



Communities Together Inc

2020 Annual Report

Building Community.

Enriching Lives.

Fostering Self-Reliance.



Our Mission: Communities Together empowers affordable housing residents as they improve their communities through collaboration. We help our residents meet their needs with dignity, build community, and thrive.

Annual Report: 2020 Pandemic Response

Our Affordable Housing Communities: The Neighbors We Serve

- **19** communities, with **2** more coming in 2021 in DC and Kensington, Maryland
- **10,000+** residents in Maryland, DC, and Virginia
- Seniors and families in low- and moderate-income communities

Pandemic Response Highlights: Addressing Basic Needs

In the face of the covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic collapse, Communities Together pivoted quickly in March 2020 to meet the most basic needs of those we serve. Without Communities Together's services, many of the residents we serve would be at high risk of hunger, eviction, homelessness, isolation, poor school performance, and conflict. Through our direct engagement, we improved our relationships with our residents.

Food Aid

Coordinated the provision of more than **48,000** meals with the aid of our community partners in 2020, paid for with **\$22,000** in funds raised by Communities Together. Our collaboration has been serving **60%** of our families and **40%** of our seniors.

Rental Assistance (as of February 1, 2021)

- **\$125,000** raised by Communities Together for rental assistance.
- **\$50,000** additional funds offered by Communities Together to match donors who join us.
- **\$44,000** provided to residents by Communities Together rental assistance to date.
- **518** households applied for **\$1,706,674** in assistance from Federal, State, and local funds with the help of the Residential One property managers and the CTI staff.
- **304** households approved for **\$1,068,037** in governmental funds to date.
- **\$638,637** additional governmental assistance awaiting final approval.

“God will bless you. I have been so desperate.... Thank you, I feel very happy. Now my daughter can keep her computer – we don’t have to sell it to pay the rent.”

– a Maryland resident (translated from Spanish)

Resident Engagement Programs

Like the rest of the world, the pandemic forced Communities Together significantly to curtail its activities from March onward. 2020 was a story of two years and two very different programs: January through Mid-March, and Late March through December.

- In March, the pandemic forced us to halt our in-person gatherings, which form the core of our resident engagement programs. Our in-person activities' results in 2020 dropped commensurately.
- In April, we made the provision of basic needs including food and medical assistance, our highest, most urgent priority.
- In August, we successfully appealed to community owners and property managers to allow us to resume engagement activities at a lower level and via virtual media.
- Even so, we laid the bases for resumption of in-person activities while developing plans for the expansion of virtual programs.

I. Enrichment & Education, Pre-Pandemic*



Crafts & Potluck for Families

FAMILY COMMUNITIES

- **8** Movie Nights in the following family communities: Auburn Manor, Langley Gardens, Penn Mar, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, and University Manor.
 - **156** residents participated.
 - **3** Craft, Enrichment, and Social Events for residents at Penn Mar, Quebec Arms, Royal Courts, University Manor.
- **96** residents participated in those events.
 - **2** Youth Employment Programs with the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center at Auburn Manor, Quebec Arms, and Queens Manor.
 - **14** youth participated in the programs.

Spotlight: CAFÉ at Queens Manor

One of our partners, CAFÉ (Cultural Academy for Excellence), provides classroom education and tutoring for students at Queens Manor in Prince George's County. Accomplished concert performers, they specialize in music, the arts, and science education, using the steel pan music of Trinidad as the motivating appetizer and accompaniment to many of their lessons.

- **28** students participated in after-school tutoring and a dinner meal every weekday.
- **14** students joined Saturday Health & Wellness, Music, and Art classes.

I. Enrichment & Education, Pre-Pandemic (continued)

SENIOR COMMUNITIES

- **127** seniors participated in Craft Events at Clinton Manor, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, and Potomac Woods I & II.
- **371** elders participated in Educational & Social Events at Clinton Manor, Ft. Washington Manor, Madison House, and Mill Park Terrace.

