

Organization Backgrounds and Speaker Biographies

Manna Food Center

Manna's origins reflect the shared efforts of community, civic and faith leaders to establish a centralized food bank for Montgomery County – and their history is just as remarkable as the people they serve.

When Manna's doors opened in 1983, they were the doors of a vacant elementary school. Operations began with a meager budget, a single pledge of \$3,100 and a donation of 16,000 pounds of food. At the time, Manna served just several hundred people.

Ever-increasing community support has allowed Manna to expand the scope of our work, and original operations are hardly recognizable. Now, Manna distributes approximately 12,000 pounds of food daily. They operate as more than just a food bank; they are also a center of distribution and nutrition education. They have grown from serving hundreds of people each year to serving 50,510.



Jackie DeCarlo, Chief Executive Officer

Jackie's professional background is in education and not-for-profit management, and she has promoted economic and social justice within communities around the United States, in Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Jackie was the first director of the newly independent Fair Trade Resource Network and worked for eight years at Catholic Relief Services, leading its Fair Trade program expansion in the United States. Currently serving as Manna's Chief Executive Officer, Jackie is responsible for the strategic development of the leading community-based organization working to end hunger in Montgomery County, MD. In addition obtaining a B.A. in Sociology from Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, GA, Jackie earned her M.S. in Administration from University College at the University of Maryland.



Angela Whitmal, Senior Director of Administration & Participant Services

Angela has been an integral part of Manna’s senior management team since 2005 and is currently responsible for both Manna’s logistics and participant services teams. She is the internal data “guru” helping build out the technological infrastructure and commitment to being data-centered and participant centered organization. She is currently on the Advisory Board of Kaiser Permanente’s Unite Us social care referral platform. Angela has many years of leadership experience including tenure as director and curator of the Albany Civil Rights Movement Museum. She received her Master of Arts from Eastern Illinois University and completed undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Jenna Umbriac, RD, Director of Programs & Policies

Jenna is a registered dietitian dedicated to educating about and contributing to the creation of a healthful, sustainable, and equitable food system. As Director of Programs & Safety Policies at Manna, Jenna directs the school-based food assistance program and oversees nutrition education programming. Jenna also works to fill Manna’s warehouse with regionally produced and nutritious food through donor education and partnerships with local farms and farm markets. Jenna currently serves as co-chair of the Food Council’s Food Access and Recovery Working Group. She earned a B.S. in Biology from Loyola University Maryland, an M.S. in Nutrition from Bastyr University in Kenmore, Washington and completed her dietetic internship at Virginia Tech.

Clifton Park Baptist Church Aeroponics Project

Clifton Park Baptist Church, under the Pastoral leadership of Rev. Essentino A. Lewis, has been serving groceries to their church for over 14 years. Once the pandemic began, our community's needs increased and they went into action. They began a partnership with Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services as one of eight Service Consolidation Hubs. Their first year they served over 60,000 groceries packages and are currently serving 1,400-1,700 households each week. They also distribute diapers, baby wipes, clothing, offer case management services and partner with local organizations for them to offer their services and resources to our community. They are growing their own food to help sustain their growing weekly food distributions.



Ms. Randi Drewry, Outreach Coordinator and Service Consolidation Hub Coordinator, Clifton Park Baptist Church

Ms. Randi Drewry has been the Outreach Coordinator for Clifton Park Baptist Church since 2016 and Service Consolidation Hub Coordinator for the last year. She has been very active in the community by participating and spearheading events, global mission trips, food and item drives, Diversity Dinners and responding to the community's needs and creating partnerships with local organizations to address those needs as a community. During the pandemic she created partnerships to ensure that food needs would be met for the community's crisis. Along with food she has coordinated several vaccine clinics, began case management opportunities during events, provides the community with up-to-date information such as rental assistance, voter registration, employment opportunities.

Randi began a nonprofit, Green Seeds, to fill the food insecurity gap that was caused during the pandemic. Green Seeds helps to create and sustain food systems for communities and individual households while being good stewards of our environment. They partner with organizations to manage aeroponic gardens that produce food for those experiencing food insecurities, along with guiding and assisting households to grow within their own homes for sustainability. The current aeroponic garden provides food for the 5 monthly food distributions and is working on building a greenhouse at Clifton Park Baptist Church to house another 24 aeroponic towers.

