

## History of Share – Executive Summary

As described in the accompanying complete history, Share's primary focus has evolved over the years. During the 1970s and 1980s, its volunteers devoted their time and resources to the contemporary social problems of the day, with programs for alienated youth and runaways, inner city problems, concerns with the limited availability of affordable housing, and the special needs of the aging senior population. In the 1990s, the focus shifted toward core programs for the working poor – those individuals and families with limited income who are living paycheck to paycheck with little capacity to absorb economic dislocations like job loss, reduced working hours or medical problems. For them, even minor losses of income can result in potential homelessness, mortgage foreclosures or bankruptcy.

Reflecting this shift in focus, Share started a number of programs for the poor, including crisis intervention, free food pantry and used clothing rooms, furniture exchange service, free transportation for seniors and special distributions to clients at Thanksgiving and Christmas. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Share launched new initiatives as its earlier activities led to the establishment of independent institutions that provided specialized services, such as Meals on Wheels, Alternative House, and McLean Day. Other institutions took the lead in dealing with other initiatives like youth problems, which went beyond the capabilities of all-volunteer organizations like Share, such as the promotion of affordable housing.

In the early 2000s, Share began programs to provide school supplies, refurbished computers, and fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs (much of it grown by local gardeners) to families in need. Share also expanded its cooperative activities with other non-profit groups serving special needs populations, such as the victims of spousal abuse, formerly homeless families and other individuals re-entering society. Share increased its cooperative efforts with Fairfax and Arlington Counties social services programs to help identify and support needy clients.

Share's ability to manage its programs was enhanced by the application of modern management techniques, coupled with advances in information technology. These steps included automating financial management processes, initiating an automated system to track client services, and upgrading the ability to collect meaningful performance metrics and provide detailed annual accomplishment reports on services to clients. In the future, Share will continue to find program initiatives that deliver real client services, within the capabilities of its all-volunteer personnel.

### Share's Beginning

In the late 1960s, McLean Baptist Church parishioner and visiting home teacher Irene Jones learned about a local family with two children who, because they had to share only one pair of shoes, could only have one child attend school at a time. Mrs. Jones made it her mission to spread the word to McLean church laypersons about the number of people in the community who were in need, or who were falling between society's cracks. Church members realized they could work more effectively by organizing an ecumenical program of community ministry, rather than working separately. So, on March 10, 1969, laypersons from area churches met to

## History of Share – Executive Summary

consider forming an organization to respond to the social needs of the McLean community. During this meeting, the attendees decided to establish an organization for interfaith cooperation to respond to needs both of an emergency nature and those requiring a longer range approach, but still fundamental to citizen welfare. Membership in the corporation would be comprised of two representatives from each of 16 participating churches and “other individuals who volunteer their services or resources.” The result was that Share was incorporated in September 1969.

From its early years, Share initiated a long list of programs:

- Family Assistance – to provide food, clothing, furniture and financial assistance. McLean Baptist Church offered space for food and clothing items. In its first year, Share provided Thanksgiving turkeys to 12 families visited by Irene Jones. Sixteen Christmas baskets were distributed the next month. The food and clothing rooms were open Wednesday morning and the first Saturday morning of the month. In 1989, the third Saturday morning of the month was added and, beginning in 2005, the rooms were open every Saturday morning. In 2002, the board decided to issue Safeway or Giant certificates in amounts appropriate to the family size at Christmas, rather than provide food baskets. In 2004, the Thanksgiving basket program began to rely on gift certificates in lieu of perishable foods. By 2006, gift cards replaced the distribution of staples as well.
- Share received its first donated pickup truck in 1984. In January 1988, it acquired another truck funded largely by a \$5,000 grant from the McLean Citizens Foundation. Over the next 20 years the Foundation provided three more grants for used trucks so that Share eventually had two trucks for furniture delivery and one for food drives. The furniture pickup and delivery program used a succession of temporary storage facilities until 2008 when space in the Montessori School at the Chesterbrook United Methodist Church became available.
- In 1972 Share began sponsoring the Meals on Wheels program, which served two routes in McLean and one in the Tysons Tower apartments. By 1984, it was delivering 240 meals every day. In 1996 Meals on Wheels spun off as a separate organization.
- In 1974 the Telephone Reassurance program began. The purpose was to raise spirits and “add happiness” to caller recipients. Between six and eight senior citizens received a daily phone call to check on their safety and well-being. That program ended in 1977 when the American Red Cross took it over.
- Transportation – to provide provided rides to medical appointments. It continued even through the worst of the gasoline shortage in the mid-1970’s and provided between 200 and 400 rides a year until 2014 when Share merged its program with that of the Shepherd’s Center of McLean/Arlington/Falls Church. The Shepherd’s Center program was larger than Share’s and had an automated scheduling system to match drivers and riders, in contrast to Share’s paper scheduling and record-keeping system
- Youth Programs – Share sponsored Psychodrama, a role play program designed to help teens and adults work together to deal constructively with problems of stress and alienation. Share also sponsored Freedom House, established to help McLean teenagers find creative

## History of Share – Executive Summary

involvement in community activities. Both programs closed in 1972. In 1971, Share began to fund two graduate students at American University's Wesley Seminary to spend 25 hours a week each working with young people in McLean. Share continued to support youth ministers until 1979. One of the youth ministers revived McLean Day in 1973. McLean Day was taken over by the McLean Community Center when it opened in 1975.