II. Seniors' Health and Wellness, January-December

Working with United Healthcare and other partners, we were able to provide our seniors with health workshops, yoga sessions, diabetic shoe demonstrations, meditation lessons and sessions, and flu shots through CVS. Our senior communities are in Maryland, DC, and Virginia. While the events began as in-person events from January through mid-March, we converted them to virtual events or outside, masked, socially distanced events from April through December.

- **1,652** elders at Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, and Potomac Woods I and II participated in our Health Events.

"I like the dinners and the residents getting to know each other. I enjoyed the coffee time. I liked the yoga class. I really enjoyed those activities because I could get to know my neighbors better."

- Sylvia Allen, senior resident

III. Networking & Community Building

Our core program is Community-Building. Our chief method for building community is a program we call "Networking Nights," in which a trained facilitator guides participants through the stepwise process of networking toward a community goal. The process brings residents together. They identify their principal challenges and work together to provide stewardship for their community. In this way, our residents build self-reliance as well. In 2021, Communities Together has marshaled its resources to develop a robust, sustained series of programs in more and more communities. In 2020, we launched the series in three communities before the pandemic shut down the process.

- **158** residents participated in four programs held at Fort Washington Manor (for seniors), 3 Tree Flats, and Metro Village in January and February.

“I love those [networking] meetings. ...we talked as a group about things that need to be done and ideas for activities. The coffee hour was good fellowship. We get to know our neighbors. Then CTI had put crafts and puzzles hung on the door in the Spring so we would have something to do. I also like the “Decorate Your Door” contest.”

- Shirley Simms, resident of Fort Washington Manor

Pandemic Responses, March through December*

I. Pandemic Wellness Checks

Communities Together recruited partner organizations and trained its staff and volunteers to call each household. We called to “check in” with each family and to follow up on previous calls with information, assistance, or to “check in” again. Our calls were “scripted,” and we surveyed residents who were able and willing to answer our questions. Our calls gave us our initial and updated assessments of the basic needs of our residents.

Quite apart from the information we gleaned, however, our calls throughout the year were a crucial form of social assistance to our seniors and families. While our seniors combat social isolation even in “normal times,” the pandemic greatly exacerbated that challenge – and it hit our families, too. Hence, our calls serve as informational for both residents and Communities Together team members, but we found that they provided our residents with critical social rewards. As one senior said, it was good for her to hear that “someone cares about us old folks.”

Our data on those calls follow:

Families

- **600** families responded to Wellness Checks at Auburn Manor, Langley Gardens, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, and University Manor.

Seniors

- **765** seniors received and responded to a Wellness Check in each season: in April, in the summer, and in November or December. They live at Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, and Potomac Woods I and II.



CAFE Pantry at Queens Manor

II. Food Aid & Supplies During the Pandemic

Communities Together used our findings from the wellness checks, information from property managers, and other sources to determine which residents needed nutritious food. Working with partner organizations, we coordinated the provision of food brought by Prince George's County, the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center, Catholic Communities, and other food aid organizations. Communities Together delivered or coordinated the delivery of the following:

- About **1,900** masks – approximately **100** for every one of the **19** communities we serve.

Families

- About **48,000** meals for residents at Auburn Manor, Quebec Arms, Langley Gardens, and University Manor, provided by our partners from April through December.
- **405** summer lunches for school-aged youth provided by Prince George's County Public Schools, St. Francis International, and Montgomery County.
- **824** deliveries of food to covid-19 patients as well as distributions of flyers to all DC residents, alerting them to neighborhood food distributions.
- **104** covid-19 patients living at home received special food deliveries or supplies from our community partners through our coordination and referrals. They included residents at Auburn Manor, Langley Gardens, Penn Mar, 3 Tree Flats, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, Savannah Heights, University Manor, and Metro Village.

Seniors

- About **4,000** meals for our seniors at Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, and Mill Park Terrace.
- **874** food deliveries to seniors with Covid-19.
- **7** covid-19 patients living at home received special food deliveries or supplies from our community partners through our coordination and referrals. They included residents at Laurel Lakes and Fort Washington Manor.

