



# APAH's Resident Services

Impact Statement: 2020 - 2021





Because a stable home is just the first step to a productive and healthy life, APAH's Resident Services program organizes a variety of activities and provides individual assistance to residents to help them thrive.

**What started as a single, part-time resident services coordinator in 2004 has grown into a robust program and a growing team of eleven members, each combining their unique set of skills with a passion to help residents maintain stability and celebrate their resiliency.**

Resident needs inform our program offerings and fit within five pillars: housing stability; economic mobility; health, wellness, and senior support; youth, children, and families; and community engagement.

As an affordable housing real estate developer, APAH could easily just be thought about as buildings. But APAH's real estate work is done for the benefit of the people who call our communities home. Our resident services work aims to partner with our residents and amplify their voices.



Across Virginia, over the summer of 2021, **about 15% of all households were behind on payments**

## Homes for Neighbors: Rent Relief

More than a year into the pandemic, about 6 million households were behind on their rent payments<sup>[1]</sup> but thanks to federal and local eviction moratoriums, many were able to stay in their homes. But some evictions still happened, and some families lost their housing despite the public health risks. Research from the Brookings Institute has identified that residents who are currently receiving SNAP or TANF have a higher probability of facing evictions<sup>[2]</sup>.

Across Virginia, over the summer of 2021, about 15% of all households were behind on payments despite the state's Rent Relief Program leading the nation in distribution of funds received from the federal government.

APAH has steadily repeated the mantra since the start of covid: "you can't stay safe at home if you don't have a home" and in 2020 immediately began many efforts to ensure residents were not displaced due to non-payment of rent. APAH voluntarily extended our eviction moratorium until December 2021, and our work expanded and continued through the year.

### Next Steps:

APAH will continue to pursue all available avenues to help residents struggling to pay rent. As long as the Virginia Rent Relief Program has funding, APAH will continue to assist residents in applying for this source of support. The staff has hosted, and will continue to host, "rent parties" to ensure all residents are aware of state and local resources to help with rent relief. And monthly meetings are taking place between APAH and Arlington County focused on eviction prevention.

To continue building strong relationships with residents, the resident services team also plans to add four new positions in 2022.



SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC, **MORE THAN \$4 MILLION IN RENTAL ASSISTANCE** FOR FAMILIES IMPACTED BY COVID-19 FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES



APAH HAS HELPED RESIDENTS SUBMIT **MORE THAN 450 APPLICATIONS** TO THE VIRGINIA RENT RELIEF PROGRAM



**5 NEW POSITIONS WERE ADDED TO THE RESIDENT SERVICES TEAM DURING 2020 AND 2021, MAKING A TOTAL OF 11 TO BETTER MEET RESIDENT NEEDS**



Happy residents move into Queens Court apartments and receive a welcome basket with home supplies

### Spotlight:

In an innovative partnership, **Arlington Thrive** is embedding a Case Manager within the APAH resident services team. Splitting the costs of the position, we believe this position will not only pay dividends both for Thrive and APAH residents and will pave the way for future opportunities for partnership and innovation.

### Immediate benefits include:

- Reducing agency time and barriers to access financial assistance for APAH residents
- Closer collaboration between Thrive and APAH Case Management to connect with additional services for APAH residents
- Opportunities to identify gaps and additional areas of service and assistance
- More efficient distribution and disbursement of finite financial resources



Volunteers prepare for an AFAC distribution in spring, 2020

## Keeping Food in the Fridge: Addressing Food Insecurity

Worrying about where the next meal would come from on any given day was not new for many Americans when the COVID-19 pandemic started. In February of 2020, Virginia's food insecurity rate was 9.9%; it sky-rocketed in just four months to more than 22% in June<sup>[3]</sup>.

In just the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arlington County saw large increases in needs for food assistance. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications increased 84% and AFAC increased 23%. And the Hunger Report 2021 from the Capital Area Food Bank reported that their network of nonprofit partners has seen anywhere from 30 - 400% increase in individuals seeking food assistance indicates food insecurity is still an issue for many in our region.

Food insecurity is not a new challenge. Many APAH families report – both before and during the pandemic – that they often need to make hard decisions between buying groceries, and paying another necessary expense (like rent, utility bills, or their medicine).

