



Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc.

# Annual Report FY2015



## Dear Friends,

Laurel is a wonderfully inspiring place to live and work. Its rich history and small town charm are easy to love. But what really makes Laurel unique is the sense of community that is equally extended to residents and visitors alike. In our sometimes challenging line of work, we are continually inspired by Laurel families, congregations, businesses, and civic groups who genuinely care about their community and all of its members. This incredibly supportive environment makes it possible for places like LARS to exist, to bring that compassion to those who need it most.

LARS is proud to be a source of hope and relief for our community members who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Case managers in LARS' Crisis Center provide personalized, one-on-one support to individuals and families struggling to meet their basic needs. For some, help may come in the form of money towards rent after an unexpected illness causes lost hours

at work. For others, help means not having to choose between buying food or medications. Thanks to the generosity of many community donors, congregations, and foundations, LARS is able to fill a crucial gap in service to vulnerable populations in Laurel who lack the means to travel to larger social service hubs in the county. Through its unique programs and extensive community partnerships, LARS connects people in need with solutions for stability and long-term success.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for everything you do for LARS and the Laurel community!

Sincerely,

Leah Paley, LGSW  
Executive Director

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### Staff:

Leah Paley, LGSW  
*Executive Director*

Stephanie Guzman  
*Director of Emergency Services & Community Relations*

Lauren Cohen, LGSW  
*Director of Supportive Housing*

Laura Wellford  
*Development & Marketing Manager*

Lynette Greenwood  
*Office Manager*

Janada Randall, LBSW  
*Transitional Housing Case Manager*

Angelica Christian  
*Case Manager/Volunteer Coordinator*

Kennesha Rodgers  
*Bilingual Case Manager*



## LARS

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@laureladvocacy

# Mission & History

LARS' mission is to enable homeless and low-income people in Laurel, MD who are in crisis to achieve stability and long-term self-sufficiency. We envision a community that treats all people with dignity and helps everyone meet their basic needs.

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc. (LARS) was founded in 1987 by a group of local congregation leaders and community members who sought a consolidated approach to responding to the number of people coming to their doors for food and financial help. Today LARS is a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization staffed by trained social workers and continues to receive financial and volunteer support from many faith-based partner organizations.

## Board of Directors:

### President

Don Ausherman  
*Holy Trinity Lutheran Church*

### Vice President

Nicole Tuchinda  
*Community Partner*

### Secretary

Cheryl Lee  
*Our Savior Lutheran Church*

### Treasurer

Lewis Taylor  
*Emmanuel United Methodist Church*

Linda Bergofsky  
*Oseh Shalom Synagogue*

Bob Conley  
*First Baptist Church*

Tom Dernoga  
*Community Partner*

Gary Hall  
*St. Mary of the Mills Church*

Dot Brownlie  
*Laurel Presbyterian Church*

Wesley Kreger  
*Community of Christ*

Lisa Misra  
*Bethany Community Church*

Betsy Tervo  
*Oaklands Presbyterian Church*

Larry Krieger  
*Resurrection of our Lord Church*

Jenny Wall  
*St. Philip's Episcopal Church*

Mike Woodruff  
*St. Nicholas Catholic Church*



(Left) LARS' Community Crisis Center is open three days a week to residents of the four Laurel zip codes: 20707, 20708, 20723, and 20724, which includes parts of Prince George's, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties. LARS received a large capital grant in 2010 to build a new office from the ground up, replacing the dilapidated building that the agency was quickly outgrowing.

(Right) Nancy Herron, a volunteer at Emmanuel United Methodist Church, connects with Justin, a Laurel Winter Shelter guest. LARS conducts intake screenings for guests of the Winter Shelter and provides outreach support to the congregations who host the shelter each week from early November through late March.

