



EST. 2020

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CARE

Connecting People, Resources, Opportunity

2025 Annual Report

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CARE, INC.

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COLUMBIACOMMUNITYCARE.ORG



From the Executive Director

When I wrote that first Facebook post in March of 2020 just days before the world as we knew it changed, I had no idea what we were starting.

I only knew that children were going home without food, that families were scared, and that neighbors were ready to help. Forty volunteers showed up. And Columbia Community Care was born. Six years later, I am filled with profound gratitude and an unshakeable sense of purpose as I reflect on what this community has built together.

None of it has been built alone.

From our very first day, Columbia Community Care has operated on a foundational truth: we are stronger together. Everything we do, every grocery bag filled, every young person mentored, every circle of healing held, exists because of partnerships and collaboration with individuals and organizations who share our values. We do not simply accept help; we build relationships. We seek out partners who believe, as we do, that every person deserves dignity, that systemic barriers must be dismantled, and that community care is an act of collective liberation.

Our partnerships are not transactional. They are relational, rooted in shared purpose and mutual accountability. From faith communities and civic organizations to local businesses, schools, and fellow nonprofits, the people and institutions who stand alongside CCC do so because they are value-aligned, because they see the same Howard County we see, and because they are committed to building it together with us. When we say Columbia Community Care is a community organization, we mean it in the most literal sense: this work belongs to all of us. It is this spirit of collaboration that has allowed a grassroots response to a pandemic to grow into something lasting and transformative.

Access is not a privilege. It is a right.

One of the most deliberate and defining choices we have made at Columbia Community Care is our commitment to removing every barrier that stands between a neighbor and the resources they need. We do not require income verification. We do not ask for proof identification or of need. We do not demand documentation, citizenship status, or any credential that reduces a human being to their eligibility. We simply ask: how can we help?

This is a radical act in a landscape where so many systems require people to prove their worthiness before receiving care. We reject that model entirely. We know that the families we serve are not lacking capability, they are navigating systems deliberately designed to exclude them. Systemic barriers rooted in race, income, immigration status, and ZIP code have long determined who gets access and who does not. CCC exists to dismantle those barriers, one interaction at a time. Removing barriers also means meeting people where they are. It means delivering food directly to families who cannot travel to a distribution site. It means creating programming that is anti-racist, culturally responsive, linguistically accessible, and rooted in the lived experience of our community. It means building trust over time so that our neighbors, especially those who have been burned by systems that were supposed to help them, know that when they come to CCC, they will be met with dignity, not suspicion.



Access without dignity is not access at all. We hold both as sacred.

What began as a pandemic response has grown into something far greater than any of us imagined. Today, CCC serves 300 to 400 families every week across three in person distribution sites and delivers food directly to 60 to 70 households without transportation. We proudly partner with two incredible mentorship organizations, STAND & PUSH, to support well over 50 young people through transformative opportunities and wrap around services. We partner with two talented and brilliant athletes, Nya Lightfoot & Amel Lightfoot, to provide financially accessible volleyball clinics to any young person who wants to learn and play. We partner with the Restorative Justice Partnership and Coach Tahis Blue to provide free healing and connection through community circles, wellness workshops, and wraparound support. Every single one of those touchpoints represents a neighbor choosing to show up for another neighbor, with dignity, without judgment, and without barriers.

This is not charity. This is community.

We have built something rare here in Howard County: a space where asking for help is met with abundance rather than shame, where young people are seen as leaders rather than problems to solve, and where we understand that food security, youth development, and community healing are not separate issues, they are one. When we nourish a family on Saturday morning, we are also saying: you belong here, you matter, and we see you.

I must be honest with you about the moment we find ourselves in. The challenges facing our community and communities like ours across this country are not abstract. Federal cuts to SNAP and Medicaid, increased ICE enforcement terrorizing immigrant families, and the systematic dismantling of the social safety net are arriving at the doorsteps of our neighbors in real and devastating ways. Families are being forced to choose between groceries, medicine, and safety. The demand for our services is rising sharply, and it will continue to rise. CCC will not look away. We never have.

As a volunteer-led organization recognized as a Best of Howard County Volunteer Organization winner or honorable mention every year since 2020, our strength has always come from the people who show up. Our extraordinary volunteer leadership team, our dedicated staff, our community partners, and every individual who has ever supported a young person or delivered groceries: you are the infrastructure of care that no federal policy can dismantle.

This annual report is a celebration of what we have accomplished together, and a declaration of where we are going. We are scaling to meet unprecedented need. We are deepening our programs. We are building the community institution that Howard County deserves, one rooted in collective liberation, mutual respect, and the unwavering belief that we are stronger together.