III. Rental Assistance Update (as of February 1, 2021)

- **\$125,000** – funds raised by Communities Together for rental assistance.
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- **\$44,000** – Provided to residents by Communities Together rental assistance to date.
- **518** households applied for **\$1,706,674** in assistance from Federal, State, and local funds with the help of the Residential One property managers and the CTI staff.
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“I am one of the people who tested positive with Corona Virus...after 17 years in this country I became unemployed, the first time I have ever been without work. Thank you very much for helping me and for understanding my needs.”

– a family resident (translated from Spanish)

IV. Information & Resources During the Pandemic

Communities Together provided information packets, flyers, information sheets, and social media messages to our residents to share information on the novel coronavirus, the Covid-19 pandemic, and related information, considerations, advisories, and resources.

- **1,937** information flyers and resource packets distributed through property managers to all of our families at Auburn Manor, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, Langley Gardens, Mosby Heights, Penn Mar, Royal Courts, Savannah Heights, University Manor, and 3 Tree Flats.
- About **600** “goody bags” and other handouts with supplies and materials provided to our seniors at Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, and Potomac Woods I and II. We provided the materials at 2 events at each community.
- **25** batches of Back-to-School Materials for students going back to school in August and September from the Penn Mar community.

V. Senior Community-Building – in a Pandemic

In a creative endeavor to engage our seniors in community building through crafts, our team created two “contests,” complete with prizes, designed to draw out seniors with a creative impulse.

Decorate Your Door: In the summer and again in the fall and in December, we invited seniors to decorate their front door using recyclable materials, a summer fun theme, or a patriotic theme. **35** households participated.

Gratefulness Essay Contest: We invited seniors to write a short essay on what they are grateful for. **15** seniors entered their essays, judged by Camp Fire mid-career interns.

Voter Information Events: **232** seniors took advantage of the chance last fall to gather voting information, ask questions, and gain assistance in registering to vote. Seniors at all of our elder communities were able to participate: Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, and Potomac Woods I and II



Door Decoration Contest Winner at
Madison House

“We had made Valentine’s Day cards in February which was great fun. I also enjoyed the African American History program. A lot of residents came to that program. ...We the community of residents would have come together more and could have really grown, but COVID came.”

- Arnette Riddick, resident of Fort Washington Manor

VI. Virtual Enrichment & Education – in a Pandemic



Partner agencies distributing resources to
Maryland family residents

2020 called for experimentation and innovation. We allowed ourselves to try new tactics and learn lessons to build virtual programs in a pandemic and deep recession. Camp Fire, a crucial organizational partner, designed and offered a series of virtual summer camps. Two such pilot projects illustrate their brave tests of the online “camp” programs:

VI. Virtual Enrichment & Education – in a Pandemic (continued)

- **63** students participated in virtual camp, also known as outside-school enrichment, via Internet connections from home in July and August, from Auburn Manor, Penn Mar, Mosby Heights, 3 Tree Flats, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, University Manor, Friendly Gardens, and Fort Washington Manor. Camp Fire, our crucial organizational partner, produced and conducted the “camp” with the aid of their mid-career interns. Our participants ranged in age from kindergarten to 12th grade.
- **35** families joined Camp Fire and Communities Together for two virtual “Camp Family Nights” last summer for families at Auburn Manor, Langley Gardens, Penn Mar, Quebec Arms, Queens Manor, University Manor, Fort Washington Manor, and Friendly Gardens. Families were able to participate in games, watch a film, and take a virtual field trip to the Caribbean using Google Earth with a tour guide from the Caribbean.
- **10** students participated in CAFÉ’s after school weekday educational program online from September through December at Queens Manor.
- **8** students joined CAFÉ’s Saturday Health & Wellness, Music, and Art program at Queens Manor last fall.

VII. Holiday Food, Events, Crafts, and Gifts



Crafts for Families

Working with Camp Fire and Residential One property managers, Communities Together provided holiday foods, events, crafts, and gifts to residents in the fall and in December.

746 residents participated in our events and programs and enjoyed food, gifts, and crafts at Auburn Manor, Penn Mar, Mosby Heights, 3 Tree Flats, Quebec Arms, Royal Courts, University Manor, Metro Village, Clinton Manor, Laurel Lakes, Fort Washington Manor, Madison House, Mill Park Terrace, Potomac Woods I and II, and Friendly Gardens.

