

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc.

311 Laurel Avenue • Laurel, MD 20707 • 301.776.0442 • www.laureladvocacy.org

LARS Letter

Serving the Laurel Community Since 1987

Fall 2016 | Volume 29, Issue 2

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Leah Paley, LGSW

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Leah Young
Oseh Shalom

LARS is looking for dedicated individuals to join its Board of Directors! Contact Leah Paley at lpaley@laureladvocacy.org for more information.

Final Print Edition: We're Going Green!

There's still something special about getting a letter in the mail, but for a small organization like LARS, it can be a lot of work (not to mention costly) to get a paper newsletter out of our office and into the hands of our 1,600 supporters!

We will continue to send out special appeals and thank you letters via snail mail, but our bi-annual LARS Letter is going green. We want to make sure you continue to receive important updates from LARS, so we will be transitioning to a quarterly e-newsletter starting in January.

Please visit www.laureladvocacy.org and subscribe to our e-newsletter so we can keep in touch!

If you are already subscribed to our emails, you don't need to do anything extra. You will automatically receive the new e-newsletter, and you can opt-out at any time.

If you'd still like to receive a hard copy of the newsletter, we are happy to accommodate! Just give us a call or send us a note by mail or email. Contact Laura Wellford at 301-776-0442 ext. 27 or lwelford@laureladvocacy.org.

A Place to Gather, Give Thanks, and Grow

The dining room table in their cozy yet comfortable apartment was scattered with papers, books, and crayons, as dad and daughter worked side by side—one studying for his medical technician's exam, one studying for her fourth grade spelling test. Mom was supervising from the end of the table, singing ABC's with the little ones. An ordinary picture of an American family working hard to open doors to new opportunities. "It was a sweet picture" says LARS case manager Alli Milner, as she recalls her recent visit with the family, who had just settled into their new apartment as participants in LARS' Permanent Supportive Housing Program. "Two months ago there was no dining table for them to gather around," says Alli, as she tells their story:

Sam* had been homeless on his own for a while before meeting Joyce*. Sam's father had recently passed away, and he was unable to keep up with the rent on his own. Joyce and her three young children became homeless after her mother, who they were staying with, lost her housing voucher. Sam and Joyce ended up in the

same shelter and developed a strong bond over their shared struggles. Over the years, as both their relationship and their blended family grew, they continued to stay in various shelters and temporary housing, but it was difficult for them to find places where they could all stay together. Most of their nights were spent on the streets. On occasion they were able to afford motel stays, but finding and paying for rooms became tougher and tougher.

To make matters worse, the two youngest children were suffering from chronic bronchitis and Sam was facing serious health problems of his own, having regular asthma attacks and seizures. It was beyond difficult for them to manage their symptoms while constantly being exposed to the elements. The stress of living on the streets was taking an unimaginable toll on every member of the family, both physically and mentally. When Joyce's four-year-old son was diagnosed with autism, it became even more apparent that something needed to change. After completing a vulnerability assessment with Donny Phillips

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LARS Staff

Leah Paley, LGSW
Executive Director

Betsy Bowman, MA
Director of Client Services &
Community Relations

Lauren Cohen, LGSW
Director of Supportive Housing

Laura Wellford
Development & Marketing Manager

Lynette Greenwood
Office Manager

Brian Ruth
Supportive Housing Case Manager

Angelica Christian
Case Manager/Volunteer Coordinator

Alli Milner
Case Manager/Program Coordinator

Holiday Program 2016

Last holiday season, generous donations from 63 local families, community groups, businesses, and congregations fulfilled the holiday wish lists of 543 children. **This year, Alli Milner will be coordinating all of LARS' holiday festivities!** There are many ways to get involved during this busy time of year:

- **Adopt a family** by providing food and gifts for a family ranging in size from 2-8. You will receive a wish list from the family to help guide your purchases.
- **Donate loose gifts** to be distributed to families who are not adopted (new items only)
- **Donate gift cards** (grocery, gas, etc.) for families in need
- **Donate food** for families and seniors (see back page for a list of needed holiday items)
- **Volunteer!** (See opportunities below)

If you are interested in donating or volunteering during this year's Holiday Program, please submit your information through the form at www.laureladvocacy.org/holiday-program.html. For more information, contact Alli Milner at 301-776-0442 ext. 34 or amilner@laureladvocacy.org.