APAH has had a strong partnership with Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) for many years which has provided families with supplemental groceries on a weekly basis to help ensure residents didn't go hungry. This relationship was instrumental in 2021 to ensuring APAH residents were not food insecure.

### Next Steps:

In 2022, onsite grocery distributions by AFAC will continue at the two existing property sites, but APAH plans to launch a mobile food pantry to expand access. This bus will visit each of APAH's other Arlington properties bi-weekly. Families, one at a time, will be able to board the bus, outfitted as a mobile grocery store, and collect fresh fruit, vegetables, protein, and other dry goods as are most appropriate for their own dietary needs and desires. AFAC is excited about this expansion and may provide most of the food to stock the pantry; even if they do, APAH will have a budget to supplement.

With APAH's first property opening in Loudoun County in 2022, APAH is discussing partnership with Loudoun Hunger Relief that would bring a similar regularly scheduled onsite food distribution to the senior residents of this new property. We look forward to building a strong, high-impact relationship with new partners as we work to provide opportunity for all residents in our portfolio to access food.



Samia and her children

**"I have participated in AFAC [distributions] for about three years, since I moved into Columbia Hills,"**

said Samia Mehenoun. The onsite food distribution has helped her family a lot. Without the program she says "it would be harder to buy food since food and other costs, like electricity, have gone up. I would be scared about how to make ends meet."

She says the onsite AFAC distributions means she and her family have consistent access to food. "Thank you so much for the help because this has been a hard time economically, and with fear of getting sick with COVID."



**OVER THE COURSE OF 2021, 344 FAMILIES RECEIVED 6,736 AFAC GROCERY DISTRIBUTIONS ONSITE AT TWO APAH PROPERTIES**



**35 SENIORS RECEIVE WEEKLY GROCERY DELIVERIES**



**LA COCINA VA DELIVERS 100 HOT, FRESHLY COOKED MEALS TO RESIDENTS EACH WEEK**



**25% of Americans... indicate they have no emergency savings.**

## More than Walls and a Roof: Economic Stability

For some of APAH's households, having an apartment with a rent that is affordable to their income is all the assistance they need to be economically stable. But for many others, additional assistance is needed. Thanks to generous donors in 2020, APAH was able to greatly expand our small emergency fund into a tool that allowed our resident services team to help meet urgent and emerging financial needs.

Having at least three months' worth of living expenses in savings is one of the most advised financial tips, and yet 51% of Americans have less saved – including 25% of Americans who indicate they have no emergency savings<sup>[4]</sup>.

APAH's emergency fund was able to provide immediate financial assistance to households to pay utility bills and for groceries, baby formula and diapers, and medicines. But it also allowed APAH's resident services team to provide support for the less obvious, but still immediate needs like buying new clothes for a quickly growing toddler or a work uniform for a newly employed resident, or childcare costs for a parent returning to work.

### Next Steps:

Although it is our hope that the catastrophic toll of the pandemic on resident's income will end soon, the road to recovery may be long for some families. The emergency fund was not new in 2020 and it won't end in 2022. Some immediate financial assistance to help residents meet their basic and urgent needs will remain available to the APAH resident services staff into the future.

To ease the burden of utility costs and address the digital divide, all new construction and rehab projects will provide residents with free Wi-Fi, and plans and pilots to provide reduced or free Wi-Fi at current properties are underway. In 2022, 345 households will have free Wi-Fi thanks to this initiative; 230 households in 2023.

**"I was down to my last \$2, and I didn't know how I was going to feed my kids. I'm so thankful to APAH for providing emergency assistance thanks to their donors."**

— APAH Resident (anonymous)



**174 REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE WERE APPROVED**



**MORE THAN \$25,500 DISTRIBUTED FROM THE EMERGENCY FUND IN 2021**



**THE MOST COMMON REQUESTS IN 2021 WERE FOR UTILITY ASSISTANCE, AUTO EXPENSES, AND EMERGING HEALTH NEEDS.**



Encore Stage & Studio "Drama Tots" program for kids aged 3-5 outside of Gilliam Place

## Lifelong Learning: Education

Distance learning became a vital tool for school systems at the start of the pandemic. Across the country, 60% of American K-12 students were fully virtual at the start of the 2020-21 school year, but by the end of the year nearly all had access to at least some form of in-person learning.<sup>[7]</sup>

Locally, Arlington Public Schools, the main district for APAH students, started the 2020-21 school year remotely before transitioning to a hybrid model in March 2021, and welcomed students back to school with in-person learning at the start of the 2021-22 year. But the disruption to schooling has negatively impacted many students, widening the pre-pandemic test score gaps by race and economic status.<sup>[8]</sup>

APAH's partnerships with nonprofits like Rosie Riveters, Aspire! Afterschool Learning, Encore Stage & Studio, and more made learning fun for young kids and provided opportunities to experience new things. Arlington Presbyterian Church (APC) provided space for two "learning pods" in 2020 allowing small groups of students to safely continue learning in person.