Randi was selected to be part of a worldwide cohort focusing on controlled environment agriculture that was put together by the Rockefeller Foundation, Thought for Food, and a few other organizations that presented solutions to the question, ‘How do we feed 10 billion people in 2050?’ during the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 to UN partners.



Rev. Dr. Essentino A. Lewis Jr. , Pastor, Clifton Park Baptist Church

Essentino Lewis, Jr. is a visionary and progressive thinker guided by the conviction that authentic Christian faith is demonstrated not only through what one says, but by what one does. His well-respected civic and social leadership has extended into the areas of faith, law, business and the academy.

Rev. Lewis is the pastor of Clifton Park Baptist Church, a vibrant ministry located in Silver Spring, Maryland, a diverse suburb of Washington, DC. He believes in encouraging a brand of discipleship that equips persons to honor God and serve others. Under his leadership, Clifton Park has established meaningful connections with global and domestic community serving organizations to impact areas such as international health outcomes, literacy, public safety and affordable housing.

Rev. Lewis has always been burdened by issues of social justice and civil rights. Prior to his call to full-time ministry, he excelled as an attorney, working for almost a decade as the assistant general counsel at Morgan State University. He also clerked at the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, helping enforce protections against race, age and gender discrimination.

Rev. Lewis holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo, a Master of Arts in Biblical Exposition from Lancaster Bible College – Capital Seminary & Graduate School, a Juris Doctor from the University of Maryland School of Law, and a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, where he serves on the adjunct faculty. Rev. Lewis has been married to Dr. Cassandra C. Lewis for 24 years and they have three wonderful children.



Sara Mussie, Senior Network Builder, Impact Silver Spring

Sara has more than seven years of experience in community development work at IMPACT. She began her work as a facilitator working with immigrant parents through the IMPACT in the Schools program. She became the lead organizer of IMPACT’s Parent Educator Program before moving to her current work with the Family Asset Building Network. Sara is a native of Ethiopia and, in addition to English, speaks Amharic and German. Sara has just stepped into her role as Bel Pre Network Builder.

Food Systems Resiliency Roundtable



Heather Bruskin, Executive Director, Montgomery County Food Council

Heather leads the operational and strategic initiatives of the Montgomery County Food Council, coordinating the contributions of the organization’s 11 staff, 400+ volunteers of the Council, Working Groups, Board of Directors, and 200+ community partner organizations toward our collective food system goals and achievements. Heather spent the first decade of her career as an administrator and program director at MIT, Georgetown University, and the University of Virginia. Prior to her work with the Food Council, Heather also served as President of multiple volunteer-driven community-based organizations in Montgomery County focused on early childhood education and parent resources. Heather holds a B.A. from Tufts University and an M. Ed. from the University of Virginia. Heather serves as co-lead of the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force and Co-Chair of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, and as a

member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments FARM Committee, National Capital Region Food and Water Project Technical Advisory Committee, Montgomery County's Community Health Needs Assessment Advisory Committee, COVID Recovery Executive Committee, and its Small Business Recovery Workgroup, and the Nonprofit Montgomery Advocacy Committee and Healthcare Initiative Foundation Equity Taskforce, and she is an active leader and volunteer in her community and local schools.



**Vanessa Pierre, Founder, Homestead Hustle and Healing
Member, Montgomery County Food Advisory Board**

Vanessa Pierre is a garden coach, educator, and food activist in the DC Metro area. When she is not performing her functions of being a single mother to three beautiful children and working full time, she runs an organization whose mission is to build strong, self-sufficient, empowered and healthy minority communities through food & gardening education, demonstration, & advocacy.

Her brand, Homestead Hustle & Healing, is an online platform with local community initiatives, whose mission is to end food insecurity among minority populations. She is a member of the Food Security Advisory Board of her local Food Council, as well as a Client Leadership Councilmember for the Capital Area Food Bank.