Volunteer Corner

Join the LARS team by volunteering as a:

Holiday Program Elf (October through December)

The holidays can be an especially isolating and stressful time of year for those without the means to celebrate. Volunteers are needed to assist LARS staff with a variety of tasks on and before both of our distribution days: Saturday, November 19th and Saturday, December 17th. From preparing bags of food to carrying gifts to family cars, volunteers will have the unique opportunity to engage with the families LARS serves, as well as work behind-the-scenes to ensure the distribution days run smoothly.

Turkey Trot Pilgrim (Wed 11/23 & Thurs 11/24)

From cheering on our flock of runners and walkers to making sure everyone is well-hydrated during the race, we rely on volunteers at the Thanksgiving Morning Turkey Trot. As a Turkey Trot volunteer, you'll get a special volunteer t-shirt and get to be a part of a growing Laurel tradition! What is the best part, you ask? You can volunteer in the morning and still make it home by 10AM to get your turkey in the oven! **This is a great opportunity for groups of all sizes!*

Administrative Assistant (Year-Round)

The Crisis Center is in need of volunteers to assist with day-to-day office duties such as data entry, filing, answering phones, office organization, preparing food bags for clients, assembling/sorting mail, and more. No experience is needed! This position is available to anyone over 18 who is free on one or more of the days we are open to the public: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 9am–2pm and Monday evenings between 5pm–7:30pm. Additional support is also needed in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9-5pm. **This position may require lifting and carrying 20+lbs for short distances.*

LARS' Volunteer Coordinator, Angelica Christian, would love to hear from you via phone or e-mail! You can connect with her at (301)776-0442 x32 or achristian@laureladvocacy.org.

A New Look for LARS!

You may have noticed the facelift over at laureladvocacy.org. That's all thanks to our talented web development and graphic design volunteer, Alden



(Old Logo)

Curnutt. As we enter our 30th year of service, we are excited to introduce a new logo (designed by Alden) that much better reflects the work we do:



A bit of background from Alden on how the logo came together: The house/"A" represents LARS as a pillar standing tall in the Laurel community, working to ensure that all of its members have food on their tables and a place to rest their heads at night. The handshake represents LARS' many partnerships within the community, which serve to empower and uplift our neighbors in need.

Let us know what you think! Send your feedback on the new look to lwellford@laureladvocacy.org.

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(a former employee at LARS), the family was recommended for placement in LARS' housing program, where they receive subsidized rent and supportive services including assistance with education, employment, transportation, and childcare expenses. Thanks to a huge response from the Laurel community to LARS' call for furniture donations last month, we were able to turn an empty apartment into a comfortable home for a family that, after many years of having nothing, now has a safe and healthy place to raise their children. Sam has started an educational program to become a medical technician and Joyce has secured a part-time job at a department store. Their oldest daughter has re-enrolled in school and is doing well. Their son who has autism will be starting an occupational therapy and social skills program this fall. And their youngest one, who was born while they were homeless, celebrated his first birthday last month in their new home!

**Names in this story have been changed to protect the family's privacy.*

FY2016 Annual Report (July 2015-June 2016)

1,730 households served:
42% were visiting LARS for the first time
12% were homeless

13 chronically homeless & disabled individuals resided in LARS' Permanent Supportive Housing

14 homeless families (including 30 children) stably housed in LARS' Transitional Housing. 11 of these families secured permanent housing upon program completion.

