



Neighbors Helping Neighbors
— Since 1969 —

HISTORY OF SHARE

1969 – The beginning

Share began with one neighbor noticing that another neighbor needed help.

- In 1969, Irene Jones, a parishioner and visiting teacher at McLean Baptist Church, learned that two children in one family shared a single pair of shoes. Because only one child could wear the shoes at a time, they had to alternate going to school. Moved by their situation, Irene reached out to local interfaith and community leaders to find a way to help neighbors facing emergencies.
- That effort became Share, which was incorporated in September 1969 by an interfaith coalition of 16 partner organizations, along with community members who joined its growing network.
- From the beginning, Share established programs to provide food, clothing, furniture, and emergency financial assistance to neighbors in need. The organization also made a foundational commitment that continues today: Share would be powered by volunteers.
- In its very first year, Share provided Thanksgiving turkeys to 12 families and 16 holiday baskets, laying the foundation for more than five decades of neighbors helping neighbors.



1970s and 1980s – Growing to meet community needs

As Share grew through the 1970s and 1980s, so did its commitment to responding to the changing needs of local families and individuals. Share's limited resources were focused on some of the most pressing issues facing the community, including supporting vulnerable youth, helping families access affordable housing, and addressing the needs of older adults.

Some of the programs Share pioneered during this period eventually grew into independent organizations or were transferred to organizations better positioned to continue their work.

Responding to the Needs of our Community

- **Expanding the Food & Clothing Pantry:** McLean Baptist Church generously provided space for Share's food and clothing rooms, which initially opened Wednesday mornings and the first Saturday morning of each month. By 1984, Share was providing families with almost a week's supply of supplemental food. In 1987, additional space was provided for freezers and refrigerators, allowing Share to expand its offerings to include meat and produce.
- **A New Way to Celebrate the Holidays:** In 1982, a client picking up food at the pantry began to cry when a volunteer wished her a Merry Christmas. She explained that she had no gifts to give her family. Her story inspired Share volunteers to create a Christmas "store" where clients could choose gifts for their families. In its first year, more than 400 gifts were selected and distributed. That spirit of giving continues today through Share's Holiday Program, which now provides gift certificates to local grocery stores so families can choose what they need most.
- **Expanding Furniture Delivery:** In 1984, Share received its first donated pickup truck to deliver furniture to families in need. Over the next two decades, civic organizations and community donors provided additional used trucks. Eventually, Share had two trucks dedicated to furniture deliveries and another used for food drives.

Programs That Grew Beyond Share

- **Meals on Wheels**
 - **1972:** Share began sponsoring Meals on Wheels in the greater McLean area.
 - **1984:** More than 240 meals were being delivered every day.
 - **1996:** The program had grown so significantly that it became an independent organization, [Fairfax Area Meals on Wheels Program](#), allowing it to expand its reach and services.
- **Telephone Reassurance Program**
 - **1974:** Share launched a telephone reassurance program designed to "add happiness" and provide a daily connection for older adults. Six to eight seniors received daily calls to check on their safety and well-being.
 - **1977:** The [American Red Cross](#) assumed responsibility for the program.

- **Transportation**

- **1970s:** Share volunteers provided transportation to medical appointments, continuing the service even during the severe gasoline shortages of the mid-1970s. The program provided approximately 200 to 400 rides each year.
- **2014:** Share's transportation program merged with [Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia](#).

- **Youth Programs**

- **1971:** Share funded graduate students at American University's Wesley Seminary to work with young people in McLean. One of the youth ministers helped revive McLean Day in 1973, an event eventually taken over by the [McLean Community Center](#) when it opened in 1975.
- **1972:** Share's Youth Committee began developing a "runaway house" where teenagers could have a safe place to cool off during family crises. Their efforts ultimately helped establish [Second Story](#), formerly known as Alternative House, which continues to serve young people in Northern Virginia today.