She hasn't always lived in the Capital Region. Vanessa comes from a Caribbean community in South Florida. Growing up, she spent most summers with her family in Borobridge, a little-known town in Jamaica where she says "farming is wealth." Her grandparents had a lot of land and animals, and everything was fresh. They often fed members of the community who visited the house.

After graduation from the Community Advocacy Institute in April 2020, Vanessa testified in front of the local legislature in support of a Farmers Market that would bring healthy, culturally appropriate foods to her underserved community of White Oak.

Taking her own advice to do more, she began offering free bi-weekly workshops for beginning gardeners, live Q&As called “Master Gardener Mondays”, as well as hosting her panel series, 3H Table Talk, to showcase strategies to grow in and out of the garden.

In February 2021, she decided to show her support once again in support of Maryland Legislation, the Heat & Eat Bill to put more money into the hands of SNAP benefit recipients as well as energy assistance.

Vanessa is very much of the mind that change must come from action and legislation.

Her current initiatives include bringing a Farmers Market to her neighborhood with culturally appropriate foods, developing a gardening school curriculum for Title I elementary schools in her area, and continuing to increase community knowledge of the benefits of growing your own food.

Camilla Pinares, Member, Montgomery County Food Council Advisory Board and SNAP Advocate



Michael J. Wilson, Director, Maryland Hunger Solutions

Michael joined Maryland Hunger Solutions in July 2013 as Director. In this role, he is helping to lead Maryland’s premier hunger advocacy, education, and outreach organization as it works to end hunger and improve the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income families in Maryland. Michael serves in a leadership role in many statewide coalitions and is a collaborator with other anti-poverty advocates.

For more than three decades, Michael has been a leading advocate for economic and social justice. He worked on Capitol Hill as a legislative and press assistant for the late U.S. Representative Charles Hayes (IL). He also served in numerous positions at the U.S. Department of Labor, culminating as Chief of Staff in the Employment Standards Administration where he coordinated legislative, regulatory, communications, and policy development. Michael also was an international officer and director at the United Food and Commercial Workers International

Union where he headed the legislative and political department and led the union's efforts in food policy and worker advocacy. Michael served as a FRAC Board Member for more than a decade, as well as a Board Member for the Consumer Federation of America and Americans for Democratic Action, where he also served as National Director.

Michael currently chairs the Board of the Montgomery County Food Council, formerly co-chaired the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, and served on the Howard County Food Task Force. He also serves as a member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Advisory committee, and on the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, where he chairs the Communication and Coordination Committee.



Kenneth Oldman, President and CEO, United Way of Frederick County

Ken has been President & CEO of United Way of Frederick County (UWFC) since August 2016. He is responsible for the developing the organization's long-range vision and developing the business strategy to advance the organization's objectives. He and his small but capable team have developed and advanced strategies to support ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families in the focus areas of health, education and financial stability. ALICE are those who are working but unable to afford a basic cost of living – they are among the most vulnerable to job losses, food insecurity, homelessness and sickness.

United Way team accomplishments include developing the Prosperity Center's Pathway to Financial Stability, a key strategic initiative to support ALICE families; nearly doubling charitable gifts through the Unity Campaign, a multi-community fundraising campaign bringing new resources to ALICE households (Frederick County, MD and Berkeley County, WV); and springing to action in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to bring immediate and long-term relief to ALICE households in crisis. In May of 2021, Oldham and the UWFC team were named 8th District Hero of the Week by U.S. Representative Jamie Raskin (D-Md) for their work assisting families with the federal Child Tax Credit.



Ivie Baker, Program Manager, Community Kitchen at Crossroads Community Food Network

Ivie brings a wealth of entrepreneurship experience to Crossroads, which he gained by establishing a food startup while pursuing his MBA at Howard University. Having worn multiple hats in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors since then, Ivie's focus now is to share business insights and creative problem-solving skills with Crossroads' food entrepreneurs. He has a passion for seeing growth from all angles and utilizing technology and intellectual property to scale up. Away from the kitchen, you may find Ivie planting in his garden or practicing handstands to find the perfect balance.