## Clara's Story...

At 77 years old, surviving on microwaveable meals and sharing a few feet of living space in the backseat of a car with two dogs was never in Clara's plan for retirement. After losing her home, she turned to the county for help. Feeling lost and alone in a new world of public assistance waiting lists, paperwork, and constant stress, Clara's dogs were her only remaining comforts. When she was told it would be next to impossible to find immediate placement in a subsidized housing unit that was both handicap accessible and allowed pets, her heart sank. LARS' Director of Supportive Housing, Lauren Cohen, reviewed the case and set up a meeting with Clara to assess her eligibility for placement in a local church shelter. Lauren quickly noticed that Clara was much more at ease in the presence

of her companion dogs, and that separating her from them would be more damaging and more traumatizing to her than being homeless for the rest of her life. Luckily, the church agreed to take Clara in, along with both dogs, until a more permanent solution could be found. With a little negotiating from LARS' case management team and Prince George's County DSS, Clara and her dogs will be able to move from the church shelter into an apartment of their own in mid-October. Clara will become the tenth current resident in LARS' Permanent Housing Program, where she will contribute 30% of her income towards the rental of a local apartment leased by LARS—a place she can stay for however long she needs. Lauren will continue to work with Clara during weekly case management visits, making sure her health, mental health, (and dogs!) are taken care of.





Stephanie Guzman, LARS' Director of Emergency Services & Community Relations, talks with a client in the Crisis Center.



"They have paid my rent, they have given me a lot of food, they have helped with Christmas and Thanksgiving... **They've been there when we needed them the most.**" -Barbara Brewer, LARS client



A child of one of LARS' Transitional Housing Program participants visits with Santa at the annual holiday party.

## Emergency Services

- Short-term financial assistance to prevent evictions and utility stoppage
- Assistance with security deposits and first month's rent
- Vouchers for eyeglasses, clothing, and furniture
- Referrals for shelter, mental health, and substance abuse treatment
- Food pantry which can be utilized by clients every 30 days
- SHARE Food Program site, which allows clients to order affordable monthly food packages; LARS receives donated packages from the Knights of Columbus who deliver food and coordinate client orders
- Financial assistance for homeless clients to obtain ID cards and birth certificates, prescriptions, and drug treatment
- Employment program assisting clients with job searching, resume writing, and applying for jobs online
- Access to an on-site representative from the Prince George's County Department of Social Services to apply for and renew benefits (one day a week)
- Partnerships with organizations such as the Capital Area Food Bank and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide local access to county-wide services

## Supportive Housing

LARS operates two housing programs which provide subsidized housing and supportive services to clients living in local apartments leased by LARS.

**The Transitional Housing Program** provides subsidized housing and case management for 10 homeless families for a period of up to 24 months. Parents attend weekly life skills classes on topics such as financial management, parenting, healthy eating and exercise, higher education, job searching, and homeownership.

**The Permanent Housing Program** provides subsidized housing, ongoing case management, and financial support to 10 chronically homeless, disabled individuals. A case manager visits these clients twice each week and creates individualized service plans to help them meet their goals and maintain independent living in their community.

# Impact & Outcomes

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

1,871 households served  
**=4,616 individuals**  
 168 self-reported as homeless



homeless families were safely sheltered in LARS' Transitional Housing Program this year; 5 of these families graduated from the program and secured permanent housing



chronically homeless, disabled individuals resided in LARS' Permanent Housing Program; 1 participant moved into a long-term medical care facility during the program year



## FOOD

Distributed 11,025 bags of food, worth an estimated \$220,500

11,025



## SHELTER

Prevented 147 evictions through emergency rental assistance totaling \$52,740

147

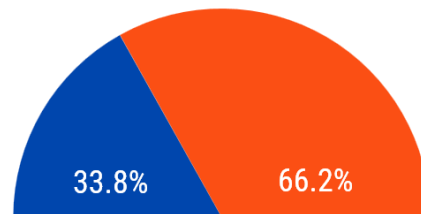


## UTILITIES

Restored power or prevented utility cutoff to 38 homes with financial assistance totaling \$9,622

38

**LARS received 6,848 bags of donated food, worth an estimated \$136,965! Volunteers delivered an additional 14,456lbs of fresh produce from the Capital Area Food Bank.**



■ New Clients ■ Returning Clients

442 children had their Christmas wish lists fulfilled

237 clients met with an outreach worker from the Dept. of Social Services to apply for/renew benefits

161 children received school supplies

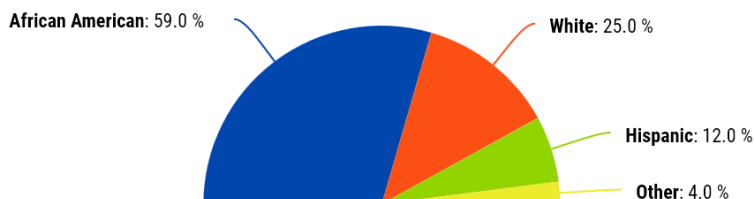
124 families received vouchers for clothing and furniture

