



2023 Participation, Projects and Accomplishments

In 2023, Community Alliance of South County (CASC) expanded our presence in South County by building on our connections within the community and by working with volunteers in support of our projects. We developed new programs and projects in response to community needs and interests, continued to support and enhance our ongoing projects, and partnered with organizations and individuals in support of their community service programs. We took steps to improve as an organization by expanding our Board, by opening our planning sessions to include new voices, and by becoming a member of Maryland Non-Profits.

New in 2023

Hydroponics: The Magic of Light, Water, Nutrients and Seeds (January thru March)

In early 2023, CASC partnered with the Deale Library on a project to introduce basic concepts of hydroponic gardening, with an emphasis on growing edible plants. A demonstration garden was maintained and displayed inside the library to spark curiosity about how plants grow and about growing food without soil. As they became ready to harvest, herbs and salad greens were shared with library patrons and staff. At the conclusion of the project, the plants were donated to the library for their outdoor garden.



Ham Happening (May)

When a local market received a windfall delivery of hams, CASC worked with members of the Board of the SCAN Food Pantry to help distribute over 600 hams to food pantries and distribution events in South County. In a true community effort, the market provided and helped load the hams, CASC identified pantries and joined with members of SCAN to deliver the hams, and volunteers at pantries and distribution sites unloaded, stored then distributed the hams - which were greatly appreciated by those in the community who received them.

Tracey's Elementary School "Spring Fling" (May)



CASC members greeted students and family members with games, toys and snacks while sharing information about community services such as the SCAN Food Pantry and the Call N' Ride transportation service.



Summer Kick-Off at Deale Library (June)

CASC joined the library's event and brought puzzles and games for kids and families at the kickoff of the Library's summer reading program.



Produce Partners (June thru September)

As part of the *Produce Partners*, CASC members helped structure and carry out a community-wide effort to collect excess produce from local growers and vendors and distribute it to residents in underserved neighborhoods in South County. Another true community effort, *Produce Partners* involved volunteers from church groups, civic organizations, local growers and vendors, and individuals.

"Sneak a Peek" Back to School Event at Shady Side Elementary School (August)



At the invitation of the school Principal, CASC Board members participated in the back-to-school celebration at Shady Side Elementary school. Hoping to ease anxiety about school and generate excitement for the new school year, CASC members distributed Hackey Sacks and healthy snacks to the children, and provided information about the Call N' Ride and other services to parents and family members.



Dental Kit Distribution (November)

CASC was grateful to receive a generous donation of dental kits to distribute to our community. Kits for kids were brought to two local elementary schools and kits for adults were shared with local church ministries.

Coats for Kids (December)

CASC members collected coats as part of a joint community effort to provide coats for students in need at a local elementary schools.

Linus Project Blankets (December)

CASC organized a project to prepare, assemble and distribute fleece blankets. Volunteers joined CASC members and prepared 23 blankets for the 2023 Summer Camp attendees and 14 additional blankets, which were donated to Project Linus, Annapolis Maryland Chapter for distribution to pediatric and neonatal intensive care units at hospitals in the Annapolis area.



Ongoing and Annual Projects

South County Community Needs Meetings

A guiding principle of our organization is to build programs and projects in response to needs expressed by members of the community. Meetings and outreach events are conducted for this purpose. In 2023, CASC continued inviting members of the community to bi-monthly virtual “Community Needs Meetings.” In these meetings, community members shared information about their needs, and representatives from community organizations provided information about available services. New connections were made and collaborations developed at each session.

Camp: A Week of Possibilities – Second Summer

In an effort to provide an opportunity for some South County children to benefit from an experience that might not be otherwise available to them, CASC developed the “Camp: A Week of Possibilities” project in 2022 and expanded it in 2023. Through this project, twenty-two children (double the number from the prior summer) from South County, ages 8 thru 11, were able to attend week-long overnight camps during the summer. At camp, kids swam and kayaked for the first time, excelled at games, and gained craft skills. Best of all, they formed new friendships. Follow-up meetings and activities were held in December to further develop the social and emotional skills fostered by the camp experience. The children, their parents and camp counselors reported that the children thoroughly enjoyed the camps and identified specific instances of personal growth and achievement.

As in the prior year, this program would not have been possible without the generosity of Anne Arundel Women Giving Together and the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel, the Rotary Club of South Anne Arundel County, mini-scholarships from Camp Letts and West River Methodist Camp, and private donations.

Bountiful (Weekend Food) Backpacks

For the fourth year, CASC members participated in the Bountiful Backpacks program at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. This program provides bags of food for a number of students at Tracey's Elementary School. CASC members assisted with packing bags and delivering food to the school on a weekly basis.



SCAN Food Pantry Support

SCAN operates a federally-subsidized food pantry that has been in existence for over 40 years in South County. Clients must meet criteria and can receive food once each month. CASC maintains a bin at the Deale Library to collect nonperishable food donations. When the bin is full, CASC collects the food and delivers it to SCAN. CASC members also volunteer, and recruit volunteers, for the pantry.



Monthly Food Calendars and Resource Lists

Continuing with the project established during the early days of the COVID pandemic, CASC prepared and published two documents monthly, identifying food resources available to residents of South County. Relevant events and sites are identified from state, county and local sources and compiled into both a calendar and a more detailed resource listing. The calendar identifies, by date, emergency food distribution events taking place in South County, including locations and times. The resource list provides additional details about the events on the calendar, and includes additional emergency food resources not applicable for a calendar listing. Both documents are posted on the CASC website, on the CASC Facebook page, and are emailed to an extensive list of faith organizations, community groups and individuals.

Weekly Information Sharing – Community Connections

As a known source for outreach to the South County community, CASC receives information from numerous agencies, organizations and individuals regarding events and opportunities of possible interest to our neighbors, including requests for volunteers to assist at food pantries, food distribution events, and with programs such as the STAIR reading program at local elementary schools. Weekly, CASC prepares and emails relevant information to an extensive list of South County contacts. Recipients are encouraged to share information and flyers with their communities.

Community Outreach and Collaboration

CASC regularly receives invitations to collaborate with other organizations on projects which benefit residents of South County. CASC has worked with local elementary schools, the library, state and county agencies, and local organizations including the South County Assistance Network (SCAN), the Ralph J. Bunche Community Center and STAIR Annapolis. Community financial support, in-kind donations, and volunteer assistance were critical to the success of projects such as the Hydroponics program, the Summer Camp project, the Linus Blanket project, and the Ham Happening.

Conclusions

Expanded community collaboration was key for CASC in “moving forward – working together” during 2023. CASC’s prior work in the areas of food accessibility, transportation and education support led to new opportunities for partnering with individuals and organizations in South County.

Looking ahead to 2024, we anticipate expanding our on-going projects as well as developing new programs that respond to changing needs and challenges in South County. We hope broaden our impact on the community and will continue to engage community members in projects that serve the needs of our neighbors in South County.