



## **President's Update: 2024 ALIVE! Programs & Plans for New Year**

We hope that all the Board members and Committee members had a restful and meaningful Holidays. As we turn into the new calendar year, I wanted to take the opportunity to provide an overview of where important ALIVE! programs and initiatives stand. Representatives: Please alert your congregation and your networks about the needs outlined below

Many thanks to our Program chairs for their leadership and commitment, and their contributions to this summary document. And, very importantly, we should all thank the ALIVE! staff for their excellent performance during 2023 and we give high recognition to the extra efforts staff have given to ensure that ALIVE! goals can be realized!

If you have questions about program details or comments about the current direction of ALIVE! please contact me by email or phone. I see the primary role of Board President to ensure the organization continues towards its mission and reflects the interests and concerns all board members in our approach to serving people in our community. Please reach out to me with your ideas and questions at [rolfb444@gmail.com](mailto:rolfb444@gmail.com), or 703-969-6291.

I look forward to working with you during 2024!

*Rolf*

President

## **Furniture Program**

*2024 Dreams, Needs, and Resolutions from Nancy Lopez, Furniture chair*

**Dreams:** I dream of having enough congregational and community volunteers that we can operate two furniture trucks each weekend. Right now, for the first 13 weeks of the year - through March 31 - I have only 2 dates with no congregational coverage (March 2 & March 30), and 6 dates with one congregation volunteering. We already have enough volunteers signed up to operate 2 trucks on 5 weekends! I am so grateful to our congregations for stepping up!

**Needs:** A little extra support! I will be out of the country from January 24 - April 2. During that time, Alexandra Stynchula will be filling in as the temporary furniture chair. I ask for extra support for Alexandra to make sure that our furniture operations continue smoothly. I know Karl and Jose will be helpful. I hope others will check in with her from time to time to see how things are going, to ask what help she may need, and to thank her for her work!

**Resolutions:** In 2024 I have big goals! I want to:

- Recruit 8 more drivers for the furniture program,
- Find a way to pick up every useful donation offered to us,
- Improve our system for logging furniture in and out of our storage unit, and
- Thank our congregational and community volunteers by hosting 2 in-person furniture volunteer appreciation events.

Thanks for encouraging us to set some specific goals for the upcoming year!

---

## **Housewares Program**

*Happy New Year! from Janese Bechtol, Program chair*

Housewares is entering 2024 very well stocked and ready to make deliveries! When our shelves are full with a variety of houseware items, we partner with our friends in the Food Program to distribute them at the food hubs or monthly food distributions, but we are trying hard to limit our donations to the most usable items.

The important needs we have at this point are kitchen appliances in perennial demand including small, basic equipment like blenders, coffee makers, slow cookers, and toasters. At the current time, we also have a need for washcloths, new or gently used.

---

## **Food Program**

**Thoughts and key data** on the Food Program—from Jim Karlson, Program chair

First, an operational overview for calendar year 2023:

- Households served averaged 4,534 per month
- Pounds of food averaged 148,584 per month

**2024 Program Goals** include core operations improvements:

- First, we are working hard to collect more client data to improve overall efficiency and reduce costs. Using these data, we will evaluate the impact programs have on the communities served and adjust to improve on our positive impact.
- We are also working on a major update to the Operations Guide and some detailed spot training items for our volunteers. We believe this will assist the ALIVE! Food Operations team by providing guidance for them and the volunteers to improve our safety risk, reduce errors, and increase consistency for volunteers.
- Next, we are developing new volunteer role definitions for our experienced volunteers. The idea is to adjust the workload on the Food Operations team by creating a cadre of volunteers able to support key efforts such as volunteer training, delivery operations, and coordination for food distribution events of different types.

**Food Operations update.** In 2024 we will continue with the two food hubs, community food drive support, community food distribution support and ALIVE! sponsored food distributions. Of note, January will mark the final Last Saturday Food Distribution for NOVA Community College. While we continue to review alternatives, our clients will be redirected to Cora Kelly and Ramsey Rec Center. Also, for the food hubs we are developing plans to better accommodate the client volume by exploring ways of offering options to schedule appointments for the client visits.

**A hope:** I hope the food insecurity in Alexandria and across the country gets to a better place in 2024. In recent years, we've witnessed a scenario where our neighbors are facing increased financial struggles; 2024 is hopefully a year of improvement.

*A dream:* A successful capital fund raising program to solidify the warehouse planning.

*A final goal:* Work with the entire ALIVE! team to reenergize our congregational and overall community support for food and volunteers.

*A smile moment:* Working with the ALIVE! team is always a super experience!