66 job-seekers received employment counseling

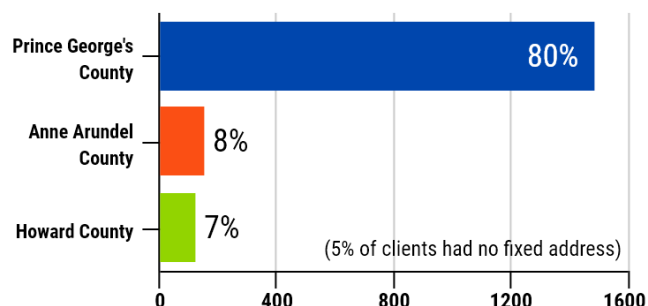
57 adults and children obtained eye exams and glasses

40 homeless individuals obtained a birth certificate or ID

## DEMOGRAPHICS:



Number of clients served by county:





# Our Community

Of Laurel's 25,800 population (2013 estimate), an estimated **7.8%** of residents live below the poverty level. Laurel's per capita income between 2008 and 2012 was \$33,075 and median household income was \$66,355. An estimated **1200** people are currently homeless in Prince George's, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties combined. Homeless and low-income households are vulnerable to crises because they lack resources in reserve – financial and otherwise. The high cost of living, particularly the cost of housing in the Washington DC Metro area, exacerbates the risk and is often what drives people to LARS for services. Further, Laurel's distance from major social service hubs (i.e. Department of Social Services, Veteran's Assistance, etc.) isolates many residents who lack transportation.

For over 28 years, LARS has been a vital lifeline for its community, significantly reducing food insecurity and homelessness in the Greater Laurel area. An estimated **3,500** households have received rental assistance from LARS over the lifetime of the organization. LARS has distributed over **250,000** bags of food from its food pantry, and more than **200** homeless individuals and families have been stably housed through LARS' Transitional and Permanent Housing Programs.

ALL of this is possible because of the tremendous support of our community members. Last fiscal year, **371** unique volunteers contributed **3,263** hours of service to LARS, shelving food in the pantry, answering phones, helping at events, and more. The 1st Annual Spring into Summer 5K held in June raised **\$7,000** (gross) and had **149** participants. The 10th Annual 5K Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving Morning raised **\$45,759** (gross) with **746** participants.

We see great need every day at LARS, but we also see great kindness and generosity. This is what drives us, inspires us, and enables us to continue this important work.



*LARS' food pantry is stocked by many community groups, including the Laurel Community Gardeners, who tend to a donated plot of fresh produce for LARS.*



*Dedicated volunteers John & Rosie McLeod, Maureen Bauer, and Monica Revelle keep the LARS pantry organized and efficient.*



*The Annual Thanksgiving Morning 5K Turkey Trot is a fun family tradition for many, and an important day for LARS to raise awareness and funds for its programs.*

# Financial Status

Income	FY 2014	FY 2015
Congregations	47,685.97	50,728.50
Workplace Giving (United Way, LIC, CFC)	28,790.75	29,906.89
Individual Donors	70,727.66	67,221.31
Corporations/Organizations/Civic Groups	51,650.09	34,239.76
Private Foundations	40,000.00	40,000.00
Turkey Trot	<b>32,377.50</b>	<b>45,759.10</b>
Silent Auction	11,802.25	40.00
Spring into Summer 5K	0.00	7,235.94
Fannie Mae Community Walks	<b>18,915.00</b>	<b>1,739.37</b>
Housing & Urban Development (HUD): Transitional Housing Program	189,311.94	189,312.00
HUD: Permanent Housing Program	163,385.49	168,562.21
HUD: Homeless Supportive Services	<b>48,165.00</b>	<b>*0.00</b>
HUD: Co-Pay/Client Match	37,818.54	35,241.68
HUD: Chronic Homeless	<b>0.00</b>	<b>29,976.14</b>
Public Funding: State	13,000.00	10,000.00
Public Funding: County/Local	169,862.00	253,012.64
Interest Income	1,006.05	1,055.32
Miscellaneous Income	478.62	147.02
In-Kind Contributions	135,466.00	136,186.86
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>1,047,442.86</b>	<b>1,100,364.74</b>
Expenses	FY2014	FY2015
Homeless Supportive Services	44,721.06	0.00
Transitional Housing Program Rent/Client Assistance	189,792.00	185,047.47
Permanent Housing Program Rent/Client Assistance	124,900.95	125,922.23
Chronic Homeless	0.00	22,431.34
Emergency Services Program	15,748.05	28,175.64
Administrative	70,264.15	83,446.88
Personnel	280,791.00	299,736.85
Special Events/Fundraising	16,450.52	14,021.87
In-Kind: Food/Items Distributed	127,800.55	137,837.77
Depreciation	35,660.65	35,613.85
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>1,066,677.29</b>	<b>1,098,049.52</b>
<b>Total Net Income</b>	<b>-19,234.43</b>	<b>2,315.22</b>



