

Facts on the rising needs in Montgomery County

Thousands of our neighbors are hurting because of the recent economic downturn. Here are just a few startling facts about the needs right here in our community:

- The 430 beds in Montgomery County's family and single-adult homeless shelters are all full. At one point in the past year, the homeless shelter waiting list was so high that the County had to temporarily place 61 families in motels. This does not include the many people "invisible" to the system, bouncing between the homes of friends and relatives.
- Manna Food Center provides free groceries to individuals and families at risk for hunger, as well as referrals to social services that can help residents regain financial stability. Manna responded to a 43% increase in demand this past year, serving an average of 145 clients every day. Now, Manna is serving on average of 157 clients daily and anticipates continued increases in the coming year.
- Montgomery CARES, a network of health clinics for uninsured, low-income adult residents, is on pace to serve 20% more patients than in Fiscal Year 2009 (July 2008 – June 2009) and 55% more patients than Fiscal Year 2008 (July 2007 – June 2008).
- Countywide, home energy assistance recipients grew 18% between Fiscal Year 2008 and Fiscal Year 2009. The rate of application intake increased 22% in the first 6 months of Fiscal Year 2010, compared with that same period last year.
- The County's public assistance caseloads have grown every month since Fiscal Year 2007, reaching the following high as of February 2010:
 - Temporary cash assistance: 928 (33.7% increase)
 - Food stamps: 18,146 (60% increase)
 - Medicaid: 38,788 (32.4% increase)
- As of June 2010, the Mental Health Association of Montgomery County's crisis hotline is performing nearly 6 times more suicide assessments than they were in June 2008.

These are challenging times not only for the poorest in our midst but for many others. Recent data found that a Montgomery County family of three (one adult and two children) needs to earn over \$68,000 to pay for food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, transportation, childcare and other cost of living. For families fortunate enough to earn this "self-sufficiency" wage, one large medical bill, unexpected car repair or broken furnace can be devastating. They, too, turn to the front line emergency service providers for help.

Please contact The Community Foundation for Montgomery County, a regional affiliate of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, to learn more about how the Neighbors In Need Montgomery Fund is supporting critical "safety net" nonprofit organizations serving County families in crisis. Visit us online at www.thecommunityfoundationmc.org or contact 301-588-2544.

Sources: Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Manna Food Center, Mental Health Association of Montgomery County.