To every volunteer, donor, partner, and neighbor who has made this work possible: thank you. You are the heart of CCC. You are proof that when a community decides to care for itself, something extraordinary happens. We are just getting started.

With gratitude and in solidarity,

Erika Chavarria
Executive Director, Columbia Community Care



Who We Are



Erika Strauss Chavarria

March 11, 2020 · 🌐



If they close HCPSS I volunteer to run meals to students and families who are in need, or help in locations where food will be offered. Who is with me???



Jenna Billard, Jessica Brause and 80 others

16 Comments

MISSION

The mission of Columbia Community Care is to create authentic connections and community partnerships. We listen, and respond by providing resources and programs, while respecting the inherent dignity of every person.

VISION

CCC envisions a community that is healing centered, self-determined, collectively powerful, and economically independent through partnerships and collaboration.

What We Want to Achieve



Fully fund FY26 budget



Solidify 3-5 corporate donors



Implement new desired hires



Transition plan to The Source fully developed



Fully implement research project developed by Leadership Howard County to incorporate locally made products into our pantry offerings.



2025 Year-in-Review

This year tested our community in unprecedented ways—and our community responded with extraordinary resilience, courage, and care.

As federal uncertainty threatened the safety net families depend on and grocery prices continued climbing, demand for CCC's services reached record highs. We delivered to nearly 50% more families than the previous year, proving once again that grassroots organizations are essential infrastructure in times of crisis.

But we also doubled down on our commitment to long-term change. We invested in youth through transformative summer programming. We stood before county leaders to demand restorative justice over incarceration. We welcomed service-year members who arrived seeking experience and left with a calling.

These stories reflect our core belief: if one person in a community is unwell, we are all unwell. This year, we showed up for each other—not just with groceries, but with mentorship, advocacy, and a refusal to accept systems that fail our neighbors. The work continues, and so does our hope.

United We STAND: Summer Program for Howard County Teens

While many Howard County families can afford summer camps and community association memberships, working-class families—some working multiple jobs and still struggling—continue to face financial barriers that make summertime opportunities challenging for their children.

This summer, CCC's PUSH (Persevere Until Success Happens) program joined forces with longtime partner STAND (Stepping Towards a New Destiny Corporation) to create an impactful solution. The six-week United We STAND program served 32 teens from diverse backgrounds, from straight-A students, to court-referred youth, and others whose choices may lead them into trouble with the law. The program provided life and communication skills, financial literacy, mentorship, health and healing resources, and career insights. Various professionals spoke to participants about topics ranging from personal hygiene to law to electricity. The teens also participated in a Shark Tank-style competition to develop solutions for world problems, with winners receiving money to donate to an organization or start a nonprofit.



The results were powerful. Financial literacy awareness increased and social IQ improved among participants. Court-referred teens had zero new arrests or repeat offenses. As one participant shared: "The STAND program has helped me mentally. It has made me ambitious and it has given me courage while at the same time helping me become the man I can be."

Record High Demand Amid Federal Uncertainty



The federal government shutdown created unprecedented pressure on grassroots agencies like CCC. Additional threat to SNAP benefits and rising food costs stretched CCC's ability to meet demand – but our donors stepped up with unprecedented giving during a challenging time.

The federal government shutdown, which lasted for over a month in October and November 2025, skyrocketed already increasing demand. CCC reported a more than 50% increase in week-to-week grocery orders, starting in late summer.

The increase was driven partly by relentless grocery price inflation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index for food-at-home increased 3.2% over the past year, on top of double-digit increases in 2022 and 2023. Some prices rose even faster: ground beef and other staples like coffee, eggs, and baby products are significantly more expensive than they were pre-pandemic.

But CCC donors responded, with power. Online donations during the same period increased by over 600% – a resounding increase that helped provide a safety net for hundreds of families during a tumultuous and uncertain time.

Maryland Corps Members Find Purpose at CCC

Through the Maryland Corps / Service Year Option through the MD Department of Service and Civic Innovation, a service-year initiative providing young adults with full-time paid opportunities to work with nonprofits while gaining professional skills, CCC welcomed two 2024 high school graduates, Jocelyn and Sophia. Working Tuesday through Saturday, they split their time between grocery collection days and food pantry operations.

What started as a gap year work opportunity became an experience shaping both women's future paths.

