation in June, **the county recently decided to modify the income requirements to include a larger population.** We will continue working with **families at University Manor and Friendly Gardens who are able to benefit** from this assistance program and alleviate some of their economic stress.

FAMILY COMMUNITIES IN DC & VIRGINIA: OUR RESPONSE, March to July -- DETAILS

3 Tree Flats: Most of the residents at 3 Tree Flats have remained employed and are working from home. Those who have been furloughed have either been waiting for unemployment benefits or receiving them. Management has been in contact with Communities Together to address residents who have immediate needs.

Metro Village: Residents at Metro Village have kept their jobs, but a majority of the residents have asked for additional assistance with food. Given its location, meals and grocery distribution spots are abundant.

Royal Courts and Savannah Heights: Most residents at Royal and Savannah have been in the hospitality or medical industry. They have been working or receiving some level of pay. As of May 15th, most had received information that they would be heading back to work as food was starting to be prepared for donation or because their businesses would be opening back up in some form.

3 Tree Flats, Metro Village, and Royal Courts/Savannah Heights: Communities Together worked with housing managers to provide all residents with information about free online student programs. Families were able to request sheets from the office regarding school work as well as coloring sheets and brain teasers.

Mosby Heights: Residents at Mosby Heights have been one of the least affected communities, due to their location in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In our survey, none of the residents had needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic itself. Mosby Heights has a large population of residents who work at a food processing plant. Accordingly, local officials did on-site COVID-19 testing for our residents. Each resident at Mosby Heights receives a call each week to verify that they are faring well. Our relationship with Covenant Presbyterian Church has been helpful. The Church has addressed the few needs that have arisen in a timely fashion. Only a handful of residents have asked for assistance obtaining food. The Church has been able to provide fresh groceries immediately in all situations.

OUR RESPONSE IN OUR SENIOR COMMUNITIES, March to July Details

Clinton Manor and Fort Washington Manor held an event in the spring with Doctor's Community Hospital in which medical staff members hung little gift bags of toilet tissue, masks, and laundry detergent "pods" on all residents' doors. Residents were also invited to have their

blood pressure and blood sugar levels checked in the medical mobile van in the parking lot. The social distancing protocol was followed with extreme care and precautions. It was an extremely efficiently run event led by the management teams. Clinton Manor has partnered with Prince George's County Department of Family Services alongside Councilman Sydney J. Harrison and the Pastor of Clinton Baptist Church, who are helping to provide 43 residents Grab and Go boxes every two weeks. CTI has been offering puzzles, drawing and painting sets for stay at home activities. In the coming weeks, we are planning to have music played in the courtyard, to encourage residents to sit outside on their patios and enjoy some smooth summertime jazz.

Fort Washington Manor: Some residents entered our "Decorate Your Door Contest," in which they were able to use their creative talents. We have offered word puzzles and paint sets to residents to encourage creativity and fight boredom. Residents tell us that they really enjoy completing puzzles. A weekly virtual events calendar is distributed among residents where online events, tours and photos can be enjoyed by entering or clicking on the link for each date. Lastly a "Senior Summer Wellness Call Initiative" is in the works to check on residents, offer resources and act as a listening ear to concerns about the property and their own lives. This call initiative also asks residents about their interests. Responses will be implemented in the weekly virtual events calendar.

Laurel Lakes: The Communities Together Weekly Virtual Calendar is distributed each Friday. It gives residents the chance to bring up online events such as the Dance Theater of Harlem or a virtual tour of the Surratt House Museum in Clinton, Maryland. Residents enjoy word puzzles and painting sets provided by Communities Together. Several residents participated in the Decorate Your Door Contest. The doors looked beautiful! In the coming weeks, activities such as "Chat on the Patio" will allow residents to socialize with their neighbors in a strict seating setting while being spaced six feet or more apart.

Madison House: We are in the midst of working with the Loudoun County library system to open membership accounts for residents, order books to be picked up, and books to be returned on library sites.

Mill Park Terrace: Having reached out to our residents to listen to their needs, we have worked with community partners and the management team to provide residents with handmade cloth masks, meals, and fresh produce.