---

## **Family Assistance Program**

*From Mollie Lambert, Program chair:* Thank you for giving us the opportunity to highlight key needs for the Family Assistance Program. As you are aware, there has been a significant increase in the number of requests for food deliveries and financial assistance with the decline in federal pandemic funding and the end of utility and rent moratoriums.

The increased current volume keeps the volunteers very busy. Hopefully no one will experience burn out. Currently, there are **priority needs for the Family Assistance Program:**

First, educating caseworkers on Family Assistance Program Procedures—

Family Assistance works directly with caseworkers, not individual clients. There are limited funds available each week. In the last several months, clients are calling and/or emailing us asking about the status of their financial request. Many of the caseworkers send multiple requests each week (up to 8 at \$1,000 each) but our weekly budget is about \$7,000. Responding to requests and tracking denied requests due to lack of funding allocated for the week takes valuable time away from volunteers who work on routine tasks.

**Volunteers** – The Family Assistance Program is always in need of volunteers, particularly drivers. The program is unique; all positions require some training. And we are looking for folks who can commit to one or two days a month on a consistent basis.

---

## **Volunteers and Communications**

*New developments in these two important program support functions are summarized by Karl Bach, Outreach & Communications Director.*

Two recent wins with Communications are the short videos that volunteers created to help tell ALIVE!'s story. We promoted these on social media and have plans to create more in the near future—excellent volunteer initiatives! Board members check out the videos (below) and circulate to your networks:

[About ALIVE!](#)

[The Journey Your Donation Takes](#)

**Volunteers stepping forward:** We are filling nearly every volunteer shift for Food Hubs, Pop-Up Distributions, and Last Saturday Distributions. This means that we have more than 100 volunteers on the last Saturday of the month working between all of our sites, and hundreds more throughout the month.

In the Bus Barn volunteer site, we saw more than 500 volunteers working to fill bags of shelf stable items over the last 6 months. Largely these volunteers are coming from local businesses and are being introduced to ALIVE! for the first time through this teambuilding experience. Companies recently participating include: USDA, Booze Allen Hamilton, Hilton, US Coast Guard, Fraternities, local associations, and local schools.

Our **greatest needs** for volunteers include:

1. Driving ALIVE!'s trucks for the last Saturday events and Saturday furniture runs. You don't need a commercial license, required is a valid driver's license and be at least 21 years old.
2. Volunteers with language skills. For Last Saturday to help with interpretation and translations and at our Food Hubs. Spanish language skills are most needed at Cora Kelly and the Del Ray Food Hub, and Dari, Pashto, Amharic, and Arabic are most needed at Ramsay Rec and the West End Food Hub.

Additionally, we are seeking a dedicated staff member at the Warehouse on South Payne Street to train and manage first time volunteers. A part-time volunteer coordinator is also being recruited.

---

## **Client Services- Eviction Prevention and Food Hub**

*by Erika Gaitan, Client Services Manager*

2023 was full of growing pains, we saw an overall increase of clients needing assistance with food, rental assistance, eviction assistance, employment assistance etc. Despite it all we remained strong and resilient. The biggest highlight (in my opinion) was the successful opening of the second food hub in the Del Ray neighborhood. We have been able to help a ton of families and our service navigators have been able to build strong relationships with the clients on both sides of the city.

My dreams for 2024 are to continue the great work we've been doing—e.g., by successfully staffing both food hubs and finding solutions for a better flow. I am working on implementing an appointment-based model to create some structure for the service navigators, and the food team, but most importantly for our clients. The vision for the food hubs was to offer wrap-around services, but the high numbers have delayed that goal. By scheduling appointments, we can have enough food stocked and also help to foster relationships between staff and clients. We are in discussions with city partners to continue hosting monthly food demonstrations, vaccination clinics, yoga and Zumba classes along with the ongoing presence of INOVA, Office of Community Services and Edu-Futuro.

## **ALIVE! House**

*by Erika Gaitan, Client Services Manager*

In 2023 our biggest win was the successful exit of our last resident. She moved into her own apartment and was extremely grateful for her experience at ALIVE! house. With her departure we decided to take some time to rethink and evaluate the ALIVE! house program. We met and interviewed over 16 city stakeholders to see where AH! fit in the city's continuum of care. We then met with the AH! Committee and discussed the findings.

### **Moving forward in 2024:**

I am working on presenting the final recommendations to the Executive Committee to receive their final decision on the ALIVE! house program. My dream is to successfully move in three new families, hire a social worker and house manager to assist with the day to day. A little ambitious but I would love to successfully transition out at least one family within the year. We have a lot of work to do but I am excited to see ALIVE! house full of smiling faces and the sound of little pitter patters running upstairs.