Invest in Our Top 5 Programs & Projects

In response to the pandemic, Communities Together launched four urgent projects. We will re-launch our Community Building program in 2021, with new technology, as pandemic restrictions ease. You can support our residents of affordable housing in the following ways:

1. Eviction Prevention: CTI's Rental Assistance Fund

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

2. Emergency Food Assistance

We estimate the total six-month cost of emergency food supplies coordinated with partners at approximately **\$15,000**. That small investment by our donors and funders would help every family get through the pandemic and recession for the first six months of 2021.

3. Out-of-School Enrichment Programs

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. Please consider sponsoring children and youth in this one-of-a-kind enrichment program.

4. Technology and Internet Access Project: connecting our residents to the world

- Providing our residents with Chromebook "loaners" entails a **\$36,000** investment.
- Our Amazon Fire 7 tablets project for seniors requires an initial investment of **\$11,000**.
- To make WiFi available to all residents in our **19** communities, we would need an investment of **\$150,000**.

5. Community Building Program (see Core Program above)

The cost of a two-month community building project at one community would be about **\$5,000**. Please consider sponsoring this service to our neighbors.

Organizational Facts

- 501c(3) (charitable) non-profit governed by an independently elected and majority Black board of experts in related fields, founded in 2017.
- 2020 revenue, both earned and donated, approximately **\$550,000**.
- Projected 2021 revenue: **\$650,000**.
- Lean Staff: 4 FT employees (1 more planned in 2021), 3 interns, and 4 contractors.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT OF OUR DONORS & GRANTORS.
YOU ARE PART OF OUR SUCCESS: YOU MADE OUR ACHIEVEMENTS POSSIBLE.
MANY OF YOU PROVIDED RESOURCES AS WELL AS YOUR TIME AND EXPERTISE.

Pillars (\$75,000+)

Donald Tucker

Leaders (\$30,000-74,999)

AHD, Inc.

Camp Fire of Patuxent (in-kind)

Oceanside Development

Michael Seltz

Bridge-Builders (15,000-29,999)

Franklin Capital

Partners (10,000-14,999)

Residential One

Advocates (\$5,000-9,999)

Eagle Bank

Greystone

HSBC (gift and in-kind)

Jonathan Rosenberg

First Responders (\$100-4,999)

Crescent Cities Charities

Holly D'Avanzo

Nemo Hanifan

Michelle LaChance

Marsha Lucas

Kent Neumann

Rosemary Pezzuto

Prosperity Consulting

Lili R. Spain

Richard Tager

United Bank

Annette Wasno

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

2400 Diner (Fredericksburg, VA food aid)

Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen
(food aid)

CAFÉ (food aid & youth education in music, arts, and science)

Camp Fire (youth, family, and senior enrichment & education – and so much more)

Capital Area Food Bank

CASA Maryland (food aid)

Catholic Charities (food aid)

City of Mount Rainier (food aid)

CVS (flu shots)

Eagle Bank (volunteers for check-in calls)

Flow Yoga (for seniors)

HSBC (volunteers for check-in calls)

JITA (food aid)

Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers (bag lunches)

Newmark (volunteers for check-in calls)

Prince George's County (rental assistance & food aid & much more)

Prince George's County Council (food aid, summer youth employment, and other aid)

Prince George's County Public Schools
(summer lunches)

Maryland Multicultural Youth Center
(employment training)

Montgomery Co. Emergency Assistance Program (rental assistance, food aid, summer lunches)

Neighborhood Restaurant Group (MD food aid)

Residential One (property management at 18 of our 19 communities)

Saint Francis International School
(summer lunches & more)

United Healthcare (health workshops)

Women's Voters League of Fredericksburg (VA voting information)

We thank these and other partners, donors, and volunteers for their extraordinary and swift aid in such a historically challenging year.

You made it possible for us to serve our residents and build community - together.



Creating a garden banner for University Manor

Visit us online at <http://commtogether.org/>

**** Data on a community-specific basis are available upon request.***