- In 1972, a group of volunteers on the Youth Committee started laying the groundwork for an alternative or runaway house where teens could “cool off” for a few days when family situations became explosive. Their effort resulted in Alternative House, which is still operational on Gallows Road. Share also sponsored a course in Parent Effectiveness Training that was later sponsored by the Safe Community Coalition. In 1974, Share joined with the Rotary Club of McLean to open a foster home in Lewinsville Park on Chain Bridge Road for four to six boys aged 11 to 14. Share was responsible for home operations and obtaining resident foster parents. The home operated until 1978, when state funding support ceased. From 1978 to 2010, Share continued to provide financial support to Alternative House and the Falls Church-McLean Children's Center, which had opened in 1967, but no longer ran any youth programs of its own.
- Inner City – Share's initial efforts to help the Inner City focused on one man, James (Jabbo) Kenner, a McLean resident. Kenner had built up numerous inner city contacts through his 41 years as a professional fighter and Northwest Washington's Boys' Club No. 2 organizer. He took the \$150 a month provided by Share and did the most he could with it. Typically the funds went to furnish food, clothing, furniture, and utility payments. After Kenner retired in 1979, inner city efforts were conducted by Carver Leach under the Roving Leader program. Support to inner city programs ended in 1991.
- Low Cost Housing – In 1969, Share volunteers intended to provide low-income or moderate-income housing in McLean. They first focused on purchasing a 1¾ acre tract on Kirby Road in order to build 16 moderate income townhouses. Then they set their sights on a five-acre parcel on Cottonwood Street behind Linway Park. The plan was to obtain HUD funding, have a private builder construct 50 townhouses, and sell most of the homes to moderate income families. These efforts ended in 1973. By that time, building costs had risen too high to provide moderate income housing even if Share had been able to purchase the land for nothing, and HUD had frozen funding of such projects. In 1976 the housing committee worked to establish a home to provide short-term housing for people released from mental institutions. Share volunteers later deferred to other groups around the county competing for the same funds. Instead, Share began to donate funds to a number of shelters: Bethany House, Shelter House, Bailey's Crossroads, and Embry Rucker. Later it funded Homestretch. Funding for all these organizations ended in 2010.
- Community Counseling Service – Initially, Share subsidized a psychological and psychiatric counseling service to low income families and individuals. Funding ended in 1975 when the service became self-sustaining.

## History of Share – Executive Summary

While a number of initiatives ended, a few others began. For Christmas 1982, Share tried an experiment in the form of a Christmas store, from which people could shop for family gifts. More than 400 gifts were chosen and volunteers thought the experiment was a success. The idea for the store came from a conversation in the food room when a young woman was picking up her food. A volunteer wished her a Merry Christmas and the woman started to cry, explaining that she didn't have any Christmas gifts for her family. By 2014 the store, now called a Holiday Celebration and distributing gift certificates rather than food or gifts, was serving 220 families.

In 2010, Share entered into agreement with Family Preservation and Strengthening Services (FamilyPASS) for it to provide services for two Share clients. Share recognized that those services were beyond those that Share could provide and that FamilyPASS could probably not accept these clients into its program without Share financial support.

Share's income and expenditures have grown over the years. Its programs were impacted by the recession when the number of clients requesting assistance more than doubled. Thanks to the generosity of its benefactors, increased donations enabled the organization to maintain historic levels of services to an increasing number of clients. Most recently – particularly in the past two years – demand for services seems to be leveling off, likely reflecting the current economic recovery. Share believes its success in expanding resources to keep pace with the demand for services is related to a solid reputation in the community as an all-volunteer institution providing vital services to the poor. This is quite remarkable in that Share is wholly dependent on private donations and has never received government funding.

On October 10, 2009, Share celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, where Rev. Michael Catlett of McLean Baptist Church gave the keynote address. In his eloquent remarks, Rev. Catlett said:

“Share cannot be described with words or with numbers, no matter how lovely the vocabulary or impressive the figures. Statistics can paint a picture, but it's a paint-by-number canvas devoid of depth and feeling .... Knowing how many cans of food the scouts delivered is far different from watching the scouts collect and deliver that food to Share .... Knowing Share delivered furniture to a house is far different from seeing an empty home transformed by a sofa, chairs and tables. Learning Share sometimes helps clients with utilities isn't the same as seeing the light reflected in the eyes of a man who lived far too long in darkness .... Behind every number there's a face; behind every word there's a story. Share is about people.

“.... Some of us need to give; some of us need to receive. Some of us walk into Share and are changed; some of us walk out of Share and are changed. All of us are needy, and all of us have needs met through Share .... we are community .... When kindness and compassion are exchanged each person is strengthened. When goodness is our currency, everyone is rich.”