



## HISTORY OF SHARE

### 1969 – The beginning

- McLean Baptist Church parishioner and visiting teacher, Irene Jones, learned that two children in the same family shared one pair of shoes, so only one child could go to school at a time. This spurred Irene and local interfaith and community leaders to define a plan to help neighbors in the community with emergency situations.
- Share was incorporated in September 1969 with membership comprised of 2 representatives from 16 participating churches and other community individuals who volunteered their services. It was decided that all programs would be staffed by volunteers.
- A core set of programs were put in place to provide food, clothing, furniture, and financial assistance. McLean Baptist Church offered space for the food and clothing rooms which were open Wednesday mornings and the first Saturday morning of every month. In its first year, Share provided Thanksgiving turkeys to 12 families and 16 holiday baskets.

### 1970s & 1980s – Finding a balance

- During the 1970s and 1980s, Share's limited resources were largely devoted to the contemporary social problems of the day: guiding alienated youth, assisting with affordable housing, and understanding the special needs of the aging senior population.
- In 1982, a client picking up food from the pantry began to cry when a volunteer wished her a Merry Christmas. She explained that she did not have any gifts to give her family for the holiday. This sparked an idea for Share volunteers to create a Christmas "store" where clients could shop for gifts. During the first year, more than 400 gifts were chosen and provided to clients. (The Holiday Program continues to this day but has taken a new form with gift certificates to local grocery and retail stores being distributed allowing clients to purchase their own items.)
- Share received its first donated pickup truck in 1984 for furniture delivery. Over the next 20 years, additional used trucks were provided through civic organization grants and donations so that Share eventually had two trucks for furniture delivery and one for food drives.
- A few programs put in place by Share during this period have since been successfully incorporated into other organizations over the years:

- Meals on Wheels
  - 1972: Share began sponsoring the Meals on Wheels program in the greater McLean area.
  - 1984: More than 240 meals were delivered every day.
  - 1996: The program was so successful that it was spun off as a separate organization – [Fairfax Area Meals on Wheels Program](#).
- Telephone Reassurance Program
  - 1974: The program began to raise spirits and “add happiness” to caller recipients. Between 6-8 senior citizens received a daily phone call to check on their safety and well-being.
  - 1977: The [American Red Cross](#) took over operations of the program.
- Transportation
  - 1970’s: Share provided transportation to medical appointments. This program continued even through the worst of the gasoline shortage in the mid-1970’s and provided between 200 and 400 rides a year.
  - 2014: Share merged its program 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 revived McLean Day in 1973 which was eventually taken over by the [McLean Community Center](#) when it opened in 1975.
  - 1972: A group of volunteers on the Youth Committee started laying the groundwork for a runaway house where teens could “cool off” for a few days when family situations became explosive. Their effort resulted in [Second Story](#) (formerly Alternative House), which is still operational in Dunn Loring, VA.

**1990s to present – Expanding core programs**

- Starting in the 1990’s, Share’s focus shifted toward core programs for families and individuals who had some income, but basically lived from payday to payday with little capacity to absorb economic dislocations such as job loss, reduced or seasonal working hours, or medical problems. For them, even minor income losses could result in potential homelessness, mortgage foreclosures or bankruptcy.
- The demand for the core set of services was so great that Share added another time slot and opened the food and clothing pantry on the third Saturday of each month. And beginning in 2005, the food pantry was open every Saturday morning in addition to every Wednesday morning. Around 2018, the pantry opened up to the 55+ senior population

and is now open the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month with transportation being provided to those living in the Lewinsville and Fallstead senior centers.

- In 2002, Share issued Safeway or Giant gift certificates in amounts appropriate to the family size during the holidays, rather than provide food baskets. Today, Lidl and Walmart have been added to the list of grocery options.
- During the first decade of the 21st century, Share launched additional programs to provide school supplies, refurbished computers, and fresh produce (grown by local gardeners) to Share clients, which continue to this day. Share still resides in the McLean Baptist Church and the church has provided additional donated space for the technology lab, back to school supplies, and storage areas for clothing and food.
- Share also increased cooperative efforts with Fairfax County social services programs to help identify and support clients with emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical services, prescriptions, and other essential services.
- Share implemented tools to track and analyze client information to collect meaningful performance metrics. Social media sites, a website, a general email id ([info@shareofmclean.org](mailto:info@shareofmclean.org)) and telephone number (703- 229-1414) were created to help clients, donors, and volunteers get to the right information quickly.
- Share's programs were greatly impacted by the Covid pandemic in 2020. Share continued to operate, though it took a tremendous amount of energy and coordination from Share's amazing volunteers to move the food pantry items outdoors for every opening. With the generosity of benefactors and their increased donations during this period, Share was able to maintain historic levels of service to an increasing number of clients.

#### **Future of Share of McLean**

- Share believes in its core values:
  - We value our clients and treat them with kindness, respect, and generosity.
  - We value our donors and are deeply grateful for their charitableness and partnership.
  - We think of our volunteers as family and are inspired by their commitment and dedication.
- For the future, Share's leadership team will continue to look for program initiatives that line up with our vision to positively impact the lives of our neighbors in need that fall within the capabilities of an all-volunteer organization. Share began in 1969 with delivering 12 turkeys and 16 holiday baskets to families and now supports 1,100 households with over 3,000 family members in the community through various programs and services.