1990s to present – Adapting to Changing Needs

Beginning in the 1990s, Share increasingly focused its core programs on working families and individuals who were making ends meet but had little financial cushion. For those living paycheck to paycheck, an unexpected job loss, reduction in work hours, medical issue, or other financial setback could quickly threaten their ability to pay rent or a mortgage, keep the lights on, or put food on the table.

- **Growing to Meet Demand:** As the need for food and clothing assistance increased, Share expanded its pantry hours. A third Saturday opening was added, and in 2005, the pantry began opening every Saturday morning in addition to Wednesdays. Around 2018, Share expanded pantry services to eligible adults age 55 and older, opening specifically for seniors on the first and third Thursday of each month. This schedule continues to

this day and Transportation is provided for seniors living at Lewinsville Senior Center and The Fallstead.

- **A Growing Network of Food Donors:** Local grocery stores began donating fresh produce, meat, bread, and other food on a weekly basis. Over time, this network expanded to include additional grocery and retail stores, bakeries, nonprofit organizations, and local gardeners helping Share provide a greater variety of nutritious food to local families.
- **Holiday Assistance Evolves:** In 2002, Share transitioned from distributing holiday food baskets to providing Safeway and Giant gift certificates based on family size, giving families the dignity and flexibility to choose the foods they needed most. Today, gift cards from Lidl and Walmart have been added to the program for registered clients.
- **New Programs for Local Families:** During the first decade of the 21st century, Share expanded its services to include back-to-school supplies and refurbished computers. These efforts reflected Share's continued commitment to responding to the practical needs of families and children. McLean Baptist Church continued to generously provide space for Share, including additional areas for the technology program, school supplies, and food and clothing storage. In 2024, Share transitioned away from its Technology Program as schools and community organizations increasingly provided laptops and tablets, allowing Share to concentrate its efforts where the need was greatest.
- **Stronger Partnerships for Emergency Assistance:** Share strengthened its collaboration with Fairfax County social services and other community partners to identify and assist neighbors facing urgent financial challenges. Assistance has helped clients with rent, utilities, medical care, prescriptions, and other essential expenses, often helping prevent a temporary crisis from becoming a much larger one.
- **Modernizing How Share Serves the Community:** Share introduced new tools to track client information and measure program impact, helping volunteers better understand community needs and make informed decisions. The organization also expanded its communication channels through a website, social media, email, and telephone support, making it easier for clients, donors, and volunteers to connect with Share.

Meeting a Crisis Together

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, Share faced one of its greatest challenges. Rather than close its doors, Share adapted. Volunteers moved pantry operations outdoors, reorganized distribution, and worked tirelessly to continue serving neighbors safely.

At the same time, the generosity of the community grew dramatically. Donors stepped forward with increased contributions, enabling Share to maintain historic levels of service even as the number of neighbors seeking assistance continued to rise.

The pandemic demonstrated something that has defined Share since its founding in 1969: when our community faces a challenge, neighbors come together to help one another.



Our Values and Our Future

Everything Share does is grounded in three simple commitments:

- **Our Clients:** We treat every neighbor we serve with kindness, dignity, respect, and compassion.
- **Our Donors:** We are deeply grateful for the generosity, trust, and partnership of the individuals, businesses, faith communities, and organizations that make our work possible.
- **Our Volunteers:** We are a family of volunteers united by a shared commitment to helping our neighbors. Their compassion, dedication, and willingness to serve are the heart of Share.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, Share will continue to listen to the needs of our community and seek new ways to make a meaningful difference within the capabilities of an all-volunteer organization.

What began in 1969 with 12 Thanksgiving turkeys and 16 holiday baskets has grown into an organization supporting 1,400 households and more than 3,500 individuals through a broad range of programs and with the support of our community.

Our mission remains the same: neighbors helping neighbors. And after more than five decades, we are committed to carrying that tradition forward for generations to come.

All-Volunteer
Non-Profit since 1969

info@shareofmclean.org
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Food Pantry and Clothing Room:
McLean Baptist Church, Door #8
1367 Chain Bridge Road, McLean, VA