"I've decided to go to college after this," says Jocelyn, who is waiting on college acceptances. "I'm hoping to study something around sociology or policy." Her experience at CCC has sparked an interest in hunger relief policy work. "I like what we're doing here at CCC, but there's only so much we can do to help here. I want to try to make changes directly from the source."



Sophia plans to continue exploring service opportunities.

"After my year is over, I want to look into more nonprofit programs to work or volunteer with. This job has opened my eyes to a lot of options that I did not know were there."

And this year we have welcomed Zakariya and David who are working in our food pantries and assisting with social media and video marketing.

YES Council: Transforming Youth Outcomes Through Restorative Justice

On December 1, 2025, CCC's Executive Director Erika Chavarria stood before community members, county leaders, and young people to present the final report of Howard County's Youth Engagement Strategies (YES) Council. Transforming Youth Outcomes through Restorative Justice is the product of months of listening, data analysis, and courageous truth-telling by youth leaders, mentors, educators, service providers, faith leaders, and community members who refused to accept the status quo.

At CCC, the YES Council's vision reflects everything we do. These are the same families and communities we serve every week—ALICE households navigating systems that were not built with them in mind. Our young people have been saying with absolute clarity: they need systems that respond with care, not control. They need investment, not incarceration. They deserve more than promises, pilots, and press releases. They deserve a community willing to act with urgency, integrity, and love.

CCC answers this call through programs like PUSH and United We STAND, providing proactive, preventative interventions that give young people the mentorship, skills, and support they need to thrive. We remove barriers to accessing food and resources. We create spaces where youth are seen, heard, and invested in. As a member of the YES Council, we're committed to turning this report's recommendations into reality, building a Howard County where every young person has what they need to succeed.





Understanding Our Impact

We envision Howard County as a model for what's possible when communities commit to collective liberation. We are building what we envision in our perfect world in Howard County:

Reliable access to nutritious food without shame or barriers

Whether through neighborhood distribution sites serving 300–400 families weekly or 60–70 weekly home deliveries for those without transportation

Youth discovering their potential and purpose

Through mentorship programs that currently serve 50 young people, building confidence, teaching life skills, and creating pathways to success through exposure opportunities (career and beyond) and experiences, like the transformative Black August Summer Institute that connects personal transformation with social change.

Holistic community care

That addresses root causes of trauma while meeting immediate needs, recognizing that healing requires confronting systemic oppression through our community partnership programs, consistently serving 200 participants yearly during our Peace & Justice Circles and BUILD Workshops.

Dignity and respect

In every interaction, with 400+ volunteer hours weekly of neighbor-to-neighbor care demonstrating that another world is possible through mutual aid and collective care.





Hearing from the People We Serve

In March 2026, we deployed our first multilingual visitor survey across all three CCC sites. Sixty-five community members completed the survey in a single collection period, sharing their experiences with our program and their perspectives on the larger forces shaping food insecurity in Howard County. **Here is what we heard:**

CCC helps families feel confident that they won't run out of food before the week ends, with more than three-quarters of the respondents agreeing with the statement "My household has enough food to get through the week." For families managing part-time wages, unemployment, and household sizes averaging 3.5 people, that is not a small thing.

Food security is not just a physical condition. It is an emotional one. Hunger creates anxiety, disrupts sleep, concentration, and relationships. **86% of respondents told us that receiving food from CCC helps them feel less anxious**, giving them a measure of mental peace that ripples through every part of their lives.

Perhaps the most powerful data point in our survey: nearly 90% of respondents said that **CCC's services helped them avoid choosing between food and other basic needs**, such as rent, utilities, and transportation.

The survey also helps us understand what still needs to be done. We asked respondents what they believed would make the biggest systemic difference in ending food insecurity, and the answers were clear:

- higher wages (43%)
- more affordable housing (35%)
- lower grocery costs (31%)
- better access to healthcare (28%)

This helps us shape our service, and make the case to funders and policymakers for the work that still needs to be done. But most importantly, it tells us that we are doing the core of what we set out to do: providing food with dignity, reducing stress, and giving families the stability to make choices without sacrifice.

By the Numbers

400 families
served per
week

400+
volunteer
hours/ week

50+ mentees
involved with
PUSH &
STAND

165 Lyft rides for community
members without
transportation

5 partner programs:
Volleyball, STAND, PUSH,
CCCircles for Peace & Justice
& BUILD Workshops



Thank You to Our Volunteers

A Special Thank You to Meg & Tom Feroli



There are people who show up, and then there are Meg and Tom Feroli. As a co-founder of Columbia Community Care, Meg has been the beating heart of this organization from the very beginning. Her dedication to this community is not seasonal or circumstantial, it is unwavering, unconditional, and utterly her own.