But enrichment and educational opportunities for all residents is important, too. APC has provided full scholarships to 15 APAH residents (six adults and nine children) for lessons to learn how to play piano or guitar.

APAH hosted a family-friendly poetry and storytelling event over Zoom with KaNikki Jakarta. Jakarta is an award-winning performance poet, author of three novels, and the first African American Poet Laureate of Alexandria, Virginia. This event allowed APAH residents to attend an engaging and powerful performance from the safety of their homes.

### Next Steps:

APAH seeks to break the cycle of poverty by offering integrated cradle to career programs to foster expectation and provide support to enable every APAH child to graduate from high school and pursue college or trade training to achieve a family-sustaining job. Using a two-generation strategy that involves both children and their parents, the initial three years of this initiative, the Next Generation Fund, will pilot, refine, and expand opportunities geared to each age group. APAH's goal is to eventually expand these opportunities to children, youth, and parents across the portfolio.

To address the significant learning loss for the youth living at APAH due to the disruptions to in-person learning since the pandemic began, APAH will expand afterschool enrichment programming to meet the specific needs of each property's children.



732 CHILDREN RECEIVED \$50 GIFT CARDS FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES FROM APAH'S READY TO LEARN INITIATIVE



29 K-5TH GRADERS PARTICIPATED IN ROSIE RIVETERS FOR A FREE, 4-WEEK STEM PROGRAM



19 KIDS PARTICIPATE IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING AT GILLIAM PLACE THROUGH ASPIRE!



## More than Nutrition: Health and Wellness



Nurses and participants at a health fair at Columbia Hills

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to weave its own course, Americans across the country are grappling with the impacts on both physical and mental health. Even before the pandemic, social isolation and loneliness have been “risk factors for poorer physical and mental health and increased mortality.”<sup>[5]</sup> Especially for seniors and older adults<sup>[6]</sup>. APAH has a long record of offering programs to address the physical and mental health of residents of all ages. The high-risk status of seniors and older adults initiated weekly calls between the resident services team and these residents to counter social isolation and address the needs of this vulnerable population. More than 800 calls were made to these residents in 2020, but even more were made in 2021, with 129 senior households receiving a call either weekly or biweekly, depending on the nature of their needs.

### Next Steps:

With the popularity of the Girls on the Run program, it will be expanded in 2022 and to compliment it, a boys fitness component will be added to the offerings. APAH’s team is also looking to add an opportunity for APAH youth to take swimming lessons. The partnership with Neighborhood Health which facilitated the pop-up vaccine clinics will continue and together we will work to ensure APAH residents continue to have access to the COVID vaccine, especially when one becomes approved for children under five.



**151 APAH RESIDENTS RECEIVED A COVID-19 VACCINATION AT A POP-UP CLINIC ONSITE**



**75 YOUNG RESIDENTS RECEIVED A VARIETY OF WELLNESS CHECKS (INCLUDING VISION AND HEARING) AT TWO HEALTH FAIRS**



**40 GIRLS, AGED 8-13, TRAINED FOR AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED A 5K RUN THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NONPROFIT, GIRLS ON THE RUN**

[1] <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt-in-america>

[2] <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/11/23/the-destabilizing-cost-of-a-pandemic-what-covid-19-meant-for-renters-already-getting-assistance/>

[3] <https://vafoodbanks.org/about-us/hunger-in-virginia/>

[4] <https://www.bankrate.com/banking/savings/emergency-savings-survey-july-2021/>

[5] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8300081/>

[6] <https://ghrp.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s41256-020-00154-3>

[7] <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>

[8] <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/7/28/22596904/pandemic-covid-school-learning-loss-nwea-mckinsey>



[www.apah.org](http://www.apah.org)