*\*LARS was recently required to reallocate its Homeless Supportive Services Grant, which had been used to provide financial assistance to homeless individuals for IDs/birth certificates, dental needs, drug/alcohol treatment, and transportation, as well as fund one case manager's salary. As part of a larger trend towards "rapid re-housing," these federal funds are now being provided to LARS in the form of a Chronic Homeless Grant which will allow LARS' Permanent Housing Program to expand into two additional apartment units.*

*The ability to house two more clients in this program is fantastic news, but it also means that LARS no longer has funding set aside for our homeless clients who cannot afford day-to-day necessities like medications and identification. Unrestricted funds from individual donors, congregations, and businesses are increasingly important to LARS as we attempt to meet the needs of all those who come to our door.*



# The Year Ahead

LARS has recently finalized its strategic plan for the next 5 years. As a part of this process, staff and board members have conducted a thorough assessment of LARS' current activities, resources, and opportunities for program growth.

Looking forward, LARS has a financing gap of approximately \$50,000-\$75,000 each year for FY2016 and FY2017. Continued funding from private foundations and federal programs is uncertain. LARS is also still feeling the effects of losing funding (as much as \$100,000/year) from the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Program, which ended in FY2014. LARS continues to pursue new grants and is committed to finding new solutions to fund our programs. Our generous donors are a crucial part of that solution.

In January 2016, LARS will pilot a **Self-Sufficiency Program** focused on guiding stabilized and motivated clients to achieve their long-term goals through skill development, gainful employment, and weekly support from a LARS case manager. This evidence-based program aims to not only get people back on their feet, but help them *stay* on their feet. We have put a lot of thought and research into this initiative, and we are hopeful that it will help to empower our clients and set them up for sustainable futures as they learn to be their own advocates.

## How You Can Help

### DONATE!

- ⇒ *Online:* Recurring or one-time gifts can be made at [www.laureladvocacy.org](http://www.laureladvocacy.org). Consider setting up a monthly pledge that fits your budget to help support LARS' work throughout the year.
- ⇒ *Mail a check:* Payable to LARS at 311 Laurel Ave, Laurel MD 20707.
- ⇒ *Give at work!* Federal employees and those with a United Way workplace giving program can designate contributions through their respective Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) or United Way campaign. LARS' CFC number is **92544**. LARS' United Way number is **8843**.
- ⇒ Food donations are always needed and appreciated! Start a food drive at your workplace, school, or place of worship. Drop off non-expired, non-perishable food items at LARS during business hours: Mon/Wed/Fri 9am-2pm & Mon 5-7:30pm. Baby items (diapers, wipes, baby food) and hygiene products are also needed.
- ⇒ Adopt a family for the holiday season by fulfilling wish list items for children of LARS clients. Contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or [lwelford@laureladvocacy.org](mailto:lwelford@laureladvocacy.org) for more information.



### VOLUNTEER!

- ⇒ Contact Angelica Christian, LARS' Volunteer Coordinator, at 301-776-0442 ext. 32 or [achristian@laureladvocacy.org](mailto:achristian@laureladvocacy.org) to find out how you can get yourself, your family, or group involved in LARS' work. Whether you volunteer once in a while, once a month, or every week, your contribution of time is one of the most valuable resources to LARS.

### PARTICIPATE!

- ⇒ Run or walk with us at the Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving morning or at our Spring into Summer 5K in May! Contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or [lwelford@laureladvocacy.org](mailto:lwelford@laureladvocacy.org) for more information on participating or sponsoring.



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# LARS

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