In every grocery bag packed, every neighbor served, and every door opened wider because of CCC's work, Meg's fingerprints are there.

Meg is the kind of advocate who doesn't wait to be asked. She sees a need and moves toward it, with energy, with compassion, and with a quiet conviction that every person deserves dignity and care. Her belief in this community is not a talking point, it is a practice she has lived out every single day.

And behind so much of that work stood Tom. Quietly, consistently, and without hesitation, Tom gave countless hours of his time, energy, engineering skills, and even humor, to support CCC's mission. His contributions may not always have been in the spotlight, but they were felt, deeply and truly, by everyone in this community.

As Meg and Tom begin this exciting new chapter in North Carolina, we send them off with full hearts. Howard County is better because they were here. Columbia Community Care is stronger because they gave so much of themselves to it. To Meg and Tom...the words "thank you" will never be enough. We are eternally grateful for your vision, your heart, your time, and every moment you chose this community. We will carry your legacy forward with the same love and dedication you modeled for all of us.

A Special Thank You to April Lee



Columbia Community Care runs because of people like April Lee. As our Director of Pantry Operations, April is the steady force behind the scenes that keeps everything moving. Her leadership is felt in every organized shelf, every smoothly run grocery delivery, and every neighbor who walks away with what they need. She shows up, reliably, consistently, and with genuine compassion day after day.

April leads with both her head and her heart. She brings order to the behind-the-scenes work that makes our mission possible, all while never losing sight of the people we serve. April, thank you for your dedication, your leadership, and your powerful commitment to this community. CCC is what it is because of you.



Thank You to Our Volunteers

Thank You to Our Volunteer Leadership Team & Everyone Who Serves

At its core, Columbia Community Care is a volunteer-led organization, and that is something we never take for granted. To our incredible volunteer leadership team: Meg, Megan, Rachel, Vivian, Jason, James, Gabriel, Claude, and Katie...thank you. Every Saturday, without fail, you show up. You organize, you lead, you serve, and you make sure our families get exactly what they need. Your consistency and commitment are the backbone of everything we do.



And to every individual volunteer, organization, and group who has dedicated their time and shown up with compassion and love, this organization exists because of you. You are not just helping us run a food pantry, you are proving, week after week, that a community that shows up for one another is an unstoppable force.

That dedication has not gone unnoticed. We are proud to share that CCC has received a 2025 Best of Howard County Volunteer Organization Honorable Mention, and remarkably, we have been recognized as a winner or honorable mention every single year since 2020. That streak is not a reflection of our leadership alone. It is a reflection of every hand that has packed a grocery bag, carried a box, greeted a neighbor, and given their time freely and lovingly.

CCC has always been people-powered, neighbor-focused, and love-driven. That is your doing. Thank you for making this mission yours.





Donor Recognition

Sponsors of the 2025 BonBon Holiday Bash & Toy Drive

The 2nd annual Jonathan Johnson Community Coalition Holiday BonBon Bash and Toy Drive, benefitting Columbia Community Care was on December 4, 2025. We brought together legendary entertainers DJ Pete Rock and Treach of Naughty By Nature, along with incredible food and drinks from Reckless Shepherd. This 80s themed party was a blast, and we collected hundred of toy donations for local families. We want to thank the sponsors who made this event possible:





Donor Recognition

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS & MONTHLY SUSTAINERS!

Total Given by Monthly Sustainers
\$42,260

Total of individual gifts over \$500
56 donors, \$44,851

There are many ways to support Columbia Community Care.

Make a one-time gift or set up a recurring monthly donation online.

Shop our Amazon Wish List or host a food drive to re-stock our pantries.

Talk to your financial planner about designating CCC in your will or trust, or making a planned gift through stocks, securities, investments, or other assets.

Statement of Financial Position Summary - copy

Columbia Community Care

As of December 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL
Assets	\$275,307.77
Current Assets	\$239,489.77
Bank Accounts	\$238,489.77
Accounts Receivable	\$1,000.00
Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total for Current Assets	\$239,489.77
Fixed Assets	\$35,818.00
Total for Assets	\$275,307.77
Liabilities and Equity	\$275,307.77
Liabilities	\$14,722.14
Current Liabilities	\$14,722.14
Accounts Payable	\$0.00
Credit Cards	\$2,332.14
Other Current Liabilities	\$12,390.00
Total for Current Liabilities	\$14,722.14
Total for Liabilities	\$14,722.14
Equity	\$260,585.63
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$275,307.77