105 evictions prevented

8,655 bags of food distributed

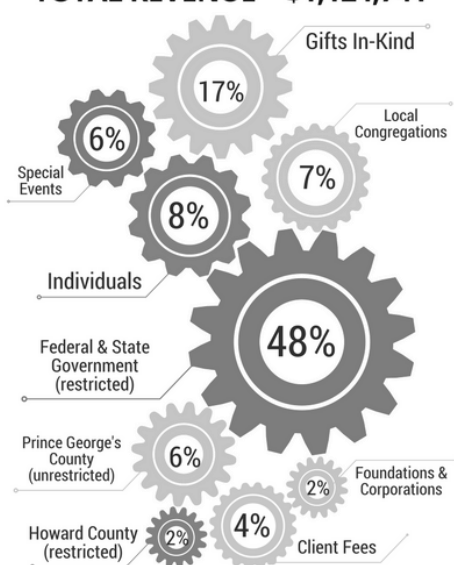
334 households applied for or renewed SNAP (food stamps) benefits

543 children had their holiday wish lists fulfilled through LARS' Holiday Program

74,400 lbs (more than 37 tons!) of food donated to the food pantry

582 volunteers contributed 3,733 hours of service

TOTAL REVENUE = \$1,124,741



For complete program descriptions, financial reports, and organizational goals, check us out on GuideStar: www.guidestar.org/profile/52-1537336

Turkey Trot 2016

The 12th Annual Turkey Trot to Benefit LARS is just around the corner! We hope to see all of you for another Thanksgiving morning full of fun, family, friends, and food! As always, we'll have a 5K run/walk and a 1 mile run/walk option, both starting at McCullough Field on 8th Street in Laurel. The City of Laurel has recently approved this route as Laurel's Official 5K Course! If you're in the area, check out the permanent blue sign posts marking the course, starting at the intersection of 8th Street and Laurel Avenue. Be the hero of Thanksgiving dinner by taking home a pie this year!

Register online at www.laureladvocacy.org (click the link on the homepage) and enter coupon code **PUMPKIN** to get \$5 off your registration fee, or mail in the included paper registration form to pay by check (you'll still get the discount!).

Packet pick-up will be held on Wednesday, November 23rd from 3-7PM. We are working on securing a larger space in the Laurel area for packet pick-up. Keep an eye out on LARS' Facebook page and website for updates! RSVP to the 12th Annual Turkey Trot on Facebook and you'll automatically receive event updates in your notifications (you can also cast your vote for this year's t-shirt color!).

Sponsorship of the LARS Turkey Trot is a great way to promote your business or group to a large local crowd! Contact Laura Wellford at lwelford@laureladvocacy.org for more information on sponsoring or participating!

TOTAL EXPENSES = \$1,174,502



LARS | 311 Laurel Ave | Laurel, MD 20707
P. 301-776-0442 | www.laureladvocacy.org



Set up a monthly gift to LARS at laureladvocacy.org

Pledge a gift through your workplace
(CFC: 92544 / United Way: 8843)

Add a few items to your grocery cart for LARS' pantry

Email achristian@laureladvocacy.org for information on volunteering!

Sign up to run or walk at the annual Turkey Trot and Spring into Summer 5K events

"Like" us on Facebook & share LARS' good work!
([facebook.com/laureladvocacy](https://www.facebook.com/laureladvocacy))

**LAUREL ADVOCACY &
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Follow us on Twitter @laureladvocacy



Support LARS every time you shop!
<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1537336>

Help us feed those in need this holiday season!

Food donations can be dropped off at LARS during business hours:

**Mon/Wed/Fri 9:00-2:00pm
& Monday evenings 5:00-7:30pm**

Please remember to check expiration dates!

During November and December, LARS distributes holiday food baskets to over 300 families and seniors, in addition to our regular food pantry distributions.

For more information about donating food, volunteering, or starting a food drive, please contact Angelica Christian at 301-776-0442 ext. 32 or achristian@laureladvocacy.org!

Thanksgiving food baskets are needed by **November 18th**.

Christmas food baskets are needed by **December 16th**.

Holiday food items needed include:

**Frozen turkeys and hams
Canned or fresh sweet potatoes
Cranberry sauce
Instant or fresh potatoes
Gravy
Stuffing
Cornbread mix
Pie filling/desserts**

Other helpful pantry staples:

**Cereal & oatmeal
Tuna/canned meats
Peanut butter & jelly
Spaghetti & sauce
Mac & cheese,
Fruit/applesauce
Pop-top soup cans
Easy-prep meals
Rice & beans**