Potomac Woods: Again, having listened to our residents, we have partnered with food providers who bring food boxes once a month. CTI continues its **Summer Call Initiative** to stay connected with residents via phone conversation. This initiative has proven to be a welcome source of socialization between residents and our Senior Engagement Coordinator. We have emailed residents **virtual calendars, general information, and resources**. This has brought a closer connection among residents, management, and our staff. We will continue to foster these "online" relationships with the hope that they will share information with their friends and neighbors who are not online. There is a rising sense of community and self-empowerment at Potomac Woods. Residents have organized a resident-run social group that meets every day at noon. They practice distancing by sitting at least six feet apart while enjoying the patio and the beautiful landscaping that surrounds it.



ATTACHMENT C – DETAILS OF PLANS

Eviction Prevention: The CTI Rental Assistance Fund Criteria

Our Fund will have criteria for eligibility. We will focus on covering families who:

- a) are behind on their rent,
- b) are excluded from external resources on account of their “mixed” status (lacking U.S. documentation),
- c) missed the governmental application deadline,
- d) have savings insufficient to make up for rent owed and/or
- e) were not delinquent before the pandemic began to hit our region last March.

Technology and Internet Access Plan Details

We have completed our calls to all of the senior residents at the Potomac Woods community. That survey provides a reasonable basis for projecting our plans for seniors. Of those who have responded, only **30 percent have email addresses and 24 percent have computers.**

Our top long-term goal for the elder communities is **WiFi throughout each location.** We are in the process of getting online access throughout the buildings. Our test site will be Laurel Lakes, where residents have stated they would like more online services. Once the installation is complete, some residents will have the opportunity to receive an Amazon Fire7 Alexa tablet. Residents will be trained by Camp Fire volunteers and Communities Together staff how to operate and navigate the online system. Once training is complete, the remaining senior communities will receive WiFi throughout their buildings. Residents will be able to stay in touch with family and friends as well as their residential community and the wider community with their Alexa tablet. They will have access to information at their fingertips, and the Alex feature allows them to vocalize what they want to know or access. This service would be crucial for seniors that experience challenges with their hands with such conditions as arthritis. Once they learn about the world of services, events, and information available on the Web, we believe that they will empower themselves greatly, with accompanying emotional and physical benefits.

The **online community** we will build at **all locations** should include a resource board, similar to an online bulletin board. We can use this to post information about resources, upcoming



events, notifications, etc. Not only will this increase peoples' access to resources, it's also environmentally friendly.

Another desired element in the portal is a chat function. This application would allow residents to quickly connect with their Communities Together representative, the office staff, or the maintenance team.

Finally, we would like the portal to have a community board where residents can post requests and offers. This portal would increase community interaction while protecting safety.

Additional Senior Plans

- ❖ We are working with the management firms to persuade the county health departments to conduct **COVID-19 testing** at each community as well as a response plan when residents test positive.
- ❖ We hope to partner with AARP for the development of **Mutual Aid groups** where seniors can help other seniors, Northern Virginia Family Services, NOVA medical group, and Doctors Community Hospital.
- ❖ These medical groups could do monthly **wellness checks** (blood pressure and blood sugar tests) which are vital in maintaining good health for seniors.
- ❖ Some residents are also in need of **basic household supplies**. We coordinate with other nonprofits to make in-kind donations possible, and this need may also become a beneficiary of our income assistance program in coming weeks and months.
- ❖ Our partners include AARP and parks and recreation departments, which will offer virtual activities such as **online yoga classes, 15-minute workouts for seniors, classes for healthy eating, and virtual visits to such local museums** as the Surratt House in Clinton, Maryland for example.
- ❖ Communities Together and Camp Fire volunteers plan to offer **voter registration** for residents who are not able to get to the voter registration office for health or transportation reasons.
- ❖ Through the summer, we will continue to offer the Weekly **Virtual Events Calendar, word puzzles, and paint sets**.
- ❖ With approved funding and consent from the management firm, we are exploring offering summer events such as an ice cream trolley where a frozen treat or warm soft pretzel will be offered by a door to door **summer treat cart, virtual tours of Niagara Falls, "sip and paint," bingo, dancing/listening to music from patios or balconies** and for some communities a nice conversation outside the property with chairs at social distancing requirement and masks worn.
- ❖ We will also encourage and assist more relationships with local **libraries and senior centers**.

